BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Cholera is a disease caused by bacteria that can live in the human digestive system. When an infected person goes to the bathroom, the bacteria can pass on and contaminate water. (CDC)
- The bacteria can spread when people come in contact with contaminated water or untreated sewage, or eat food or drink liquids handled by an infected person. (CDC)
- When a person is infected with cholera, they experience severe watery diarrhea. If the disease is not treated and the person does not get enough fluids, the diarrhea leads to severe dehydration, which can be fatal. (WHO)
- Cholera epidemics often happen in parts of the world where there has been a natural disaster like an earthquake or severe flooding. The disaster damages water and sewage systems, so people don’t have clean water to drink or wash, and sewage is not properly disposed of to prevent contamination. (WHO)
- Where there is a risk of cholera, it can be prevented by treating all water by boiling or with water purification chemicals, and by practicing good hygiene like always washing hands with good soap before handling food, cooking food well, and burying human waste in the ground if proper toilet facilities are not available. (CDC)
- When a person is infected with cholera, they must be treated with antibiotics and given lots of fluids and rehydration salts to prevent dehydration. (WHO)
- In Haiti, the cholera outbreak began in October 2010, nine months after the earthquake. Before that, there had not been a reported case of cholera in Haiti in at least a century. (CDC)
- As of June 2014, there have been 703,510 reported cases of cholera in Haiti, and 8,562 people are known to have died from the disease. However, the average rate of deaths from the disease has fallen significantly from 62 per week in 2011, to 8 per week in 2013, to just one per week by the summer of 2014. (Pan American Health Organization)

KEY TERMS

Epidemic—When an infectious disease spreads among a large number of people.

Dehydration—When your body does not have enough water. Severe dehydration can lead to death.

Sanitation—Refers to a wide range of issues like providing clean water and disposing of waste in order to protect human health.

Displaced persons—People who have been driven from their homes because of natural disaster or conflict, but are still living within their home countries.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects.

Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. The activity is structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Students are encouraged to further reflect on the issues.
THEMES AND COURSE CONNECTIONS
- Course Connections: Health and Physical Education, English, Social Sciences and the Humanities, Interdisciplinary Studies

MATeRIALS
- Front board
- Student journals or note paper
- Writing utensils

SPEcIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING GOALS
Students will:
- Develop and express responses to issues and problems.
- Reassess their responses to issues on the basis of new information.
- Participate in active group work and class discussions.
- Communicate effectively in writing, orally or visually.
- Demonstrate the ability to think critically.
- Develop, express and defend a position on an issue.

MAP IT
Have students locate the different locations mentioned in the article to gain an understanding of the expanse and involvement of this issue.

- Haiti

DISCUSS
1. What does contaminated water mean? What factors could make water unsafe to drink? What can happen to people if their drinking water is unsafe?
2. What do you know about cholera? Prior to reading this article, what did you know about the cholera outbreak in Haiti?
3. Why do you think Africa’s Ebola outbreak has received the attention that it has while Haiti’s four-year cholera outbreak gets little attention?
4. The article states that the average rate of deaths from cholera has fallen significantly from 62 per week in 2011, to 8 per week in 2013, to just one per week by the summer of 2014. However, Dr. Milsoit states, “Each time a new rainy season comes there is a fresh outbreak of the disease.” Why do you think this is?
5. What long-term steps do you think should be taken to contain cholera?

DIVE DEEPER
Organize the class into groups of three to four students and ensure each group has at least one copy of the article. Tell students that they have been chosen by the UN to conduct research on the bacterial disease of cholera in surrounding Haitian communities.

Students can use the research outline to collect information on Haiti and cholera. Once students have gathered all of the information, they can choose how they would like to display their research. Remind students that although each group will be researching the same topic and answering the same questions, they may generate different answers and present different ideas.

RESEARCHER’S NAME:

RESEARCH TOPIC: To investigate the cholera outbreak in Haiti and put forward recommendations on how to limit the outbreak.

GEOGRAPHY
- Country:
- Capital City:
- Continent:
- Language(s) spoken:

What countries or bodies of water border the Haiti on the north, south, east and west?

HEALTH ISSUE
- What is cholera?
- What causes this illness and how is it spread? Be specific.
- Is cholera an airborne or waterborne disease? Explain.
- What physical characteristics of Haiti might have contributed to the spread of cholera? (i.e. Artibonite waterway)
- List at least three possible reasons why cholera spread rapidly through Haitian communities.

CONCLUSION
What can be done to limit the outbreak of cholera?
Name three challenges that must be overcome before waterborne illnesses can be prevented in Haiti.