

WHO urges assistance to African nations facing cholera

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Scanning electron microscope image of *Vibrio cholerae*. Credit: Wikipedia

A World Health Organization official in Africa is urging more support to countries facing cholera outbreaks, saying the disease has the potential to "quickly explode" as rainfall persists in some areas.

Dr. Patrick Otim, a WHO official monitoring emergencies, said [cholera outbreaks](#) were potentially dangerous because of the short incubation period and the involvement of contaminated water sources.

"So it's very important that we support these [countries](#) to be able to respond at the point where the outbreaks have not become too big," he said.

Cholera has been reported in 12 of Africa's 54 countries. South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe are the latest to detect cases. Malawi, with hundreds of cholera deaths, faces its worst outbreak ever.

The island nation of Madagascar, the victim of two destructive cyclones this year, also faces a concerning outbreak.

Cholera is a water-borne disease. Increased rainfall in countries such as Malawi is slowing control efforts in some areas, said Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO regional director for Africa.

The WHO has warned that [climate change](#) could make cholera epidemics more common, as the bacteria that causes the disease can reproduce more quickly in warmer water.

So far 3.4 million doses of the oral cholera vaccine have been sent to Kenya, Congo and Mozambique, the southern African nation where cases are increasing, Moeti said.

Africa faces a shortage of the oral cholera vaccine amid global demand. Other countries facing outbreaks of cholera include Lebanon and Syria.

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