

Food poisoning sickens hundreds of Cambodian pupils

March 28 2015

More than 600 Cambodian villagers, mostly school children, fell ill after eating contaminated food provided to a school during an anti-child labour event, health officials said Saturday.

The children started to fall ill after they were given bread filled with meat and vegetables at an education event hosted by a local NGO in northwestern Siem Reap province.

"We suspect the vegetables put in the bread are contaminated," Kros Sarat, chief of Siem Reap health department, told AFP.

The victims suffered diarrhoea and vomiting, local health centre director Um Sarat told AFP by telephone.

"Most of them were rushed to the local health centre on Saturday morning. Those in a more serious condition were sent on to hospital," he said.

Pictures published in local media showed hundreds of poorly children sleeping in tents receiving IV drips.

Officials said a total of 615 people had been taken ill, 170 of whom were adults.

Mass outbreaks of food poisoning are not uncommon in Cambodia.

Checks on food are rare in impoverished Cambodia, where safety regulations are lax and there is little health and safety culture.

In October, nearly 300 Cambodians, mainly children, were taken ill after eating homemade noodle soup at an engagement ceremony in a remote village in central Kampong Thom province.

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