

Haiti gets help for mosquito-borne virus outbreak

September 10 2014



Haiti's Health Minister Florence Duperval Guillaume, left, leads a tour for first lady Sophia Martelly through a warehouse housing a donation of kits to treat chikungunya, in the Cite Soleil slum, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Wednesday, Sept. 10, 2014. The U.S. medical aid group Direct Relief donated millions of kits to treat the mosquito-borne virus that has sickened tens of thousands across the Caribbean over the past year. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)

Haiti has received a large shipment of treatment packets to help it deal with an outbreak of the mosquito-borne virus known as chikungunya

amid a rainy season expected to result in a surge of new cases in the country, officials said Wednesday.

The treatment kits provided by medical aid group Direct Relief include oral rehydration packs, mosquito spray and the pain reliever acetaminophen for a disease that has sickened tens of thousands of people in recent months.

Haiti is receiving 6.1 million Defined Daily Doses, considered enough to treat 1 million people.

Haitian First Lady Sophia Martelly and Health Minister Florence Duperval Guillaume announced the delivery at a ceremony in Cite Soleil and said the kits would be distributed to treatment centers around the country.

Haiti has had more than 65,000 suspected cases of chikungunya this year, according to the Pan American Health Organization. Health authorities have said many cases in the country have likely gone unreported since so many people do not have access to health care. The neighboring Dominican Republic has reported more than 430,000 cases.

Chikungunya has spread rapidly throughout the Western Hemisphere since the first locally transmitted case was documented in late 2013. After emerging in the Caribbean, it has since reached the United States and parts of Central and South America. The government of Colombia announced Wednesday that it was preparing for the imminent arrival of the virus and projected up to 700,000 cases in the first four months of the outbreak.



Haiti's Health Minister Florence Duperval Guillaume reads the information on a box in a warehouse housing a donation of kits to treat chikungunya, in the Cite Soleil slum, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Wednesday, Sept. 10, 2014. The millions of kits donated by the U.S. medical group Direct Relief, include oral rehydration packs, mosquito spray and the pain reliever acetaminophen for a disease that has sickened tens of thousands of people in recent months. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)

There is no cure for chikungunya, but the treatment kits can address symptoms that include high fever, severe headaches and debilitating joint pain.

Direct Relief, based in Santa Barbara, California, said the treatment kits sent to Haiti comprised of \$2.6 million in donated products from Canadian pharmaceutical company Apotex and seven other companies. The aid group says it has channeled more than \$125 million in private-sector aid to Haitian hospitals and clinics since the January 2010

earthquake that devastated the capital and parts of southern Haiti.

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Citation: Haiti gets help for mosquito-borne virus outbreak (2014, September 10) retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-09-haiti-mosquito-borne-virus-outbreak.html>

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