

Minutes from IASC RG call on the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Outbreak – Democratic Republic of Congo
30 August, 2018

Call participants

Anthrologica, CP AoR Helpdesk- Francophone, IFRC Psychosocial Centre, International Medical Corps, MHPSS.net, Norwegian Refugee Council, TPO DRC, UNHCR, WHO, World Vision International.

WHO

As of 30 August, there were 115 cases, 77 deaths (85 confirmed cases), with 3 new cases and fatalities reported on 28 August. The new cases were associated with children at the Mapendo Health Clinic. Patients are being treated at Emergency Treatment Centres (ETCs) with 19 different therapeutic approaches. A vaccination campaign is also underway – 4,831 persons (mixture of health workers and beneficiaries) have received the vaccination so far. Community engagement and risk communication remain high priorities as negative community related incidents have occurred in Malakbo and Beni (clinics set on fire).

WHO has declared an internal Level 3 for the emergency meaning that there is a high-level of HQ involvement in terms of coordination and technical support. The WHO mental health and substance abuse team have been providing technical input at country and HQ level for the response and advocating for the Ministry of Health in DRC to include MHPSS as part of its response, in addition to the Ministries of Health in neighbouring countries – Uganda and Rwanda. WHO has an MHPSS Advisor on standby awaiting clearance for deployment to North Kivu province in DRC to support technically with the response and regarding coordination.

Coordination

MHPSS.net: The DRC group is now active on the website. The main group is available in French (with French resources) with an English resources sub-group. MHPSS.net have compiled a Briefing Kit (as a pdf file) of resources in French and English related to the response and technical guidance on MHPSS for EVD. All responding RG members are encouraged to join the group and share relevant resources: <https://app.mhpss.net/groups/current-mhpss-emergency-responses/drc-2018-mhpss/>

The French and English versions of the PFA for Ebola Virus Disease Guide has been shared with the country level health and protection clusters, with the MHPSS TWGs in Goma and Bukavu, in addition to the Child Protection in Infectious Disease Outbreak document (developed by the Child Protection Alliance and IFRC). There is an active MHPSS TWG in Goma convened by the national NGO- TPO DRC, and the Department of Health. Assessments have already been conducted by MHPSS TWG members – see: <https://app.mhpss.net/groups/current-mhpss-emergency-responses/drc-2018-mhpss/>

IFRC PS Centre

The IFRC have deployed a Liaison officer to WHO's Coordinating unit in Geneva, in addition to having health teams on the ground. IFRC has a Psychosocial Delegate in place (from first week in Sept) to support the work of the Congolese Red Cross (Croix Rouge) in their response. The PSS delegate is initially deployed for a 4-6 week period with the possibility of extension or replacement. Congolese Red Cross are responding through their health clinics and community volunteer networks. The focus is on risk education, psychosocial support, safe and dignified burials, social mobilisation, community engagement, surveillance and response mechanisms, and infection and prevention control at the clinic and community level. ICRC have an ongoing MHPSS programme in Goma, which continues, however they are working through the Congolese Croix Rouge (National Society) for the EVD response.

International Medical Corps

- Requested to construct and manage an emergency treatment centre (ETC) in North Kivu (Makeke).
- Providing infection prevention control (IPC) including PPE items to healthcare workers
- Planning to construct SRUs (Screening and Referral Units) in 8-9 health structures and has begun IPC training for health facility staff
- Seeking an MHPSS Coordinator to be deployed to support with the response in North Kivu asap.

- Published recent journal article in Intervention Journal on Integrating psychosocial support into Ebola Virus Disease response in Sierra Leone and Liberia: <http://www.interventionjournal.org/article.asp?issn=1571-8883;year=2018;volume=16;issue=2;page=69;epage=78;aulast=Weissbecker>

Anthrologica/ Humanitarian and Social Science Platform

Mixture of anthropologists, social science and communication experts.

Created operational briefs on Equateur province in DRC (suffered from an earlier outbreak of EVD) and North Kivu provinces. Operational briefs focused on socio-cultural issues, health seeking behaviour and burial practices. Linked to the Communication 4 Development platform (C4D) and the WHO risk communication and community engagement group. All documents are available on MHPSS.net: <https://app.mhpss.net/groups/current-mhpss-emergency-responses/drc-2018-mhpss/>

TPO DRC

Are convening the MHPSS TWG in North Kivu along with the Department of Health. Have conducted 2 assessments on the EVD in North Kivu – with a focus on its impact on children. Unicef are training para-social workers on how to respond to EVD and how to adapt group activities for children so as not to increase the risk or rate of infections (e.g., adaptations to child friendly spaces, classrooms, children’s clubs etc). TPO reported that the Ministry of Health is in the process of contracting an academic from the University of Kinshasa to conduct additional trainings for para-social workers and members of the MHPSS TWG in Goma. The next TWG meeting was scheduled for 31 August 2018.

UNHCR

Monitoring the situation – a watching brief. The EVD has not occurred in refugee-hosting areas of the DRC, however there are Congolese refugees in neighbouring countries. UNHCR teams in Uganda and Rwanda are conducting emergency preparedness activities in anticipation of the EVD spreading across the borders and affecting both refugee and host populations.

CP AoR Francophone Helpdesk

The desk is based in Dakar, Senegal, hosted by Institute Bioforce. The French Help Desk is a decentralised support service for Francophone Child Protection coordination group in humanitarian coordination and early warning contexts. The expectations of the French Help desk include – local actors will have increased access to resources in their working language and will more effectively be able to contribute to regional and global initiatives, consultations and policy-advocacy initiatives. The desk is recently set up and they are in the process of compiling resources. Contacts: adama.diallo@institutbioforce.fr

Action Points

- WHO to circulate the 2-page EVD briefing note (currently under development with Anthrologica)
- Please contact WHO if agencies plan to deploy MHPSS capacity, Fahmy: hannaf@who.int and/ or risk communication and community engagement expertise, Ahaluck: bhatiaseviap@who.int
- Francophone CP AoR Helpdesk and MHPSS.net to share resources and link to MHPSS TWG members.
- Agreement to wait until agencies have deployed additional MHPSS capacity to North Kivu province before holding a follow-up conference call at the global level.
- All responding RG member agencies are encouraged to join the DRC group on MHPSS.net and share resources. It is particularly important for country-level staff to be part of the group and have access to resources in relevant languages.
- Pieter Ventevogel will be visiting Uganda in mid-September to follow up with the refugee response. Please get in contact with him should any of your agencies run MHPSS Programmes in Uganda: ventevog@unhcr.org