

Sierra Leone cholera death toll rises to 244

September 3 2012

A cholera epidemic in Sierra Leone which was declared a national emergency in mid-August has claimed 244 lives and affected 14,521 people, said a statement from a special cholera task force Monday.

"We are continuing to map out strategies in support of initiatives to eradicate the outbreak," read the statement from a presidential task force which was set up shortly after the outbreak was declared an emergency.

[Sierra Leone](#) has been hit by its worst outbreak of the water-borne disease in nearly 15 years and cases are expected to peak at around 32,000 in September, the west African nation's rainiest month, according to the [World Health Organisation](#).

The capital Freetown remains the worst affected, accounting for 63 percent of cases, according to government statistics.

Neighbouring Guinea has also been hard hit with 104 deaths and some 5,000 cases.

Whereas the disease usually appears at the start of the rainy season in June or July, this year cases were reported at the beginning of the year and have spread rapidly in the densely-populated capital.

[Poor hygiene](#) and living conditions have contributed to the spread leaving thousands stricken with vomiting, diarrhoea and [stomach cramps](#) and overwhelming Sierra Leone's health system.

"It is expected to get a lot worse before it gets better," Claire Seaward of Oxfam Sierra Leone told AFP recently.

The Chinese embassy in Freetown said Monday it will provide urgent assistance to the country to express "the goodwill and support of the Chinese government".

"The Chinese government is providing life saving anti-cholera drugs worth one million yuan to help contain the spread of the epidemic," the head of the embassy's political section Xu Zhou told AFP.

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