HEALTH

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SOMALIA: 20,000 TEXT MESSAGES SENT TO BOOST CHOLERA PREVENTION EFFORT

Flooding in the town of Beletweyne.

It's a text message that could save a life: "Wash your hands with soap and tell your children to do so." The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for the first time is sending life-saving mobile phone messages to more than 20,000 people in Somalia to quickly pass on cholera prevention tips.

The informative messages encouraging better hygiene practices are being sent to residents after a recent outbreak of cholera in south-central Somalia.
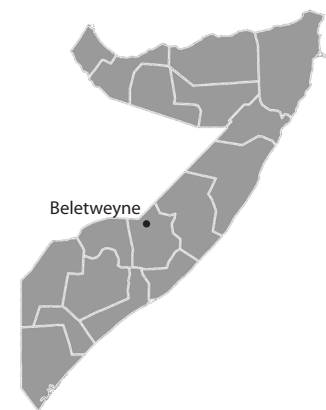
 "Since mid-April more than 1,000 people have died following the outbreak of cholera in Lower Jubba region," said Maurizio Campailla, health program coordinator for the ICRC in Somalia. "We want to send a message directly to communities made vulnerable by years of conflict, the harsh climatic environment and displacement to avoid additional trauma and death."

A messsage from ICRC to encourage better hygiene practice

Since the beginning of April, health officials from the ICRC and Somali Red Crescent Society (SRCS) have treated 1,000 cholera cases a week in Lower Jubba. The ICRC and SRCS have also been broadcasting daily cholera prevention messages on radio stations since early May.

Some areas in Somalia are currently experiencing flooding, exposing those communities to cholera and other water-borne diseases. In Beletweyn, families living in the numerous displacement camps recently had to flee rising water levels. The ICRC and SRCS continue to respond to the emerging humanitarian needs there by providing medical consultations and drugs. Food rations will be distributed to the most vulnerable later in June. Some 850 women-headed households in Beletweyn will be among those receiving the cholera text messages.

Beletweyne

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