



**Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention to deploy epidemiologists, laboratory experts, and anthropologist to respond to the Ebola outbreak in Democratic Republic of Congo**

*Urges long-term action to build resilient health systems locally and national public health systems to pick up events rapidly*

**Kinshasa/ Mbandaka/Bikoro, 20 May 2018** - The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) is deploying 25 epidemiologists, laboratory experts, and anthropologists to support the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) efforts to control the recent Ebola virus outbreak in Mbandaka and Bikoro. Following the announcement on 8 May 2018 of the Ebola outbreak by the government of DRC, the Africa CDC deployed an assessment mission within 48 hours and activated its Emergency Operational Centre to link, scan and monitor the situation.

"The global community needs to respond to this outbreak as a crisis and not as an emergency, by quickly deploying public health assets to the affected areas expeditiously". I want to applaud the Minister of Health of the DRC for his exemplary leadership in managing this current outbreak so far. "All our efforts should be geared towards supporting his leadership" said Dr. John Nkengasong, the Director of the Africa CDC, upon his return this week, with a high level delegation, to the affected areas in Mbandaka and Bikoro.

The DRC government is working with partners to improve coordination mechanisms, enhance surveillance, laboratory confirmation, contact identification and follow-up, case management, infection prevention and control, safe and dignified burials, social mobilisation and community engagement, logistics, risk communication, vaccination, partner engagement, research and resource mobilisation.

During the Africa CDC team's visits they assisted the Ministry of Health, together with other partners, to develop three strategies: a) surveillance and contact tracing, b) Defining the various health areas affected, and c) laboratory testing and network. The Africa CDC will provide up to USD 2 million to support Africa CDC interventions. Due to the remote nature of the Equateur Province, it is expected that more efforts will need to be put in supply chain issues to ensure that essential items needed are delivered swiftly. Last week the African Union Peace and Security Council was briefed on the situation and will continue to receive reports. Under Article 6(f) relating to its mandate with regard to humanitarian action and disaster management the Council can authorise deployment of military and civilian missions and assets to tackle emergency situations as it did in August 2014 in the Ebola outbreak in the West Africa sub-region. This outbreak is the 9<sup>th</sup> outbreak of the Ebola virus disease over the last 4 decades in the country. The affected health area of Bikoro covers 1 075 km and has a population of 163 065 inhabitants. This huge population is supported by only 3 hospitals and 19 health centres, most of which have limited functionality.

The risk of spread of the virus is high at national and regional levels due in part to the proximity of the epidemic focus to the Congo River which links with the capitals of the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic. As such, Africa CDC is coordinating with these countries to ensure that their surveillance systems are activated and information is shared in real time.

### **About the Africa CDC**

The Africa CDC supports all African countries to improve surveillance, emergency response, and prevention of infectious diseases. This includes addressing outbreaks, man-made and natural disasters, and public health events of regional and international concern. It further seeks to build the capacity to reduce disease burden on the continent.

### **For further information contact**

Mr. Tawanda Chisango | AIDS Watch Africa (AWA) Program Advocacy & Partnership Expert | Social Affairs | African Union Commission | E-mail: [chisangot@africa-union.org](mailto:chisangot@africa-union.org) | Web [www.au.int](http://www.au.int) | [www.aidswatchafrica.net](http://www.aidswatchafrica.net)  
Addis Ababa | Ethiopia