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### **World Concern Responds to Outbreak of Cholera in Haiti**

It's the news everyone has feared since the massive earthquake struck Haiti in January of this year. More than 1,500 people have been hospitalized and 138 have died from an outbreak of cholera in the Artibonite Valley region of Haiti. According to World Concern Haiti Country Director Christon Domond, the government declared today that the outbreak is indeed cholera, after hundreds of people were sickened with diarrheal disease this week.

According to the World Health Organization, cholera is an acute intestinal infection caused by ingesting food or water contaminated with the bacteria. People infected with cholera become ill quickly and the symptoms lead to severe dehydration and possibly death if they don't receive prompt treatment.

"The very fact that the government of Haiti has declared this outbreak as cholera is an indication of the severity of the situation," said World Concern President David Eller.

"We have convened our health committee in Haiti and outlined our response," said Dr. Meredith Long, DrPH, World Concern's Senior Director for International Programs. "We have instructed our staff to take precautions against the spread in their own areas, and to teach those with whom we work. We also alerted them to recognize and report any outbreak they might see, especially in the camps with earthquake survivors. We are preparing a broader response, should the outbreak spread to areas of our work in the earthquake camps or rural areas, and have already been in contact with possible donor agencies that could help us mount this approach."

World Concern Director of International Health Programs Dr. Paul Robinson, MBBS, MTS, MPH, said that if the outbreak spreads, hospitals will be in need of water purification tablets, oral rehydration salts, Gatorade and Pedialyte-type drinks, soap and blankets.

"We are considering strategy options for a massive campaign in the South and Southeast Departments of Haiti, where we have regional offices, in anticipation of a wider spread of the epidemic," said R. Robinson.

"The risk to life is huge if this spreads into more populated areas, and could lead to significant loss of life" said Eller. "Controlling the outbreak is critical."

World Concern staff and beneficiaries are being instructed to wash their hands frequently with hot, soapy water, especially before eating, preparing foods and after using the toilet. They should also avoid untreated

water (drink only boiled or disinfected water), eat food that is completely cooked, and avoid uncooked fruits and vegetables that could have been rinsed in contaminated water.

Dr. Meredith Long has a doctorate in public health and is available for interviews this afternoon. World Concern President David Eller can also be reached for interviews.

***To arrange interviews, please contact Cathy Herholdt at 206-546-7374 or 425-205-7412.***

*World Concern, part of CRISTA Ministries, is a Christian humanitarian organization that helps lift people out of poverty through activities including microfinance, agriculture, disaster response and small business development. World Concern works with the poor in 24 countries, with the goal of transforming the lives of those we touch, leading them on a path to self-sustainability. Worldwide, World Concern offers life, opportunity and hope to more than six million people.*

