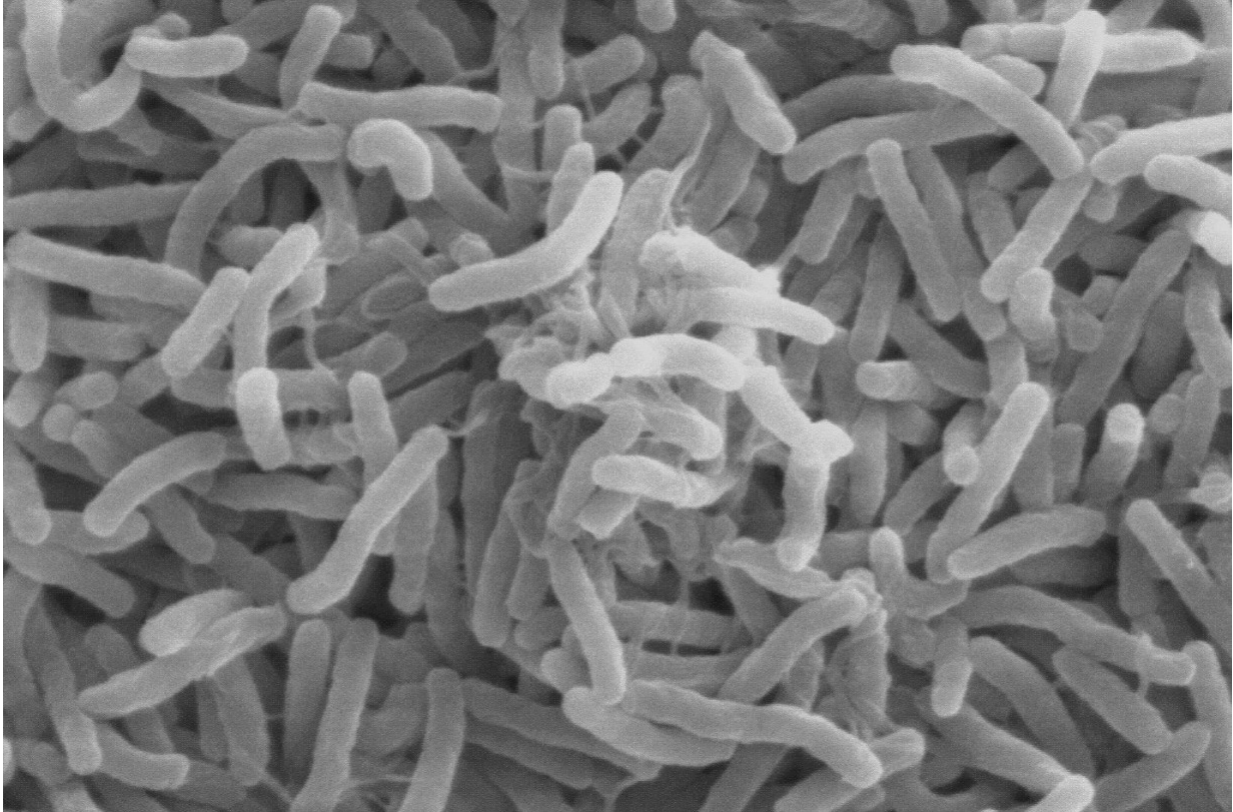


Cholera claims 23 lives in Ethiopia: charity

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

Cholera has claimed the lives of at least 23 people in eastern Ethiopia, an area hit by major flooding, Save the Children said Thursday, warning that the epidemic could become uncontrollable across the region.

Ethiopia, along with neighboring Kenya and Somalia, have been battered

by [heavy rains](#) linked to the El Niño weather pattern, triggering [flash floods](#) that have killed scores of people across the Horn of Africa and displaced around two million.

Save the Children said that in two weeks there had been 772 confirmed cases of cholera and 23 deaths in the eastern Somali region of Ethiopia which borders Somalia.

In the worst-hit district of Kelafo, the charity said its teams were reporting a surge in the disease among children under five, who account for nearly 80 percent of confirmed cases.

"A deadly combination of flooded water systems, a lack of basic sanitation services and damaged water treatment plants has driven the spike in the deadly illness," the UK-based charity said in a statement.

It said at least 91 districts across Ethiopia have reported cases of cholera, a disease contracted from a bacterium generally transmitted through contaminated food or water.

"Save the Children is warning the [cholera outbreak](#) in Ethiopia and across the Horn of Africa could spiral out of control if swift action isn't taken by government and donors to provide clean drinking water and [sanitation facilities](#) for communities forced out of their homes by floodwaters."

At least 57 people have been killed in the floods in Ethiopia and more than 600,000 displaced, according to the UN humanitarian agency OCHA.

Another 101 people have lost their lives in Somalia and 120 in Kenya, according to government figures.

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