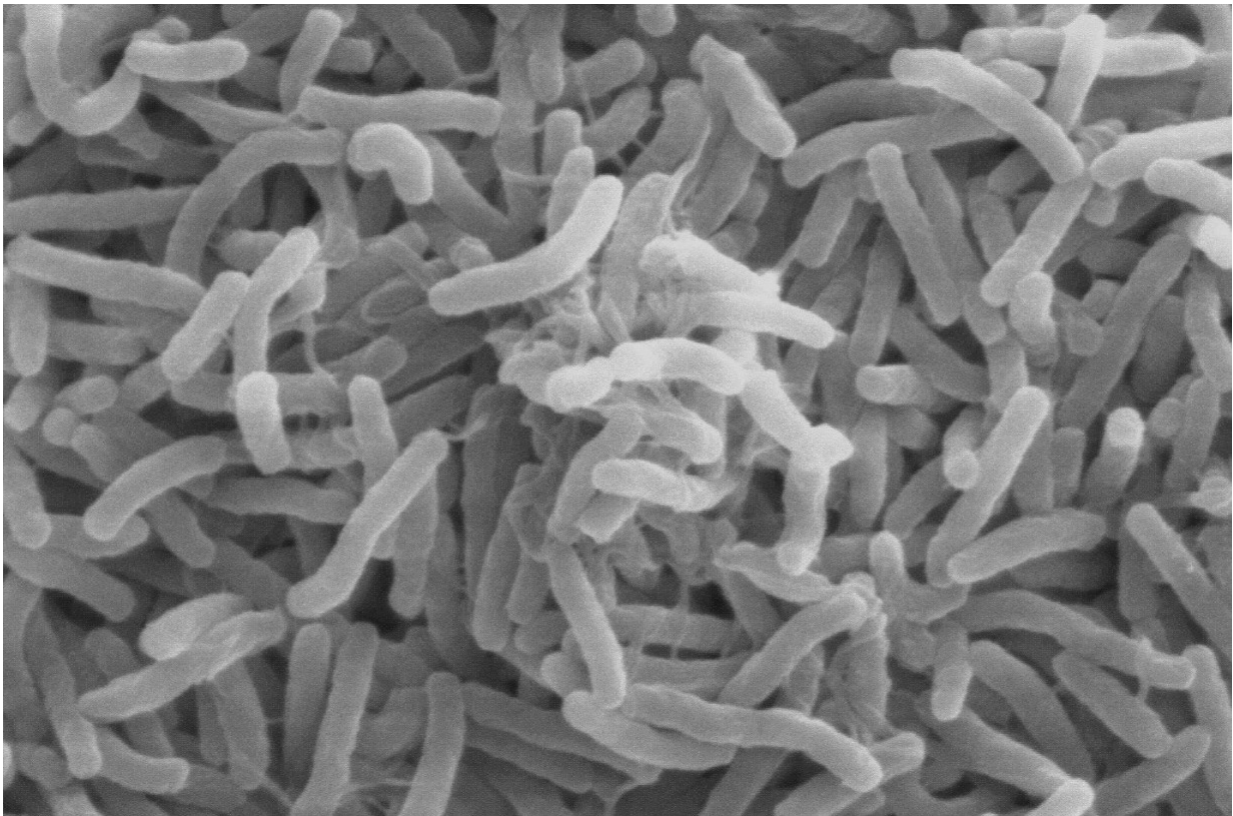


Zambia steps up anti-cholera campaign as deaths mount

December 28 2023



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

Zambia stepped up a campaign to halt a surge in cholera cases Thursday as the number of deaths this year crept toward 100.

With [heavy rains](#) speeding the spread of the bacterial [disease](#), Health Minister Sylvia Masebo said five deaths and 111 new cases had been reported in 24 hours.

The national health institute said there have now been at least 93 cholera deaths this year, mainly in an outbreak that started in October.

"Our [nation](#) faces a significant health challenge," Masebo told reporters.

The new cases were the highest daily total this year, underscoring worries over the disease that is mainly spread through contaminated food and water.

Masebo said the fatality rate in the current outbreak of about three percent of cases was of "grave concern". Internationally, the [fatality rate](#) is less than one percent.

Masebo called for tougher hygiene standards in homes while Water Minister Mike Mposha said more chlorine would be distributed to worst-hit areas to decontaminate water and public zones.

Neighboring Zimbabwe has also declared a state of emergency over cholera. It has reported more than 250 deaths since February, according to the UN's World Health Organization.

The WHO has expressed concern over the growing number of cholera cases around the world in recent years, with Africa bearing the brunt.

It has said that the number of reported cholera cases more than doubled from 223,370 in 2021 to 472,697 cases in 2022. The 2023 global figure had already passed 580,000 by September, according to the UN agency.

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