



Cholera risk assessment mission to internally displaced people camps in White Nile State. Photo credit: WHO/Lorenzo PezzoliKhartoum, 17 August 2015 -- The Federal and State Ministries of Health, with the support of WHO, conducted an assessment mission last week to enhance country support in the face of a potential cholera outbreak and determine the level of preparedness in internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps hosting over 198 000 people from South Sudan.

Ministry officials and WHO experts focused during their mission on the camps in White Nile State where approximately 90 000 IDPs are being accommodated. The joint team carried out a comprehensive cholera risk assessment to facilitate the introduction of oral cholera vaccine in the camps.

“The Ministry of Health is considering the possibility of a pre-emptive use of oral cholera vaccine in the camps as a supplementary measure to early detection, improved access to water and sanitation and health promotion to prevent a possible cholera outbreak,” said Mr Baher Idris Abu Gerda, the Federal Minister of Health in Sudan.

The risk assessment will provide guidance to the health authority in investigating the probability of a cholera outbreak in White Nile State camps. It will also identify vulnerable groups, assess the status of social services and environmental health in the camps (health, water, sanitation and hygiene), support national capacity in efforts to implement a mass cholera vaccination campaign, and enhance incountry monitoring and evaluation capacity.

“Preventing cholera in the camps or any other setting can be best achieved through effective surveillance for early detection, sufficient access to clean drinking-water and to have

appropriate sanitation and hygiene facilities,” explained Dr Somaia Okuoed, the State Minister for Health.

The assessment, moreover, indicated that a potential cholera outbreak in the IDPs camps is considered high given the living conditions and poor sanitation and basic services. The mission recommended, however, that the risk of cholera in the camps could be reduced if an oral cholera vaccine could be introduced on time to supplement existing surveillance, water, sanitation and hygiene interventions.

“WHO is working with Federal Ministry of Health officials to prepare a formal application to request the necessary doses of cholera vaccine from the global stockpile,” said Dr Naeema Al Gasseer, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Sudan, adding that the situation was especially urgent given the considerable degree of overcrowding in the camps which was resulting in decreased access to health care and water and sanitation.

The Federal Ministry of Health with the technical support of WHO has developed a comprehensive cholera preparedness and response plan to prevent and contain any potential cholera outbreak in the camps and other high-risk areas in Sudan.

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