

Cholera vaccination campaign kicks off in Yemen



Sanaa, May 7 (RHC)-- The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched a wide-scale vaccination campaign against cholera in Yemen, as the epidemic is expected to further spread due to the rainy season and deteriorating health and sanitation systems in the war-torn country.

The first anti-cholera campaign was launched in cooperation with Yemeni local health authorities in the country's south on Sunday, WHO said in a statement.

The Geneva-based organization said that there have been more than one million suspected cases of cholera in Yemen, and 2,275 recorded deaths since the Saudi-led invasion of the country in 2015.

The oral vaccination campaign, which began in four districts in Aden, is to target nearly 350,000 children at the age of five and coincides with the rainy season, which health workers fear could further spread the killer disease.

"The first four districts are being targeted ... and then the campaign will move towards all the areas at risk in the country, covering at least four million people," Lorenzo Pizzoli, WHO cholera expert, said in a tweet.

The rainy season began in mid-April and will last until the end of August. There is high risk of a second cholera outbreak in Yemen as rainy season begins in the war-torn country. The first four weeks of last

year's rainy season saw the daily number of cholera cases increase 100-fold, accelerating the spread of the disease across the poverty-stricken country.

Contamination of water resources during the season and changing levels of zooplankton and iron in water, which help cholera bacteria survive, were some of the main reasons behind the epidemic.

According to researchers, more than half of Yemen's districts - home to nearly 14 million - are at risk this year.

Cholera is an acute diarrheal infection that is spread through contaminated food or water. It can be effectively treated with the immediate replacement of lost fluids and salts, but without treatment it can be fatal.

Saudi Arabia has led a brutal military campaign against Yemen since March 2015 in a bid to eliminate the Houthi Ansarullah movement and reinstall the Riyadh-friendly former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. The Saudi military campaign has, however, failed to achieve its goals.

The Saudi-led war on the Arab world's poorest country has severely damaged infrastructure and caused medicine shortages in Yemen.

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