

Dysentery hits H'lands

By Johnny Poiya

TWO children are dead while 130 others were treated from dysentery in Nondugl, Western Highlands.

Of those affected, half of them were school children, forcing provincial authorities to close three elementary schools and a primary school since the outbreak was reported at Zumol village. The deaths occurred on Friday and Saturday while the number of patients has increase daily from the weekend up to yesterday when 22 new cases were reported.

The outbreak has forced three elementary and one primary school to close down while villagers from Zumol have become the focal point of discrimination by surrounding villages, alleging they were the cause of a possible cholera outbreak.

Health authorities said though the outbreak was not cholera, dysentery, food poisoning and typhoid were related to the deadly disease which PNG has experienced for the first time two months ago when many people succumbed to it in the Morobe province.

The first dysentery case was reported last Friday when a three year old boy was rushed to the Nondugl Health Centre.

Staff at the health center said he ate lamp flaps during the day and complained of abdominal pains and continuous diarrhoea.

He succumbed to heavy loss of body fluid some hours later.

The symptoms sent panic through the Nondugl Health Centre and patients fled during the night, officer in charge John Bena said as he recalled the initial reactions.

Mr Bena said the next morning, a mother and child came to the hospital with similar symptoms. The child, who died later, was sent to the Church run Kudjip Nazarene Hospital while the mother was treated and sent home.

Sixty patients, mostly children, half of whom were school-aged, with similar symptoms were treated on Sunday and up to yesterday, over 130 people, all from Zumol village, were given treatment while nine were admitted at the health centre.

“We’ve been admitting and discharging patients since the weekend. They are coming constantly, indicating Zumol village is facing a dysentery outbreak,” Mr Bena said.

A team from the Mt Hagen General Hospital and provincial health office diagnosed the disease as cholera.