

PAHO anticipates cholera outbreak in Haiti

13/10/2016



PORT AU PRINCE, Haiti (CMC) — The Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), has warned that acute diarrheal diseases, including cholera are threatening the population.

Dr Jean Luc Poncelet, PAHO's Representative in Haiti, said the organisation has set up field operations with the country's Ministry of Health in the towns of Jeremie and Les Cayes.

"Hurricane Matthew has devastated parts of the country, in the Southwest, it is estimated that 80 percent of the houses have lost their roofs, and most hospitals suffered major damages. At least 100 facilities have lost their ability to function," Poncelet said.

"Before the hurricane, we had serious problems of access to health, water and sanitation, and cases of cholera," he added. "So when the water supply is interrupted, cholera will increase. We are seriously concerned about an epidemic of cholera, and that's why the Ministry of Health with our assistance is taking all measures possible to avoid that happening."

To date, multinational teams of experts have been deployed to support the government's efforts against cholera outbreaks. Groups were sent to Jeremie, Les Cayes and Port-au-Prince to support humanitarian operations and restore the capacity of health services and systems.

Poncelet said PAHO is working with the Haitian Ministry of Health to increase the availability of medicines and medical supplies, and cooperating in the organization and planning of the health response to possible outbreaks.

Experts in emergencies and disasters, health services, epidemiological surveillance, logistics, transport and communication have been deployed from PAHO's Haiti office, its Washington headquarters, and other offices.

With scattered outbreaks of cholera confirmed and in anticipation of an increase in the number of cases, on

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Published on Cuba Si (<http://cubasi.cu>)

Sunday, PAHO sent shipments of cholera kits containing oral rehydration solutions, catheters and water chlorination treatments to attend patients with acute diarrhea and cholera.

Poncelet said donations have already started to pour into Haiti, with a French cargo jet arriving on Tuesday with 69 tons of supplies.

France's Ambassador to Haiti, Elisabeth Beton said her government was interested in collaborating with Haiti's national response, and sent two water purification stations, for emergency situations, six units for basic sanitation and hygiene, 13 tons of medical and first aid supplies, and cholera treatment kits, PAHO said.

Haiti's Minister of External Relations and Culture Pierrot Delienne thanked the international community for the donations, and the European Union's ambassador in Haiti said the donation resulted from good coordination between PAHO and national and international officials.

PAHO also said a Dutch ship arrived with supplies and experts to rehabilitate hospitals.

Additionally, shipments of donations from Colombia and the Dominican Republic, among others, have arrived in the French-speaking Caribbean country.
