

Press release: UK response to the Ebola outbreak in North Kivu, DRC

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The UK is working closely with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other partners to tackle the latest outbreak of Ebola in the country.

The UK is providing expertise and support to help the government and WHO respond effectively to this outbreak which is occurring in a very insecure region. This response is enabling faster diagnosis and monitoring of the spread of the disease, and is improving medical facilities and their capacity to treat patients. It will also protect health workers and raise awareness of the disease within local communities.

In addition, we are supporting the WHO to strengthen surveillance at borders and help neighbouring areas to prepare to tackle the disease should it spread.

Yesterday (15th August 2018) the International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt spoke with Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the WHO, to discuss Dr Tedros's reflections on his recent visit to the area and how the UK can continue to support the current response.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

"Global health threats like Ebola devastate lives and don't respect borders. The UK is acting now to support the DRC Government, WHO and other partners to contain this latest outbreak occurring in a very challenging context.

"We've also already been working extensively with these partners to improve vulnerable countries' capacity to detect and tackle outbreaks like this quickly when they occur – to maintain stability in the region and keep the UK public safe at home."

The UK is supporting WHO and partners to strengthen health systems so that African countries at high risk of disease outbreaks such the DRC have the capability to prevent, detect and respond quickly to new outbreaks. This work was proven to be effective in the swift response which tackled the previous Ebola outbreak this year in Equator Province of the DRC.

The UK is also the leading donor to the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and the second largest contributor to the WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies, both of which have mobilised to tackle this outbreak.

Following the West Africa outbreak of Ebola in 2014, UK aid worked with the Wellcome Trust to develop an experimental vaccine for the disease. UK aid support for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, has helped ensure a stockpile of this vaccine is available. A vaccination programme to protect high risk

populations in North Kivu province has now been launched. Risk to the UK from this outbreak remains negligible to very low, but Public Health England continues to monitor the situation closely.