Medical Xpress

Cholera deaths in South Sudan rise, thousands at risk: UN

July 3 2015

At least 29 people have died in a cholera outbreak in war-torn South Sudan with thousands more at risk of infection, the United Nations said Friday.

A total of 484 cholera cases, including 29 deaths—six of them children under five—had been reported by the end of June, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said.

"Up to 5,000 children under age five are at risk of dying from cholera unless urgent action is taken to contain this threat," it said in a statement. "Cholera is particularly dangerous for young children as it causes rapid and severe dehydration due to excessive diarrhoea and vomiting."

The World Health Organization (WHO) and aid workers are carrying out cholera vaccination campaigns. South Sudan's health ministry declared a outbreak of the diarrhoeal disease on June 23, when the number killed hit 18.

The outbreak is believed to have begun in early June in crowded UN bases in the capital Juba and then spread to other parts of the city.

Over 140,000 people have sought shelter in UN camps across the country during 18 months of civil war.

Last year, at least 167 people died in a cholera outbreak that was later contained.

Stamping out the disease, which is transmitted through water or food containing contaminated fecal matter, poses an additional major challenge for the government and aid workers.

Some 4.5 million people, or over one third of the country's 12 million people, face severe food insecurity, according to the UN.

All the cholera cases reported have been in Juba, although tests are being conducted on six suspected cases in areas outside the city.

The civil war began in December 2013 when President Salva Kiir accused his former deputy Riek Machar of planning a coup, setting off a cycle of retaliatory killings that has split the poverty-stricken, landlocked country along ethnic lines.

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Citation: Cholera deaths in South Sudan rise, thousands at risk: UN (2015, July 3) retrieved 25 April 2024 from
https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-07-cholera-deaths-south-sudan-thousands.html

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