

# Nigeria struggles to contain cholera

Efforts to contain a cholera outbreak that has struck more than 1,000 people in refugee camps in northeast Nigeria are being hampered because people are failing to report suspected cases to authorities, a UN official says.

Health officials in Borno, the northeastern state at the epicentre of both an insurgency by Islamist militant group Boko Haram and the disease outbreak, said the number of suspected cholera cases had jumped to 1,626 as of Monday.

Forty people had died, they said, up from the 23 reported by the UN on September 6.

About 1.8-million have fled their homes because of violence or food shortages, UN agencies say. The rainy season has spread disease in densely populated camps, where many people live in unsanitary conditions. Most cholera-related deaths have been recorded at the Muna Garage camp, on the outskirts of Borno's state capital, Maiduguri.

Speaking from the camp, UN Children's Fund co-ordinator Souleymane Sow said the "main problem" in containing the outbreak was a lack of referrals.

"When the people are sick they don't proactively report to the clinics," he said, adding that aid workers were visiting homes in the camps to bring the sick to a treatment centre.

Cholera is an acute infection spread by contaminated food and water. It can be easily treated with an oral rehydration solution if caught early, but can kill in hours if left untreated.

Borno state said there were 945 suspected cases in the Muna area, 537 in Dikwa and 144 in Monguno as of Monday.

"The number of cases has increased exponentially in Monguno," it said in a briefing note, adding that cases were also rising in Dikwa.

Reuters

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