

Current major events

Outbreak of Kala Azar in South Sudan

Between January and July 2010, the Ministry of Health of the Government of Southern Sudan (MOH/GOSS) has reported a total of 2114 cases of visceral leishmaniasis (Kala Azar) from 15 locations in the Greater Upper Nile Zone. Ninety-nine (99) of these cases were fatal (CFR 4.7%). The situation has been made worse this year due to inaccessibility caused by heavy flooding in many of the affected areas.

WHO and the MOH/GOSS are working closely with other partners to contain the upsurge. Control measures included surveillance and active case findings, case management, health education and vector control measures. WHO is supporting the government with kits for rapid field diagnoses and the substantial amount of drugs for the treatment of cases.

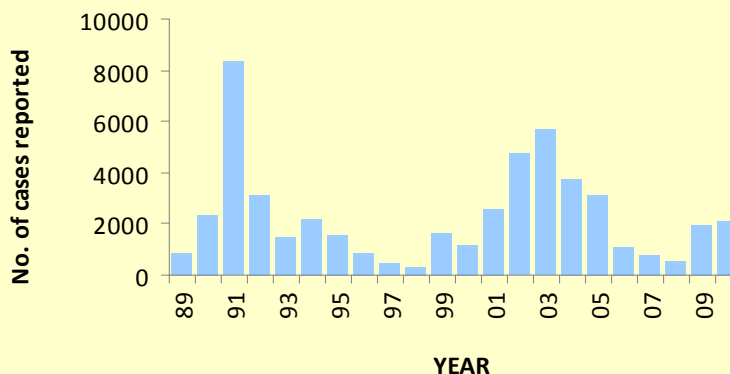
Editorial note

Kala-Azar or visceral leishmaniasis is a chronic systemic disease caused by parasitic protozoas; *leishmania donovani*, *L. infantum*, *L. Tropicana* and *L. chagasi*. The parasites are transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected female sandfly, *Phlebotomous species*. Kala-Azar lowers immunity, causes persistent fever, anaemia, liver and spleen enlargement, loss of body weight and if left untreated, can kill. The vector thrives in cracks and crevices of mud plastered houses, poor housing conditions, heaps of cow dung, holes in anthills, rat burrows, in bushes and vegetations around the houses.

Globally, Kala-Azar is a rural disease of some tropical and sub-tropical countries, occurring in foci in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, the Mediterranean basins, Central and South America. In affected areas the disease occur commonly as scattered cases among infants, children and adolescents but occasionally in epidemic waves. Kala-Azar has been targeted for elimination by the countries of South East Asia and WHO South East Asia Regional Office.

Kala-Azar is endemic in some areas of Sudan. In Southern Sudan the disease is found in multiple endemic foci in Upper Nile, Unity State, Jonglei, Central and Eastern Equatoria states. Lack of effective control programs in Southern Sudan, coupled with weak health infrastructures resulting from the long civil war, have frequently resulted in huge build up of cases that has reached epidemic proportions.

ANNUAL REPORTED NEW CASES OF KALA-AZAR, SOUTHERN SUDAN 1989 - 2010



Tips for Kala Azar Prevention

- Keep the compound clean and clear all the bushes around the house
- Fill up cracks on your wall and keep it in good condition
- Eliminate sandfly breeding places: Ventilate dark moist places within the house
- Apply indoor residual spraying
- Use bed nets

During the last 20 years, there has been 2 such upsurge/outbreaks with peaks in 1991/92 and 2003/2004 (see chart). From the previous experience, it would appear that the current outbreak is following the same pattern. The outbreak continued from last year and seems to be getting worse, despite the effort to contain it. The number of cases reported this year is already exceeding what was reported in the whole of last year, and the peak of transmission has just started. The situation has been made worse by severe flooding in the affected areas. Many patients have no access to health care and the floods also interrupted mobile medical teams from reaching patients.

In the past, efforts were made to train community volunteers and equip them with rapid diagnostic kits and drugs to treat Kala-Azar, so that in a situation like this, patients will have access to treatment. Certainly, there are dangers associated with putting toxic drugs in the hands of poorly trained people, but desperate situations forces desperate measures, and this is one such kind of situation.

Update on outbreaks

Avian Influenza A(H5N1) in Egypt; **Dengue fever** in Yemen; **Floods** in Pakistan; **Cholera** in Afghanistan; **Kala-Azar** in s. Sudan; **Acute Viral Conjunctivitis** in s. Sudan

Current public health events of international concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Avian influenza

Egypt	[111 (35), 31.5%]
Indonesia	[168 (139), 82.7 %]
Viet Nam	[119 (59), 49.6%]
China	[39 (26), 66.6%]
Global total	[504(299), 59.3%]

Dengue fever

Yemen	[9053(11), 0.1%]
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AWD (Cholera)

Yemen	[300 (4), 1.3 %]
Benin	[278(2),0.72%]

Kala-Azar (Visceral Leishmaniasis)

S. Sudan	[2114(99), 4.7%]
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Acute Haemorrhagic Conjunctivitis

S. Sudan	[428(0), 0.0%]
Uganda	[6818(0), 0.0%]

CFR=Case-Fatality Rate