

An update on Ebola virus disease outbreak, Democratic Republic of Congo

The Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak in northeast Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) still remains a serious public health concern internationally since the outbreak was declared on 1 August 2018. The cluster of EVD cases that emerged in April 2020 highlights the importance of heightened vigilance for the response in the face of significant challenges around community engagement, access to affected areas, ongoing insecurity, and limited response capacity due to other local and global emergencies.

As of 17 May 2020, a total of 3 462 EVD cases, including 3 317 confirmed and 145 probable cases have been reported, of which 2 279 cases died (overall case fatality ratio 66%). Of the total confirmed and probable cases, 57% (1 970) were female, 29% (1 002) were children aged less than 18 years, and 5% (171) were healthcare workers. As of 17 May 2020, 1 171 cases have recovered from EVD.

From 11 to 17 May 2020, there have been no new confirmed cases of EVD reported in DRC. Since the resurgence of the outbreak on 10 April 2020, seven confirmed cases have been reported from Kasanga, Malepe and Kansulinzuli Health Areas in Beni Health Zone. Of these seven cases, two confirmed cases who were receiving care at an Ebola Treatment Centre (ETC) recovered and were discharged after two consecutive negative tests; one confirmed case remains in the community; and four cases died, including two community deaths and two deaths in the ETC in Beni. Investigations into the possible source of infection of the cluster of cases reported since 10 April 2020 are ongoing. So far, no definitive source of infection has been identified. New cases are expected among contacts of the recent cluster of cases reported in Beni Health Zone.

Over 250 000 contacts have been registered since the beginning of the outbreak. As of 10 May 2020, 86 contacts are under surveillance, of which 41 (48%) are

high risk contacts who had direct contact with body fluids of the last confirmed case. Of the 86 contacts, 71 (83%) have been vaccinated. There are 10 high risk contacts who are currently voluntarily isolating in a dedicated site where essential goods and health services are provided to them.

In the past three weeks from 10 May 2020, the alert rate has improved notably in Beni and Butembo sub-coordinations. Timely testing of suspected cases continues to be provided from eight laboratories. From 11 to 17 May 2020, 2 869 samples were tested including 2 081 blood samples from alive, suspected cases; 382 swabs from community deaths; and 406 samples from re-tested patients. Overall, laboratory activities increased by 15% compared to the previous week. Since the resurgence of the outbreak in Beni, a total of 1 930 people have been vaccinated, of which 1 930 were in Beni as of 17 May 2020. The total number of people now vaccinated with the rVSV-ZEBOC-GP vaccine is 303 751 since the start of the outbreak in August 2018. WHO anticipates potential longer-term challenges with the vaccine pipeline due to limited flight ability as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The government and the Ministry of Health (MOH), and other national authorities in the DRC, World Health Organization (WHO) and partners are implementing outbreak control interventions together with teams in the surrounding provinces, who are taking measures to ensure that they are response-ready. WHO still advises against any restriction of travel to, and trade with, the DRC based on the currently available information. WHO continues to closely monitor and, if necessary, verify travel and trade measures in relation to this event. Travellers should seek medical advice before travel and should practice good hygiene.

As of 26 May 2020, there are no EVD cases reported in South Africa associated with the current outbreak in the DRC. In addition, there are no suspected cases of EVD in South Africa at present.

Article source: WHO; www.who.int; WHO-AFRO, Division of Public Health Surveillance and Response, NICD-NHLS; outbreak@nicd.ac.za