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**BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)  
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

## **Zimbabwe – Cholera Outbreak**

Fact Sheet #1, Fiscal Year (FY) 2009

December 12, 2008

### **BACKGROUND AND KEY DEVELOPMENTS**

- Since August 2008, cholera has spread through 9 of Zimbabwe’s 10 provinces. As of December 11, cholera had caused nearly 800 deaths, with more than 16,400 cases reported, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). On November 18, Médecins Sans Frontières reported that an estimated 1.4 million Zimbabweans could be at risk if cholera continues to spread.
- A breakdown in water and sanitation infrastructure has exacerbated Zimbabwe’s cholera outbreak, and the nation’s collapsed health system is unable to respond adequately. On December 3, the Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) Health Minister requested international assistance to respond to the cholera outbreak.
- The cholera outbreak has spread to border areas of neighboring South Africa, Botswana, and Mozambique, according to OCHA.
- USAID/OFDA will provide \$6.2 million for emergency assistance in response to the cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe. To augment ongoing response efforts, USAID/OFDA activated a Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) on December 10 to monitor and assess humanitarian conditions, identify priority programming needs, and facilitate humanitarian coordination and information sharing.

<b>NUMBERS AT A GLANCE</b>	<b>SOURCE</b>	
<b>Total Reported Cholera Cases in Zimbabwe</b>	16,403	OCHA – December 10, 2008
<b>Total Reported Cholera Deaths in Zimbabwe</b>	783	OCHA – December 10, 2008
<b>Reported Cholera Case Fatality Rate in Zimbabwe</b>	4.8 percent	OCHA – December 10, 2008

### **FY 2009 HUMANITARIAN FUNDING PLEDGED TO ZIMBABWE FOR THE CHOLERA OUTBREAK**

**USAID/OFDA Assistance to Zimbabwe .....\$6,200,000**  
**Total USAID Humanitarian Assistance to Zimbabwe for the Cholera Outbreak .....\$6,200,000**

### **CURRENT SITUATION**

- The currently reported case fatality rate of 4.8 percent in Zimbabwe is substantially above the emergency threshold of 1 percent employed by relief agencies. USAID/DART staff have received unconfirmed reports of case fatality rates of up to 50 percent in some isolated areas. USAID/DART staff and relief agencies have expressed concern that cholera rates may rise with the onset of the rainy season in the coming weeks, as rains typically exacerbate the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera.
- On December 10, the USAID/DART public health advisor reported that cholera rates are declining in current hot spots but are increasing in new locations. High-density, peri-urban areas with limited access to clean water remain particularly vulnerable to increased cholera rates. Limited information flow from rural clinics impedes the GOZ Ministry of Health and humanitarian organizations from gauging trends in rural areas. In addition, people who do not seek care outside the home may not be included in official statistics.
- Hyperinflation and a shortage of basic goods have resulted in a lack of access to sugar and salt, both of which could be used to assist with community-based oral rehydration to treat and mitigate the effects of cholera.
- On December 9, OCHA reported 708 cases and eight deaths in South Africa’s Limpopo Province, which borders Zimbabwe. According to media reports on December 11, the provincial government of Limpopo Province declared a disaster due to a cholera outbreak in Vhembe District. Within the district, the border town of Musina serves as a primary destination for Zimbabweans seeking medical treatment in South Africa. On December 11, USAID/OFDA’s principal regional advisor based in Pretoria, South Africa, travelled to Musina to assess the situation.

### ***Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management***

- On December 10, USAID/DART staff reported that insufficient information flow is preventing a targeted and effective humanitarian response to the cholera outbreak.
- The U.N. World Health Organization (WHO) recently deployed a high-level, seven-person team, including a USAID/OFDA-funded epidemiologist, to Zimbabwe to improve coordination of the cholera response.

- USAID/OFDA will support information coordination through the U.N. health and WASH clusters to improve data collection, analysis, and dissemination, allowing humanitarian organizations to direct expertise and resources where most needed.

### **WASH**

- According to relief agencies, the breakdown of Zimbabwe’s water, sewage, and sanitation systems due to aging and poorly maintained infrastructure is exacerbating the spread of cholera. USAID/DART staff report that many high-density urban areas lack clean water for months at a time and that residents obtain drinking water from contaminated shallow wells.
- USAID/OFDA’s WASH interventions will emphasize community health and hygiene promotion and education activities, provision of water purification tablets, provision of clean water through water tankering, and rehabilitation of boreholes. USAID/OFDA WASH activities will target areas with high reported cholera rates, particularly high-density, peri-urban districts. In addition, USAID/OFDA will support hygiene promotion activities at a national level to mitigate the spread of the disease.

### **Emergency Relief Supplies**

- Zimbabwe’s health care system remains unable to cope adequately with the outbreak due to collapsing infrastructure, lack of salaries for medical staff, and inadequate food and soap for medical staff and patients. USAID/DART staff report that Harare’s hospitals have closed and that additional urban hospitals lack sufficient resources, resulting in residents traveling to rural health facilities and potentially transmitting cholera to new areas.
- USAID/OFDA will provide emergency relief supplies, including soap, water containers, and oral rehydration solution packets, for individuals with cholera.

### **USAID HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOR ZIMBABWE’S CHOLERA OUTBREAK**

- Following recommendations from the USAID/DART, USAID/OFDA plans to commit \$6.2 million in emergency assistance for Zimbabwe’s cholera outbreak. USAID/OFDA’s assistance will target provision of emergency relief supplies to affected populations, humanitarian coordination and information management, and WASH interventions.
- USAID/OFDA’s assistance is in addition to the more than \$4.6 million that USAID/OFDA has provided for emergency WASH programs in Zimbabwe since October 2007. The U.S. Government has provided more than \$226 million in humanitarian assistance for Zimbabwe’s ongoing health and food crisis since October 2007.

### **USAID HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO ZIMBABWE FOR THE CHOLERA OUTBREAK IN FY 2009**

<i>Implementing Partner</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Amount</i>
<b>USAID/OFDA ASSISTANCE<sup>1</sup></b>			
Multiple	Emergency Relief Supplies; Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene	Affected Areas	\$6,200,000
<b>TOTAL USAID/OFDA</b>			<b>\$6,200,000</b>
<b>TOTAL USAID HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO ZIMBABWE FOR THE CHOLERA OUTBREAK IN FY 2009</b>			<b>\$6,200,000</b>

<sup>1</sup> USAID/OFDA funding represents anticipated or actual obligated amounts as of December 12, 2008.

### **PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION**

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for cholera response efforts in Zimbabwe can be found at [www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, warehouse space, etc); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietary, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - USAID: [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov) – Keyword: Donations
  - The Center for International Disaster Information: [www.cidi.org](http://www.cidi.org) or (703) 276-1914
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

USAID/OFDA bulletins appear on the USAID web site at [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/humanitarian\\_assistance/disaster\\_assistance/](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/)