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agency can easily access information of a licensed company and carry out their substantiation for approval. "Because of its efficiency and

various types of work by December 2017. The statistics also indicate that Uganda earns $35m (about sh125.8b) every month from the remittances of

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Researcher warns on cholera 'bomb'

By Cecilia Okoth

Ugandan lakes could serve as reservoirs for cholera, should poor hygiene practices continue to surface among cholera-prone districts.

The cholera-prone districts, also referred to as 'hotspots' by the Ministry of Health, include Hoima, Buliisa, Pakwach and Nebbi.

According to Prof. Christopher Garimoi Orach, the deputy dean of the School of Public Health at Makerere University, studies indicate that lakes such as Victoria, Albert, Edward, Katwe and River Nile could serve as vibro cholera reservoir from where cholera later spreads to other parts of the Great Lakes region.

"In saying this, it is possible that cholera stays and hides in the lakes and eventually people that use the water on these lakes, get infected and move elsewhere, therefore, carrying the organism/germ to other areas that ultimately get infected," Orach explained.

"Some fishermen deliberately defecate in the water so that they can have bumper harvests without knowing that they are contaminating the water," he added.

Whereas the health ministry has come up with a number of control interventions, including disease surveillance, patient care, infection control, health education, promotion of latrine construction and use and promotion of hand-washing, Orach said many challenges are still being experienced.

These, he said, include lack of alternative water sources (other than the lake), inadequate hand-washing facilities, ignorance, difficulty in implementing sanitation and preference for open defecation in cholera 'hotspot' districts.

"I would like to see zero cholera cases reported from all districts because we know what causes cholera and how to prevent it." **Aceng**

The don made the remarks while presenting a study on epidemiology of cholera in fishing communities, which was carried out between 2011 and 2015.

This was at a stakeholders' conference that sought to review and incorporate research into interventions for cholera prevention, control and elimination in Uganda, at Makerere University yesterday.

What is cholera?

Cholera is an infection of the small intestine by some strains of the bacterium vibro cholera. Whereas symptoms of the disease may range from none, to mild, to severe, the classic symptom is large amounts of watery stool that lasts a few days, vomiting and muscle cramps. The disease is spread mostly through unsafe water and food that has been contaminated with human faeces.

Cholera outbreaks in fishing villages were responsible for an average of 58% of cholera cases and 55% of deaths in Uganda.

Communities most vulnerable to cholera in Uganda are situated along the lakes, with the exception of Lake Kyoga and George.

According to statistics from the World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme of 2012, poor sanitation alone costs Uganda sh389b, while one prolonged cholera outbreak lasting over a year costs sh6b.

Jackson Mulindambura, the district secretary for education and health in Hoima, said out of the 11 sub-counties in the district, only four are cholera-prone and continue to have outbreaks of the disease. The sub-counties include Kigorobya, Kabwoya, Buseruka and Kyangwali.

Interventions

While closing the conference, Dr Jane Ruth Aceng, the health minister, said whereas the Government stepped-up interventions that have resulted in a steady decline of cholera cases, the decline is not enough.

"I would like to see zero cholera cases reported from all districts because we know what causes cholera and how to prevent it. We shall not hesitate to shame districts and local leaders from communities with latrine coverage that is below the set standard of 100%," she said.

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