

UN health agency rushes to prevent malaria, cholera outbreaks in flood-hit Sierra Leone

21 August 2017 – The United Nations health agency is working closely with the Government of Sierra Leone to prevent the spread of infectious diseases such as malaria and cholera in the wake of last week's mudslides and flooding in the country's capital, Freetown.

"The [mudslides have caused extreme suffering](#) and loss of life, and we must do all we can to protect the population from additional health risks," said Alexander Chimbaru, Officer in Charge of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) in Sierra Leone, in a press release.

With damage to water and sanitation facilities, residents of affected areas are particularly vulnerable to outbreaks of pre-existing infectious diseases including malaria and diarrheal conditions such as typhoid and cholera. The most recent cholera outbreak in the country occurred in 2012.

Cholera response kits, including rapid testing tools, are being distributed to areas at risk, while health and community workers are being trained to recognize the signs of priority diseases.

"While the Government and WHO are working hard to strengthen health services in the affected areas, we also urge the population to take the following precautions to help avoid a possible outbreak: hand washing, drinking only water that has been properly boiled or treated, use of latrines for sanitation, and adherence to good food hygiene practices," added Dr. Chimbaru.

Around 500 people are known to have died as a result of the flooding and mudslides that devastated whole communities in and around Freetown, and hundreds more are still missing.