

**Forum:** Special Conference on Children’s Rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
**Issue:** Cholera increase in South Sudan  
**Student Officer:** Alessia Mourkogianni  
**Position:** President

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## PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

My name is Alessia Mourkogianni and I will be serving as President of the Special Conference on Children’s Rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century for the 5<sup>th</sup> PS-MUN.

First of all, I am an IB student who aspires to become a lawyer that will defend human rights, specifically the rights of children in less economically developed countries, which is why I was so interested in the position of President of the Special Conference.

I believe that the MUN is a great opportunity for young people to be involved in issues of global importance and that anyone who gets to live this experience even once in their lifetime will be challenged if not completely changed by it. It’s important to consider that young people are the generation that are about to come in power and make great decisions concerning politics and have the power to change the world. The MUN serves as great practice to ensure that when and if they do, they will be successful.

As the President of this committee I will try my best to assist every delegate to the best extent I can and ensure that this experience will be memorable for everyone. This year’s topics should be of high interest and should be appealing to a majority of audiences as there are pressing matters that are awaiting creative and open-minded delegates to seek for solutions.

Kind regards,

Alessia Mourkogianni

## INTRODUCING TOPIC

Cholera is a disease that is caused by a bacterial toxin which interferes with the way our intestine is capable to absorb water in small quantities at a time. Once a person has contracted the disease it could be fatal within only 24 hours of them being exposed if not treated properly. Despite what many people think, cholera is not a tropical disease and comes from the quality of water intake and the hygiene levels. The main cause of death by cholera is due to the loss of fluids which occurs from the second the person is infected until their death, seeing as the first symptom is diarrhoea and vomiting.

### How can cholera be transmitted

The main cause of cholera can be traced to the excretion of faeces that can sometimes interfere with water resources that are used to extract potable water. Cholera can also be spread from the lack of proper sanitation because of bacteria that stays on the person's skin e.g. when preparing a meal. Indirect contamination can also occur from infected water that will come across water that is used for fishing purposes. This occurred in Peru in the 1990's, where the disease managed to spread out due to shellfish that was extracted from the waters. Direct transmission of the disease is not easy, yet not impossible. However there would need to be enough exposure for bacteria to start developing and multiplying in a person's body.

### Cholera symptoms

The symptoms last from 2 to 5 days and include ordinary diarrhoea as well as vomiting which continues for several hours. It needs to be treated in a hospital only if the loss of fluids reaches up to a litre per hour and it is not replaced once it reaches the total loss of 5 to 10 litres. In children particularly, this may interfere with the electrolyte in their bodies and cause cardiac arrests.

It is important to know that mild versions of cholera will usually recover on their own without any specific medical treatment. It is also important to note that if treated properly the mortality rate of cholera is lower than 1%.

### Major sources of contamination

South Sudan is currently struggling with financial problems and the villages outside the provinces have very low standing living conditions. There is minimal or no fresh water resources and people use wells and river streams in order to provide water to their families. There are no water quality control mechanisms seeing as the

government cannot provide for such in every nearby area and the drought and lack of excessive water make people appreciate and exploit any water source that can be found.

#### Lack of sanitation

As mentioned before, the quality of life is rather low in South Sudan. Finding a water source would be more important than finding an oil source seeing as it is a necessary yet rare thing to find. Furthermore, people would rather use the water to drink and cook other than clean themselves and their surroundings. Most cholera cases are passed within the family due to the fact that people do not wash their hands.

#### Rapid increase of patients

Cholera is a disease that is waterborne and attacks all fresh water resources that have come in contact with someone who is already infected. However, their living conditions do not allow for people not to share water sources, which is one of the main causes of the extent that this disease has had in south Sudan in the past year.

## DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Waterborne (disease): communicated or propagated by contaminated water

IRCC: International Red Cross Committee

CRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

IFRC: International Federation of Red Cross and Crescent Societies

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### Incidents report

The Government of South Sudan announced a cholera outbreak in Juba in mid-May 2014. Despite the decline in cholera cases in Juba where the first cases of cholera were reported, the disease continues to spread to other states including Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Western Equatoria, Jonglei and Upper Nile. Most new cases are being reported in Torit, Eastern Equatoria, 150 kilometres east of Juba and close to South Sudan's border with Uganda. As of July 21<sup>st</sup>, at least 4,765 confirmed cases with 109 deaths were reported in all affected states as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent foundation reported on the incidents.



Ever since, several NGO's including the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies have tried to eliminate the threat and slow down the pace in which the disease was spreading out in the nearby villages. Medicins Sans Frontiers was another NGO that has been actively involved by dispatching health kits and organizing camps in order to temporarily treat cases of Cholera across south Sudan. Unicef has also aided by providing a CTC in the centre of Juba to help save over 5,000 lives of children under the age of five.

Although it is a pressing matter, no parties have actively tried to resolve the issue due to the lack of proper hygiene and measures to keep cholera under control and from spreading among the population.

### A war torn country



It is of the highest importance to know that South Sudan is up to now in an ongoing civil war, therefore living conditions are even harsher than they would originally be. There is a severe lack of funds and the majority of the money people hold are used to purchase weapons to

build an opposition against an oppressing government. In a latest report the International Crisis group estimated the death toll of this Civil war could be between 50,000-100,000 casualties. Unicef warned in April 2014 that if no immediate action to deal with the cholera spread was taken, 50,000 children would lose their lives because they would be orphans and no one could care for them.

#### Severe famine across the state

Due to all the economic misfortunes that South Sudan has encountered, the country is under the state of famine. Children are malnourished and very weak. Their bodies could not handle to attract cholera because they would lose their lives as their organism would not be able to battle the bacteria. Liquid and



food intake is very important when it comes to battling cholera seeing as most cases die due to the fact they cannot have a proper intake of fluids to balance out the loss.

#### The children in this conflict



Seeing as the focus should be around children, it is important to note that they have much weaker bodies than those of adults and have smaller chances to recover if they were to be infected. Ideally they would have to be kept away from parents if they were diseased and kept in secluded areas that

would guarantee they would be kept healthy. However, low standards of life, poverty and the state of war has denied children in South Sudan their right to have a normal and healthy life. The death rate of children under the age of 5 in South Sudan was reported to be nearly 50%, which was before the outbreak of the war in 2012.



## United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

In 1989 a treaty was presented to the UN building in New York in order to secure Children's rights amongst the world. However, South Sudan did not sign the treaty and is not included in these standards about the protection of children within its grounds and therefore can have minimal intervention from UN forces when it comes to battling the issue and no penalties can be applied alongside.

## TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT INCIDENTS

- 15<sup>th</sup> December 2013: Outbreak of South Sudanese Civil War
- May 2014: The start of numerous cases of Cholera being reported
- 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014: MSF start dispatching health provisions to the affected people curing over 3,000 cases
- 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014: Unicef sends aid by setting up cholera treatment units in Juba
- 10<sup>th</sup> August 2014: IFRC sets up oral rehydration centres to combat early stages of cholera
- 25<sup>th</sup> August 2014: IFRC along with ICRC start educating the people about cholera along with setting up more treatment posts.

## MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED IN THE ISSUE

### Unicef

Unicef from the moment that the cholera outbreak was publicly announced contributed by supplying and helping operate a special ward in a hospital in Juba so that the more severe cases of cholera would be treated. Their main concern was the children seeing as more than 5,000 were estimated to be losing their lives within the following weeks due to the spreading of the disease and they wanted to ensure their safety as the known protector of children and their human rights.



## IFRC

The International Federation of the Red Cross that operated in Sudan was the one responsible for more rehydration centres that were located in the suburban areas as well and were not limited to the province of the state.



## MSF

The Medicine Sans Frontieres was the first NGO to take action in South Sudan to help combat cholera with a group of specially trained doctors that assisted over 3,300 severe cases recovered, as well as educating the people in order to prevent further contamination of the area and its people.

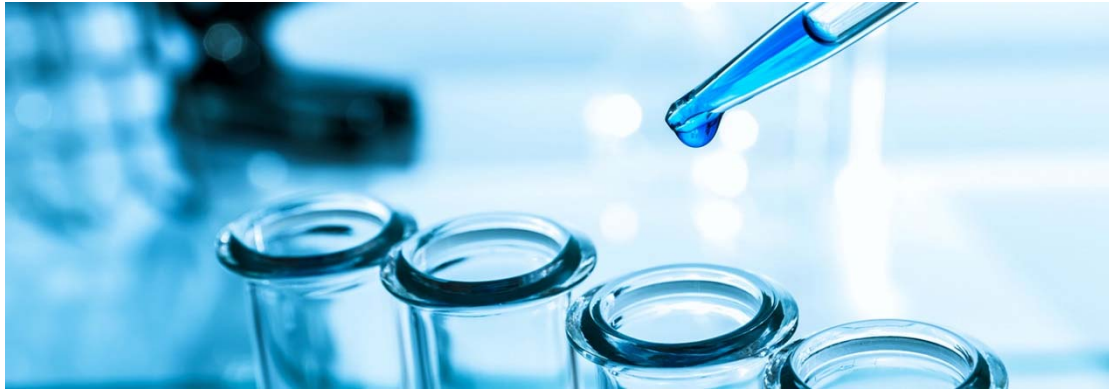


As you can see, only NGO's could take immediate action along with the World Bank which is represented in the United Nations in order to give funding to the government to help contain the disease and stop it from spreading over its borders to nearby states.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

### Potable water quality control

The main issue with cholera is that it is waterborne and can contaminate potable water and spread to a population really fast quickly, especially in countries where water is a commodity that not everyone can enjoy and is appreciated to the most. The low quality of potable water and the fact that there is no certified machinery that will filter the water to a quality that could be named appropriate to be suitable for domestic use are what makes sources of water dangerous for this disease. Therefore introducing quality control for water would be vital for all the major water resources that come from rivers and streams.



### Sanitary education

It is really important not to forget that cholera would be combatted much easier if sanitary standards were kept. Unfortunately most people lack the proper access to sanitation and are not aware of the dangers of doing so. Therefore, there should be more or less what MSF



did earlier this year, which is not only the education about hygiene but also the distribution of soap and toiletries that would help the people of South Sudan in not only not contracting the disease, but also to prevent it from spreading onto other people.

### Controlled fishing spots

Another main issue with people and water is the exploitation of the rivers and water resources for fishing purposes. Special labs should take it upon themselves to test the waters and state whether the quality of the water and the life within the rivers or streams is of acceptable quality to be consumed. If they were to fail in doing so, people would be eating contaminated fish which would only increase the chances of people contracting cholera.





### General education of the public

Ignorance is a huge issue when it comes to the efforts of stopping a disease that is spreading as rapidly as cholera. Most of the people that contract it did not even know such a disease existed and if they did, they did not know that it could be fatal. Educational camps should be set and people should get informed about the dangers of cholera, its symptoms and how to treat it affectively if a person within their family has been affected. Knowledge is power and these people need it.

### Waste control units

Cholera is a disease that is spread with faeces. Therefore the proper disposal of such should be done carefully and always with extreme caution so that no one would come in contact with the disposal, unlike it is happening right now where people in the suburban areas use large tanks to store their litter.

### Vaccinations

A vaccine should be available for people so that if they were to contract cholera it would be in a milder form that would not prove to be fatal. There have been efforts on the parts of NGO's to contribute vaccines but they are unfortunately not enough to save every single life.

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### USEFUL LINKS

1. <https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/update/2014/07-23-south-sudan-cholera.htm>
2. <https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/audiovisuals/video/2014/08-25-south-sudan-conflict-cholera.htm>
3. <http://www.netdoctor.co.uk/travel/diseases/cholera.htm>
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