

PRESS RELEASE

The United Nations and Humanitarian Partners Call for \$45.3 Million to Provide Life-Saving Aid to People Devastated by the Cholera Outbreak in Malawi

(Lilongwe, 20 February 2023): The United Nations and humanitarian partners in Malawi today launched a Flash Appeal to assist 4 million people, including 56,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, who have been hardest-hit by, and are at highest-risk of, cholera, in support of the Government-led response.

The appeal—which calls for US\$45.3 million for the next five months—comes as the numbers of cholera cases and deaths in Malawi have increased exponentially since the beginning of January 2023, worsening what is already the deadliest cholera outbreak in the country’s history.

“Despite all the efforts taken since the first cholera case was reported in Malawi nearly one year ago, the situation remains of grave concern. Every day, the number of cases increases, and more people die,” said the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Malawi, Rebecca Adda-Dontoh. “However, the good news is that, while cholera is highly transmissible, it is also easily treatable when cases are caught early and preventable when communities have access to clean water and good sanitation.”

The Malawi Cholera Flash Appeal—which is launched to coincide with Government of Malawi’s Cholera campaign—aims to address the most immediate needs of people impacted by the outbreak through an integrated response that brings together health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), while ensuring communities are engaged, prepared and supported to respond to and reduce cholera. Acknowledging that the outbreak has taken a devastating toll on the hardest-hit communities, the Flash Appeal also calls for support to essential health, nutrition, education and protection services in affected and high-risk locations.

Remarking at the launch of the Flash Appeal, Ms. Adda-Dontoh said, “I had the privilege of joining His Excellency President Chakwera and Honorable Minister of Health in visiting three cholera treatment centres in Lilongwe last week, where I spoke with health-care workers who requested more support to treat the endless flow of patients they are receiving. When left untreated, cholera can kill in less than twelve hours, but with simple IV fluids, most patients are rapidly on the road to recovery. No one should die of cholera in 2023 and the world can, and must, step-up to help Malawians in their time of need.”

The current cholera outbreak, which started in March 2022, has affected all 29 districts of Malawi and is the largest outbreak in the country in the past two decades. The number of cases increased dramatically at the start of the rainy season in November 2022 and, as of 18 February 2023, nearly 45,000 cases had been reported, including nearly 1,450 deaths. Experts anticipate that, unless urgent, intensified action is taken to scale-up the response, between 64,000 and 100,000 cases could be reported in the next three months.

The UN and its partners in Malawi urgently call on donors to fund the Flash Appeal and enable them to work swiftly in support of the Government-led response to contain the outbreak and prevent further, avoidable, loss of life.

For more information, please contact:

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