October 3, 2024



EMPHNET Emergency Bulletin

Disease Outbreaks in Areas of Armed Conflict - Sudan and Gaza

Introduction

More than 500 days have passed since the armed conflict broke out in Sudan. These are now coupled with severe flooding and widespread food shortage. Together, these conditions further exacerbate the humanitarian crisis and significantly impact public health. Despite the urgent and increasing humanitarian needs and the wide spread of disease outbreaks, aid efforts are significantly insufficient. Recently, among the most pressing concerns is the cholera outbreak being declared across multiple states in Sudan. This cholera outbreak is further draining the already fragile health system's infrastructure.

Similarly, Gaza has been bearing the consequences of Israeli aggression for almost a year. Disease outbreaks are widely reported across the Strip including: Hepatitis, pneumonia, diarrheal diseases, scabies, and debilitating rashes. Polio has also re-emerged, although Gaza has been polio-free for 25 years.

This bulletin provides an overview of the current cholera situation in Sudan and the polio campaign in Gaza, highlighting key challenges and response efforts by health authorities and international partners.

Situational Update

Sudan

On August 12, 2024, Sudan's Federal Ministry of Health officially declared a cholera outbreak. This declaration was made following a new wave of cases that were reported on July 22, 2024, and onwards.



Total Cholera Cases and Deaths in Sudan:





Deaths across 8 states up to September 15, 2024

Cholera Cases and Deaths by State in Sudan (July - September 2024):



3,256 total infections and **119 deaths** upto the outbreak began in August and up to September 13, 2024



Gedaref

699 cases upto September 1, 2024.



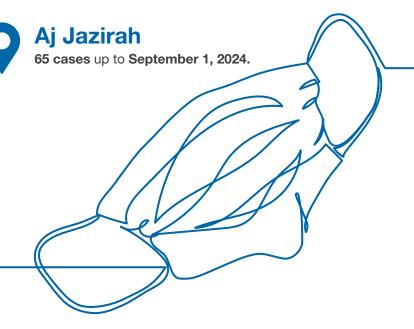
River Nile

1,611 total infections and 51 deaths up to September 13, 2024 These figures include the 161 new cases, and three new deaths reported on September 12].



Khartoum

20 cases up to September 1, 2024.



Vulnerability Factors



10 Million

are internally displaced, and some of them have poor and overcrowded living conditions with low access to services and safe water supply or sanitation



>70%

of hospitals in conflictaffected areas are not fully operational, leaving millions without access to essential healthcare.



>596,607

people have been affected across 15 out of 18 states, with at least 180,835 people displaced by the flooding, according to the Sudan Flooding Dashboard: Since June

The ongoing conflict and insecurity in Sudan have severely limited humanitarian access to many areas. This has made it extremely challenging to deliver aid, including medical supplies, clean water, and sanitation facilities. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Famine Review Committee, some communities in North Darfur State are driven into famine (IPC 5)

Gaza

Between October 7, 2023, and September 18, 2024, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH)in Gaza,



>41,272



>95,551

Health Status in Gaza and Sudan

Polio Vaccination Campaign in Gaza Strip

In Gaza, a polio outbreak, caused by circulating variant poliovirus • 558,963 children were successfully vaccinated in the first type 2 (cVDPV2) was detected in July and August 2024. In response, the Palestinian MoH, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), and other partners, conducted an emergency polio vaccination campaign in the Gaza Strip from September 1st to 12th, 2024.

• The emergency vaccination campaign launched in September 2024 aimed to reach **640,000 children** under ten years old.

EMPHNET played a critical role in this effort. Having been selected by WHO Gaza as an experienced agency to conduct postcampaign monitoring. EMPHNET was responsible for assessing the effectiveness of the campaign through independent monitoring activities. This included training 34 teams on assessment tools in coordination with the WHO regional office. The campaign evaluation involved screening 11,515 children under the age of 10 at fixed health sites and households, representing 2% of the total target population.





Public Health Implications of Cholera Outbreak in Sudan

Cholera is a severe diarrheal disease caused by the Vibrio cholerae bacteria. It spreads quickly in places where sanitation is poor, drinking water isn't safe, and living conditions are overcrowded, which unfortunately is a reality for many displaced communities across Sudan.

In Sudan, the ongoing cholera outbreak is exacerbated by armed conflict, infrastructure damage, displacement, and recent floods. Furthermore, overcrowded IDP camps and urban areas with inadequate water and sanitation are particularly vulnerable.

Recognizing the importance of a coordinated response, the Federal Ministry of Health (MOH), in collaboration with EMPHNET,

arranged a one-day workshop to finalize the "Cholera Surveillance and Response Contingency Plan for 2024-2025." Efforts outlined in this plan include deploying federal teams to affected regions and administering oral cholera vaccines (OCVs) in Kassala State. From another angle, the State Ministry of Health, the Federal Emergency Operations Center (EOC), WHO, and UNICEF have launched an extensive campaign to combat the cholera epidemic.

The ongoing outbreak is putting a lot of pressure on Sudan's healthcare system to handle the situation effectively and to prevent the further spread of cholera by improving water, sanitation, healthcare, and disease monitoring to mitigate its public health impacts.



Watch the fourth episode of "Gaza Health Chronicles: Inside the Crisis," produced by EMPHNET



Public Health Recommendations

As the disease is spreading in Sudan and new cases may appear at any time, all states should be prepared to prevent introduction of the disease and to limit its spread. Training for medical doctors and nurses should precede the introduction.

Introduction of a comprehensive and coordinated public health response is essential to effectively control and mitigate the ongoing cholera outbreak in Sudan.

Improving the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) conditions is vital to effectively manage the cholera outbreak. Proper sanitation infrastructure and access to clean, safe drinking water are warranted for the affected communities and in-camps specifically.

Promoting better hygiene through community education on handwashing, safe food handling, and proper waste disposal will help decrease disease transmission. Strengthening surveillance systems and reporting is vital for early detection and the recording of cholera cases. Trained teams should also investigate cases and trace contacts to prevent further spread. Access to healthcare, including the availability of medical supplies and vaccines, is crucial and cannot be facilitated without safe routes

Furthermore, Expanding Oral Cholera Vaccine (OCV) campaigns is essential, especially in high-risk areas like Kassala, Gedaref, and the River Nile states.

Finally, collaboration and coordination among international and national stakeholders and advocacy for funding are essential to secure the needed aid and resources to address immediate challenges and the root causes of future cholera outbreaks

Quotes

His excellency, Dr. Heitham Awadalla, Sudan Minister of Health official statement:

"The impactful response is through: enabling communities to be responsible for their health and guiding other related sectors to be responsible for the health of their communities."

Kristine Hambrouck, UNHCR Representative in Sudan:

"Risks are compounded by the continuing conflict and dire humanitarian conditions, including overcrowding in camps and gathering sites for refugees and Sudanese displaced by the war, as well as limited medical supplies and health workers."

"If cholera is introduced into this community, deaths will mount by powers of 10"

Dr. John Kahler, who witnessed the destruction in Gaza firsthand says,

"Palestinians face a myriad of diseases due to lack of proper nutrition and dehydration, as well as a collapsed public health"
—source: Anadolu English Agency. September 2, 2024.

Petition

Doing its part to stand side by side with its brothers in Sudan, EMPHNET calls on the entire international community to provide an urgent and comprehensive response to alleviate the suffering of the Sudanese people and meet their pressing needs, and it asks that we all do our part to make our voices heard. The petition below is a confirmation of unity to make positive change.



Every signature on this petition is a resounding voice calling for immediate solidarity and urgent action to end this crisis. Let this solidarity be a driving force for change towards a better reality and future for the Sudanese people.





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This report is compiled by EMPHNET's Public Health Emergency Management Center (PHEMC)