

UN struggles to stem new rise in Haiti cholera cases

May 7 2015

A deadly cholera epidemic in Haiti that experts say was introduced by UN peacekeepers from Nepal is on the rise, with hundreds of new cases registered weekly, a UN official said Thursday.

Pedro Medrano, the UN coordinator for Haiti's [cholera outbreak](#), said years of work to beat back the disease are in jeopardy as donors turn away from the emergency.

"Unfortunately because of lack of resources and of the [rainy season](#), in the last six months we have moved from a thousand new cases a month to almost a thousand a week," Medrano told AFP in an interview.

The UN official predicts more than 50,000 new cases this year, up from 28,000 last year, the lowest level since the outbreak began in October 2010.

More than 8,800 people have died from cholera and 736,000 Haitians have been infected since the outbreak that expert studies have shown was brought to the island by Nepalese troops.

Studies traced the bacteria to the sewage system of a peacekeeping base run by the Nepalese that contaminated a river used by many Haitians for drinking water.

This year alone, 113 people have died and there have been 11,721 new cases in Haiti but there are fears that with the start of the rainy season in

June, the number of cases will soar.

At the same time, many aid agencies have left Haiti and treatment centers have shut down.

"The risk here is that all the progress we made so far can be lost," said Medrano.

"For the donor community this is not an emergency, and because it is not considered an emergency, the money, the resources we need to deal with the humanitarian crisis are not coming," he said.

Left unchecked, the epidemic could spread to neighboring Dominican Republic or Cuba, he warned.

The United Nations has officially refused to recognize its responsibility for the cholera [outbreak](#) despite lawsuits brought by the victims, but it is leading an effort to rid Haiti of the disease.

The United Nations is hoping to vaccinate 300,000 people this year, but it needs \$1.9 million for the effort.

About \$37 million dollars in total are needed to fight [cholera](#) this year.

© 2015 AFP

Citation: UN struggles to stem new rise in Haiti cholera cases (2015, May 7) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-05-struggles-stem-haiti-cholera-cases.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.