



Anatomy of an outbreak-How Congo learnt from the 2014 Ebola crisis and is dealing with the situation this year

Posted at: 06/08/2018

Highlights

- The Ebola virus returned to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) just days after the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced, on July 24, that the Ebola outbreak had ended there.
- Congo says it has recorded a fresh outbreak in North Kivu province — the tenth instance in the country since the virus was discovered in 1976.
- At least four samples have tested positive and the majority of cases are in Mangina, about 30 km from Beni city, a densely populated area.

While Congo has displayed its considerable experience and also promptness in its response, WHO has also made similar moves.

- Hours after the outbreak was declared on May 8, WHO released \$1 million from its Contingency Fund for Emergencies.
- Its multidisciplinary team began an active search for cases and people who had come in contact with those who were infected.
- Then, treatment facilities and mobile laboratories were set up and the community educated on safe practices.

In 2014, when Ebola had struck three West African countries (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone), these measures were delayed and were responsible for the spread and high mortality.

- Despite the heightened global risk, the WHO's Emergency Committee has not viewed it to be a 'Public Health Emergency of International Concern', which is a formal WHO declaration.

Reasons for good response

- There are reasons for this being The first is the “rapid and comprehensive” response by the government, WHO and other partners.
- The second reason is the availability of VSV-EBOV, an investigational vaccine, developed by Canada's National Microbiology Laboratory and manufactured by Merck.
- In results of the 2015 vaccination trial carried out in Guinea the vaccine offered “substantial protection” against Ebola.
- Though the vaccine is still to be approved by a regulatory agency for commercial use, it

has been approved for 'compassionate use' in outbreaks. "Vaccination will be key to controlling this outbreak.

While it took nearly 30 months to control the 2014 West African epidemic (more than 28,600 people were infected and 11,300 died), it took less than three months in the case of the May 8 outbreak.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

