

## Current major event

### Cholera elimination in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

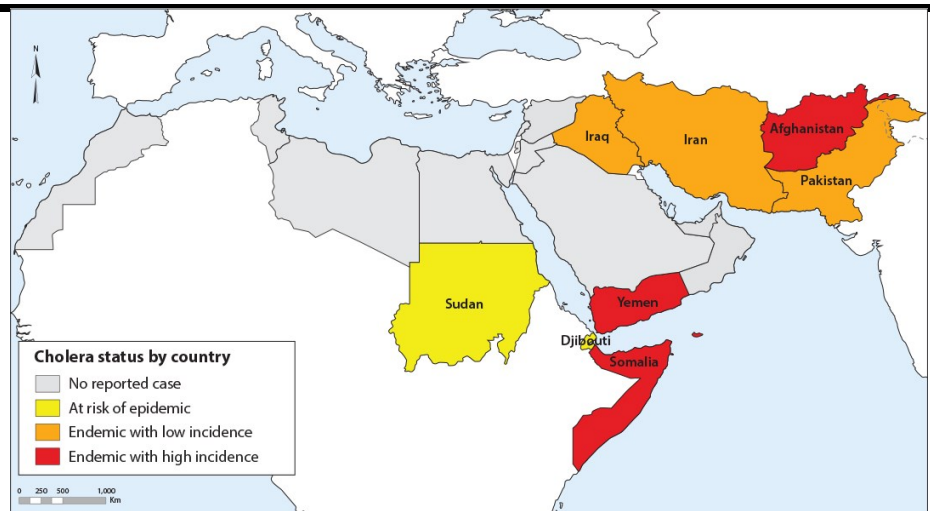
Cholera continued to threaten public health and claim lives in the countries of Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR). During this year, a total of 49,519 suspected cases of cholera including 12 related deaths (CFR: 0.02%) were officially reported to WHO by three Member States in the EMR.

### Editorial note

Cholera remains a continual threat to public health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Countries in crisis or in humanitarian emergencies are specially vulnerable to the growing threats of cholera. The increasing number of vulnerable populations living in unsanitary conditions in these countries, with limited access to safe water and health services facilities remain particularly at risk. Some countries, on the other hand, are also reporting sporadic cases every year due to cases imported from either its neighbouring or other countries.

In view of these recurrent threats, the Regional Office has currently embarked on developing a strategic framework for prevention and control of cholera in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. In order to draw evidence on the burden of cholera in the region, a desk top study has recently been kicked off to estimate the burden and identify the cholera hotspots in the region through review of available literature as well as analysis of surveillance data. Such information will help in strategizing evidence-informed specific cholera prevention and elimination programme in the Eastern Mediterranean Region through use of recently proven interventions such as the use of oral cholera vaccines (OCVs) in the hot spots. The current study will also help the Regional Office to better understand the epidemiology of cholera as well as its severity in the countries that are frequently affected by explosive cholera outbreaks.

Although, almost all the countries of the EMR which traditionally reported cholera outbreaks reported a significant drop in number of cholera cases reported last



Region	Cases*	Deaths	CFR (%)
Afghanistan	45,481	4	-
Pakistan	1218	6	0.49
Somalia	2820	2	0.07
<b>Total</b>	<b>49,519</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0.02</b>

\* includes both suspected and laboratory-confirmed cases

year (2014), there are fears that the changing dynamic of the epidemiology of cholera combined with the emergence of new strains (hybrid strains have possibly been found in some of the countries of EMR last year) along with increased microbial resistance, cholera may re-emerge as the forefront of public health agenda in many of the endemic countries of EMR unless a strategy for elimination of cholera as a major public health risk is developed and implemented urgently.

Following the entering into force of the International Health Regulations (2005), official notification of cholera has not been mandatory. However, countries, often, do not report cholera cases to WHO owing to fear of adverse political and economic ramifications as well as stigma. As proven, safe and effective public health intervention like the two-dose oral cholera vaccines are currently available and some countries outside the region have used the OCVs with promising result, the current study is expected to guide the Regional Office to consider the use of OCVs as part of cholera elimination strategy in addition to investing on improving access to safe water and sanitation for the vulnerable population.

## Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

### MERS-CoV in Saudi Arabia

### Current public health events of international concern [cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

#### Avian Influenza : 2006-2015

Egypt (A/H5N1)	[346 (117), 33.8%]
Egypt (A/H9N2)	[3 (0) ]

#### MERS-CoV: 2012-2015

Saudi Arabia	[1041 (459), 44%]
Jordan	[12 (6), 50%]
Oman	[6 (3), 50% ]
UAE	[75 (10), 13.3% ]
Kuwait	[3 (1), 33.3% ]
Republic of Korea	[186 (36), 19.3% ]
Qatar	[12 (4), 33.3%]
Yemen	[1 (1), 100%]
Egypt	[1 (0), 0%]
Lebanon	[1 (0), 0%]
Iran	[6 (2), 33.3%]

#### Ebola Virus Disease: 2014-2015

Guinea	[3792(2524),66.5%]
Liberia	[10672 (4808),45%]
Sierra Leone	[13426 (4808),35.8%]
UK	[1(0) ]
Nigeria	[20 (8),40%]
Senegal	[1(0)]
Spain	[1(0)]
Italy	[ 1 (0)]
USA	[4(1),25%]
Mali	[8(6),75%]

#### Wild poliovirus: 2014-2015

Pakistan	[325 (0) ]
Afghanistan	[29(0)]