



Youth Action Volunteers (YAV)

Press statement

HAS DAR CITY PREVENTED CHOLERA FROM BREAKING OUT?

Cholera breaks out in Dar es Salaam almost the same periods of the year for the same causes for many years now. One would expect authorities to have implemented preventive measures and make cholera history in Dar es Salaam because it kills people every year, it causes pain and shame, it cost money to treat, it adds workload to already poorly staffed health facilities. Last year alone, Dar es Salaam City Council spent 700 m/- to treat cholera during which 11,926 cases and 123 deaths were reported. These resources and lives lost should not be tolerated.

Early and mid April 2007 have seen the rainy season start in Dar es Salaam and Coast regions as expected during this time of the year. Every year, this season has led to an outbreak of cholera in areas that are historically characterized by scarcity of water, high levels of poverty and poor sewage and sanitation facilities. An outbreak of cholera is likely to happen in these areas and cause deaths and morbidity again if measures have not yet been implemented. Preventing cholera is cheaper and easier than treating it

According to the World Health Organization, cholera is caused by use of water, food or beverages which have been contaminated with feces containing the *vibrio cholerae* bacteria. This causes copious, painless, watery diarrhea and vomiting that can quickly lead to severe dehydration and death if treatment is not promptly given. Houseflies also aide in the contamination of water and food that is left exposed.

It is well acknowledged that community members who have better access to clean and safe water sources and functioning sewage and hygienic systems are better able to overcome communicable diseases such as cholera. But even simple measures of good environmental management and sanitation at household level, minimizes the risk of contracting and spreading cholera considerably. Hygienic practices are therefore crucial primary interventions for preventing cholera. These measures include proper use of toilets, washing hands with uncontaminated water after visiting the toilets and before preparing and eating food. Another measure is to boil drinking water, especially from wells and taps. Municipal Councils can disinfect cholera prone areas to prevent it from breaking out.

Youth Action Volunteers (YAV) therefore calls for Municipal Authorities in Dar es Salaam to implement preventive measures to avert or limit another shameful cholera outbreak because prevention is cheaper, easier, and less harmful than cure. We also urge community members to take simple measures to prevent the spread of yet another cholera outbreak. Cholera in Dar es Salaam City is not an accident or emergency disease because all the details are known including when it actually breaks out.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Irenei Kiria'.

Mr. Irenei Kiria
Executive Director, YAV
Friday, 22nd April 2007