Ebola virus disease (EVD) is a recurring disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the first outbreak dating back to 1976. The country is currently responding to its ninth Ebola outbreak this time in Bikoro district.

All cases in this outbreak have been reported from the catchment area of Ikoko Impenge health facility located 30 kilometres from the district centre of Bikoro, itself located 400 kilometres from Mbandaka, capital of Equateur province. Between 4 April and 5 May 2018, a total of 27 cases of fever with haemorrhagic signs including 17 deaths were reported in Bikoro health zone; of the total cases, two have been confirmed positive for Ebola virus disease.

The risk to public health from this outbreak is currently assessed as being high at the local level, moderate at the regional level, and low at the global level. On 8 May 2018, the Minister of Public Health of Democratic Republic of the Congo requested support to strengthen the response to this outbreak.

The Bikoro health zone has three hospitals and 19 health centers, most of which have limited functionality. Bikoro has a population of approximately 163 065 inhabitants spread over an area of approximately 1 075 square kilometres; the affected area is remote, with limited communication and poor transportation infrastructure.

AT A GLANCE

Ebola virus disease (EVD) is a recurring disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the first outbreak dating back to 1976. The country is currently responding to its ninth Ebola outbreak this time in Bikoro district.

All cases in this outbreak have been reported from the catchment area of Ikoko Impenge health facility located 30 kilometres from the district centre of Bikoro, itself located 400 kilometres from Mbandaka, capital of Equateur province. Between 4 April and 5 May 2018, a total of 27 cases of fever with haemorrhagic signs including 17 deaths were reported in Bikoro health zone; of the total cases, two have been confirmed positive for Ebola virus disease.

The risk to public health from this outbreak is currently assessed as being high at the local level, moderate at the regional level, and low at the global level. On 8 May 2018, the Minister of Public Health of Democratic Republic of the Congo requested support to strengthen the response to this outbreak.

CURRENT CONTEXT

In view of this context, the Ministry of Public Health and its major partners –WHO in this case –have developed a plan to respond to the Ebola outbreak for the next three months and note that the full extent of the outbreak is not yet known, and the location of the outbreak poses significant logistical challenges.

The Bikoro health zone has three hospitals and 19 health centers, most of which have limited functionality. Bikoro has a population of approximately 163 065 inhabitants spread over an area of approximately 1 075 square kilometres; the affected area is remote, with limited communication and poor transportation infrastructure.
WHO’s response

1. Coordination and operations support
2. Surveillance case management and contact tracing
3. Case management and infection prevention control
4. Community engagement, social mobilization and psycho-social support
5. Strengthen the diagnostic capabilities of mobile laboratories by setting up a laboratory for the confirmation of suspected cases
6. Research response

THE GOAL FOR WHO’S EBOLA RESPONSE

The overall goal of the response is to stop the spread of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in affected communities, prevent spread to surrounding provinces and countries by identifying and ending all transmission chains and ensuring all patients with Ebola virus disease have rapid access to safe, high quality care.

The Minister of Public Health of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has requested WHO’s support to strengthen the coordination of UN, International and non-governmental organizations, and other health partners in response to the Ebola outbreak. WHO and partners will undertake the following actions based on six response pillars:

1. Coordination and operations support
   • Activate national, provincial and district emergency operations coordination (EOCs)
   • Establish forward logistics hubs and pre-position supplies
   • Establish a transportation fleet to ensure access and safe transportation of staff (helicopters, cars, and boats, where needed)
   • Establish reporting and communications channels
   • Establish security and staff safety measures (including medivac)
   • Mobilization of human and financial resources
   • Reinforcement of health staff in the Bikoro Health Zone and neighboring areas in managing an Ebola outbreak

2. Surveillance case management and contact tracing
   • Strengthen surveillance and contact-tracing capacity
   • Set up records of EVD suspicious cases and deaths in all health facilities in the province
   • Organize active search for suspected cases and incidents in the community to detect suspected cases of EVD
   • Identify all contacts and place them under daily surveillance for 21 days for possible fever
   • Analyze and provide daily reports on epidemiological situation
   • Ensure surveillance at entry points and coordinate cross-border collaboration with Congo Brazzaville.

3. Case management and infection prevention control
   • Establish an Ebola Treatment Centre (ETC) and provide access to lifesaving therapeutics/treatments
   • Ensure infection prevention and control and establish triage and isolation capacity in surrounding health facilities
   • Establish safe transportation services for all suspected and confirmed case to Ebola treatment center’s
   • Control of infection by strengthening hygiene and biosecurity measures in health facilities and communities
   • Ensure safe and dignified burial if required and decontamination of affected households

The WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE)

In order to ensure the response efforts for this Ebola outbreak can take place quickly and effectively, WHO has allocated US$ 1 million from the Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE). However, the CFE cannot provide all the resources that will be needed.

US$ 1 million from the Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE).
4. **Community engagement, social mobilization and psycho-social support**
   - Develop and broadcast public risk communications campaigns
   - Establish community engagement and social mobilization teams
   - Provide psychological and social support to affected families and communities
   - Train community leaders

5. **Strengthen the diagnostic capabilities of mobile laboratories by setting up a laboratory for the confirmation of suspected cases**
   - Deploy mobile laboratory unit for confirmation of suspected cases
   - Acquire protective equipment, reagents, inputs and consumables and train health personnel in laboratory techniques
   - Transport samples from the field to the reference laboratories

6. **Research response**
   - Conduct an emergency ring-vaccination campaign
   - Ensure access to experimental antivirals
   - Contribute to the development and evaluation of rapid diagnostic tests
   - Set-up a mechanism in country to facilitate the coordination of research efforts related to Ebola

**FUNDING NEEDS**

An immediate **US$7.5 million** is required for priority actions in the next three months to mount a continued and effective response to the Ebola outbreak that is unfolding in Bikoro Territory in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Although WHO has mobilized US$1 million from the CFE for this critically needed response to the outbreak, there is still a severe funding short-fall in the financial support required for response efforts.

Urgent funding assistance is needed to ensure that WHO and partners can effectively support the Government to implement the activities essential to respond to the outbreak.