# Zambia further delays school reopening over cholera

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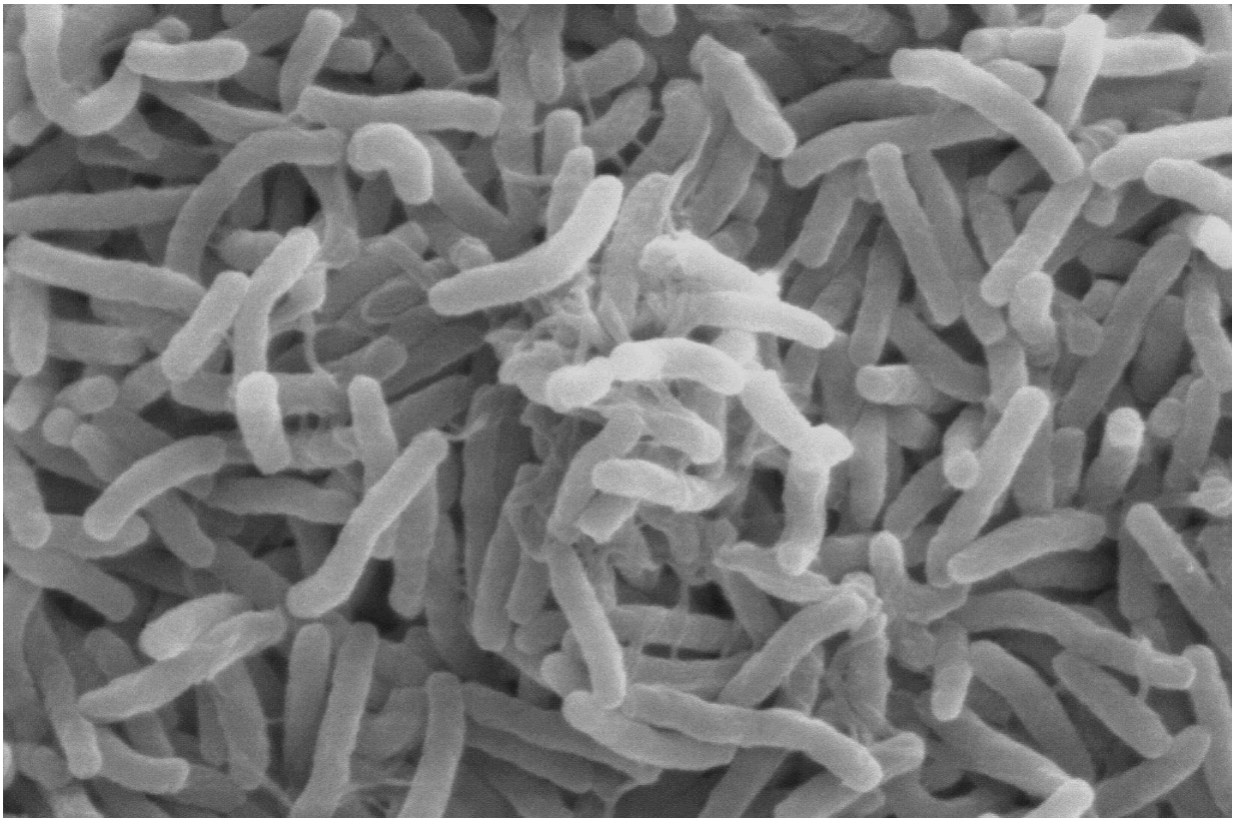

Scanning electron microscope image of Vibrio cholerae. Credit: Wikipedia

Zambia postponed the start of the school year for the second time on Wednesday due to a cholera outbreak that has claimed more than 500 lives.

Schools in the southern African nation were initially due to open on January 8 but last week the government moved the date to January 29.

On Wednesday, it announced a further delay, citing a growing number of cases.

"The ministry of education was guided to further postpone the opening date to February 12, 2024," Education Minister Douglas Syakalima told a press briefing in the capital Lusaka, the epicenter of the outbreak.

Cholera is contracted from bacteria generally transmitted through contaminated food or water.

Zambia has been battling the spread of the deadly disease since October.

The country recorded 438 new cases and six deaths over the past 24 hours, bringing the total death toll to 518, said Health Minister Sylvia Masebo.

Last week, it received the first batch of more than a million oral doses of cholera vaccines from the World Health Organization (WHO) to fight the outbreak.

Masebo said 1.4 million people had received the vaccine.

The ministry has also stepped up measures to halt the spread of cholera, including restricting the number of people attending the burial of a death caused by cholera to five.

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

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