

b Ebola virus disease outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo

A new outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) has been reported by the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Ministry of Health to the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 May 2017. As of 27 May 2017, a total of 16 suspected, 4 probably and 2 confirmed cases, and 4 deaths have been reported in the north-east of the country, in Likati Health Zone, Bas Uélé Province, bordering the Central African Republic. The likely index case was a middle-aged man presenting at the local health facility with haemorrhagic symptoms in late April 2017; he died on day of presentation. The risk of international spread is unlikely given the remoteness of the area.

The epidemiologic context of this outbreak is different from the massive West African outbreak 2013–16 where EVD spread in the densely populated urban areas of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, causing more than 11 000 deaths. The central town in Likati is a three-day drive on a dirt road from the nearest town. Nevertheless measures have been implemented by DRC, supported by WHO and other

international partners aimed at containing the disease. These include rapid diagnostic services, case identification and contact tracing, isolation and treatment of patients, social mobilizations, awareness campaigns and safe burial practices. It appears likely that recombinant Ebola vaccine will be used for ring vaccination to further control the spread of the disease.

This is the eighth outbreak of EVD in the DRC, where the causative agent of EVD was first discovered in 1976. The most recent outbreak occurred in 2014 with 66 confirmed cases, of which 49 were fatal. There are currently no travel or trade restrictions with the DRC.

National Guidelines for Recognition and Management of Viral Haemorrhagic Fevers are available at www.nicd.ac.za

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