

## Democratic Republic of the Congo (the): Cholera fight in the Democratic Republic of Congo gets fresh USD 9.1 million

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(Kinshasa / New York, 26 January 2012): The humanitarian community in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) received today a new financial boost of USD 9.1 million from the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund to fight off cholera, a water-borne disease that has affected over 22,000 people and killed over 500 over the past year.

Since January 2011, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and the Congolese government have teamed up to stop the spread of a disease that has hit eight of the country's 11 provinces. Over 22,000 cases have been recorded over the past 12 months. The majority of cases, more than 14,000, have occurred in the eastern provinces where cholera is endemic. In recent weeks however, there has been a spike in cases and close to 18 percent of the total caseload has been recorded since mid-December. Beyond the actual caseload, thousands more are collateral victims of the disease and its impact can be felt in agricultural and commercial activities, school attendance, family well-being and the livelihood of households that are already among the world's poorest.

With over 5,500 cases reported, the eastern province of South Kivu has taken the heaviest toll, accounting for 25 per cent of all cases. The capital Kinshasa, Province Orientale, Bandundu and Equateur located along the Congo River have also been struggling through their worst outbreak in the past 10 years. The Congo River is a major commercial route and vector of the disease. With a population of some 10 million and a dysfunctional water and sanitation system, Kinshasa recorded 248 cases during a four-week span in December, amounting to close to 25 percent of the caseload the city had known up till then. In Ituri, Province Orientale, some 500 people were affected by the disease between mid-December 2011 and mid-January 2012. The disease risks becoming endemic in the provinces along the river if the response fails, aid workers fear.

Across the country, aid organizations have put together a multi-pronged response strategy, but they have not yet succeeded in curtailing the disease. The response has included establishing cholera treatment centres; providing water chlorination points and refurbishing water points; conducting awareness campaigns using the media; training of medical staff; disinfecting boats. The UN and NGOs expect the CERF funding to boost the response to the disease that is compounding an already grave humanitarian situation for millions of Congolese.

“Despite all our previous efforts, we have been one step behind the disease. This new funding will allow us to reinforce the entire response chain”, Humanitarian Coordinator Fidele Sarassoro said today.

The United Nations Children Fund and the World Health Organization will receive \$4.4 million and \$4.7 million respectively. But agencies will work with a number of international and national NGOs who are instrumental in the frontline response.

Aid organizations say they are confident that they will beat this emergency, but added that durable solutions are required and that the Congolese authorities will need to prioritise investments in clean water, sanitation and hygiene.

Aid organizations estimate that at its worst, the disease could affect some 21 million people.

The CERF was created by the United Nations in 2005 to pre-position funding to respond in a timely fashion to humanitarian crises. Last year, it allocated \$4 million to fight cholera in the provinces along the Congo River.

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs:

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27 Jan 2012

**CHOLERA FIGHT IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO GETS FRESH  
USD 9.1 MILLION**

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