

CHOLERA OUTBREAK

PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday 5th January 2018



On the 6th of October, 2017 a Cholera Outbreak was declared in Lusaka. Since then sporadic cases have been recorded across the country with only three fatalities recorded outside Lusaka. ***Cholera is an infectious disease that causes severe watery diarrhea, which can lead to dehydration and even death if untreated.*** It is caused by eating food or drinking water contaminated with a bacterium called *Vibrio cholerae*.

The Government is currently taking steps to curb the outbreak, among which include, distribution of clean water in the cholera epicenters, increased health inspections of food outlets, the use of military personnel to assist in cleaning up formal and informal trading places and the suspension of the opening of all learning institutions across the country. The above measures taken are all necessary and must be aided by the citizenry personal efforts to maintain hygiene and adhere to guidelines set by the Ministry of Health to ensure the eradication of the outbreak.

Another development resulted in the Minister of Health Chitalu Chilufya invoking provisions of the Public Health Act and have since issued a Statutory Instrument 79 Public Health Act on cholera affected areas. The move was basically to enhance powers for the Ministry to carry out public health interventions to stop the spread of cholera by addressing the determinants of the epidemic from Soweto market and other markets including contaminated foods consumed from the streets.

Another intervention is that oral cholera vaccinations are to commence and the Ministry of Health is working with the United Nations (UN) targeting 4 million people for the vaccine. The citizens are hereby encouraged to take up this vaccine and be shielded from this epidemic.

The outbreak does not only pose a health risk but also poses an economic risk. The cleaning up of the informal trading areas has brought many small businesses to a halt. This has an impact on SMEs that depend on Lusaka's Central Business District (CBD) for trade. However, the health cost of the outbreak far outweighs any losses in trade, the outbreak is severe and as of January 4th, 2018, cholera had claimed 51 lives according to the Ministry of Health. Hence, SMEs businesses that mostly run by the head of their households must not continue or risk to trade within the markets at the expense of their lives.

CBD traders are therefore encouraged to exercise patience as the cleaning up is conducted and the trading areas are disinfected until declared safe. Immediate measures once CBD markets are reopened for trade is to ensure that mobile lavatories are placed strategically across CBD and are made affordable to encourage usage. Clean water access points must also be placed within the CBD to help curb the disease. Finally, the general citizenry is encouraged to strictly adhere to guidance from the relevant authorities and fully participate in all programs and campaigns aimed at ending the Cholera Outbreak.



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