

Cholera outbreak in northeast Afghanistan

August 13 2013

A cholera outbreak at a village in northeast Afghanistan has infected 1,492 people, killed a young woman and left another 100 in critical condition, a provincial official said Tuesday.

Abdul Marouf Rasekh, a spokesman for the governor of Badakhshan province, said the outbreak began three days ago and was restricted to one town that has been quarantined.

When it first appeared in the mountainous village of Chappa in the Darayen district, Rasekh said it infected 850 people but quickly spread until the quarantine was put in place.

"The village has been quarantined and they are all being treated," he said, adding that "treating such diseases is not easy."

Rasekh said the source of the infection had been traced to a single spring of water that supplies the entire town's drinking water. Health authorities were bringing in water from nearby towns until the problem was solved.

He said that 36 of the most serious cases have been taken to a hospital in the provincial capital of Faizabad and that the sole death so far was an 18-year old woman.

Afghanistan has had cholera outbreaks in the past but they are not common. Typhoid and other intestinal diseases and parasites are far more common but not as deadly if left untreated.

Access to clean drinking water is a problem in rural Afghanistan and health care is rudimentary in large parts of the country, which has one of the world's lowest [life expectancies](#) at 50. Only 12 percent of Afghans living in rural areas have access to clean drinking water, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The World Health Organization says cholera is virulent but [mortality rates](#) are low if treated quickly.

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