

Death of Ebola patients who fled DRC hospital, highlights dangers: WHO

The escape of three patients infected with the Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from the hospital where they were being treated is “not unexpected”, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Friday, underlining the need to step up efforts to explain the dangers of the deadly disease to affected communities.

Two of the three patients died after leaving an isolation unit in Wangata hospital in Mbandaka city in the last week, WHO spokesperson Tarik Jasarevic confirmed.

He said that both of the deceased had been given a safe and dignified burial and added that “it was only human” that sick people wanted to be with their families “in what could be the last moments of life”.

“It is very unfortunate that people fled the treatment centre, but it is not unexpected. We had this in previous outbreaks,” he said.

“It is really important that we redouble our efforts to engage with the community so that everyone understands how Ebola is being transmitted, and that keeping the sick person at home not only decreases the chances of survival for this person, because this person then is not receiving supportive treatment, but is also putting at risk the whole family”, added Mr. Jasarevic.

Latest data from health authorities in the DRC, indicates a total of 52 cases of Ebola in the north-west of the country; 31 of these are confirmed, 13 are probable and eight are suspect.

It is really important that we redouble our efforts to engage with the community so that everyone understands how Ebola is being transmitted – *Tarik Jarasevic (WHO)*

There have been 22 deaths confirmed so far. The overall caseload and death toll have been revised downwards, reflecting the fact that some samples have either tested negative for the haemorrhagic disease, or that any link to Ebola has been ruled out.

But concerns are still high that the disease could spread easily from Mbandaka – a city of over a million people – given its direct link by river, to the capital, Kinshasa.

The outbreak was originally declared on May 8 in Bikoro, a relatively remote region in Equateur Province.

Access there and to nearby Iboko is difficult and efforts are still ongoing to put in place a so-called “cold chain” to maintain Ebola vaccine at between minus 60 and minus 80 degrees Celsius.

Targeted vaccinations have already begun in Mbandaka and 154 people have been inoculated to date, according to Mr Jasarevic, who stressed that it would take time to identify all those who could have come into contact with an infected carrier.

“It’s targeted vaccination. It’s basically getting people who are identified as eligible to receive the vaccine; so contacts; and contacts of contacts...There are a number of challenges; first, epidemiological teams have to identify these people,” he added.

To date, WHO has shipped more than 7,500 vaccinations to DRC; a total of 300,000 are available from pharmaceuticals manufacturer Merck.

As in the previous Ebola outbreak in West Africa between 2014 and 2016, efforts are also under way in DRC to protect youngsters from the disease.

“Children are still at risk,” said Christophe Boulhierac, spokesperson for [UN Children’s Fund \(UNICEF\)](#), who added that that staff are raising awareness of the dangers among 13,000 children in the three affected zones and installing handwashing facilities in more than 270 schools.

Measures are also in place to protect the mental well-being of youngsters, Mr Boulhierac continued, adding that other Ebola outbreaks had “demonstrated the need for social workers to identify and assist vulnerable children”.

A total of 22 psychosocial agents have been trained by UNICEF and partners, Mr Boulhierac said, adding that the agency is supporting 23 children and their families who have relatives infected with Ebola by supplying household kits and food rations.

[**AU-UN mission in Darfur boosts vigilance in wake of attacks on camps for the displaced**](#)

Following a series of armed attacks on camps hosting displaced Sudanese in central Darfur, the joint African Union-United Nations peacekeeping mission there has urged all parties to respect humanitarian space which should be free of weapons, threats, and violence.

“The African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID)

expresses [deep concern](#) about recent attacks on three different internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Central Darfur state, which took place between 21 and 23 May 2018, resulting in a number of civilian fatalities and injuries among IDPs,” said a press release issued by the mission on Thursday.

Last year, the UN decided to reduce its peacekeepers in Darfur but made an exception for Central Darfur state where rebels refuse to join the peace process or to declare a cessation of hostilities.

According to media reports, the fighting between the government forces and the armed groups has recently intensified, destabilizing the region.

The latest incidents reportedly occurred in the space of three days at Khamsa Dagaig, Ardayba and Jedda IDP camps.

UNAMID said that IDP camps are considered humanitarian space, and attacks on them could constitute a grave violation of international humanitarian law.

“While the prime responsibility of protecting civilians rests with the Government of Sudan, UNAMID shall continue to collaborate with the relevant government authorities on protecting civilians and engage with them regarding this matter at all levels,” said Jeremiah Mamabolo, UNAMID Joint Special Representative.

Meanwhile, UNAMID has taken several measures in response to these recent attacks, including more frequent patrols in and around the affected camps, as well as dispatching integrated teams to verify these incidents to prevent further attacks.

“UNAMID continues to monitor events and take appropriate measures, in line with its protection of civilians mandate from the United Nations Security Council,” said the press release.

[Yemen: Human suffering at risk of further deterioration, warns UN aid chief](#)

An escalation in fighting, increasing obstacles to aid delivery and lack of food and fuel, is compounding Yemen’s dire humanitarian crisis, the United Nations top relief official warned on Thursday, calling on all parties to the conflict to end the violence.

Across Yemen, more than 22 million people are dependent on humanitarian assistance or protection, of whom around 8.4 million are severely food

insecure and at risk of starvation.

[“If conditions do not improve](#), a further 10 million people will fall into this category by the end of the year,” cautioned Mark Lowcock, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, in a statement.

The threat of a resurgence in deadly cholera, together with watery diarrhoea also looms, which infected over 600,000 people during the last outbreak, he added.

Of particular concern is the situation of Yemen’s children – one in four are out of school, not only deprived of education but also at risk of recruitment by armed groups and exploitation.

I urge all parties to engage meaningfully with the UN, without preconditions, to achieve a lasting, negotiated settlement towards sustainable peace – *Mark Lowcock, UN aid chief*

Amidst worsening suffering in the war-torn country, humanitarian agencies are also facing increasing restrictions on their work, said Mr. Lowcock.

“Humanitarian staff are being detained and intimidated and visas are being delayed and denied. Programmes and missions are being interfered with in ways which contradict humanitarian principles,” he added, calling on the Government to act on the assurances it made in the past and lift restrictions.

Mr. Lowcock, who is also the UN Humanitarian Affairs chief, said that imports of aid and commercial food has declined recently.

“Confidence among commercial shipping companies has eroded due to delays, including as a result of inspections undertaken by the Saudi-led Coalition after these vessels have been cleared by UNVIM,” he said.

The UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen – UNVIM for short – was established to facilitate commercial shipping in and out of Yemeni ports, in order to manage clearance requests and coordinate inspection of cargo at the ports of Hudaydah, Saleef and Ras Isa.

Mr. Lowcock said that humanitarian agencies stand ready to increase their delivery of assistance to the people of Yemen, and called on all warring parties to cooperate more, to ease civilian suffering.

“Finally, I urge all parties to engage meaningfully with the UN, without preconditions, to achieve a lasting, negotiated settlement towards sustainable peace,” he said.

New health board aims to break 'cycle of panic and neglect' on pandemics

A group of international experts has been tasked with helping the planet to better prepare for outbreaks, pandemics and other emergencies that have an impact on health.

The Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB) brings together political leaders, heads of United Nations agencies and health experts to strengthen global health security through stringent independent monitoring and regular reporting. It was launched on Thursday in Geneva by the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) and [the World Bank Group](#).

Dr. Jim Yong, World Bank Group president, said the Board's work will help save lives and prevent economic losses.

"For too long, we have allowed a cycle of panic and neglect when it comes to pandemics: we ramp up efforts when there's a serious threat, then quickly forget about them when the threat subsides," Dr. Kim said in [a press release](#) announcing the initiative.

"With the GPMB, we're taking a large step towards breaking that cycle."

The Board will monitor emergency preparedness across national governments, UN agencies, civil society and the private sector.

It will report annually on whether financing is adequate, as well as progress on relevant research and development; and the strength of health crisis-preparedness at the global, regional and national levels.

The Board will be co-chaired by Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, a former Prime Minister of Norway who also served as WHO Director-General from 1998-2003, and Mr Elhadj As Sy, Secretary General of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Dr. Brundtland said the current Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo—a reminder of the deadly West African outbreak four years ago—shows that preparation for such crises "has never been clearer."

She added that the Board "will hold all actors, from private and public sectors, accountable for building essential public health capacities, generating sustainable financing and ensuring that necessary research and development is conducted."

UN envoy urges 'inclusive' talks to resolve crisis in Burundi

Inclusive talks remain the only way to find a lasting solution to the political, socio-economic and humanitarian crisis that has engulfed Burundi since 2015, the United Nations envoy for the African Great Lakes country said on Thursday.

Briefing the Security Council a week after the country voted in favour of a new constitution, Michel Kafando, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi said that voting has passed off with relative calm but that some irregularities had been reported by civil society groups and opposition.

Burundi's election commission also reported some incidents at the polls but, in the commission's view, these were not likely to influence the final result, added Mr. Kafando.

The crisis began in April 2015, when President Pierre Nkurunziza began his campaign for a disputed third-term in office, triggering protests and a failed coup attempt.

As Burundi now enters an important phase in its history, an inclusive dialogue, which also includes regional actors, is vital to overcome the obstacles in a climate of mutual trust, said the UN envoy.

The absence of such reconciliation talks could further polarize an already tense political situation, warned Mr. Kafando.

The Special Envoy also told the 15-member Security Council that while the security situation in Burundi is largely calm, isolated incidents of violence remain a cause for concern, calling on the Government to continue its efforts to improve security for ordinary citizens.

He also urged the Burundian authorities to resume cooperation with the commission of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council as well as with the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR).