



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

MEDIA STATEMENT ON THE EBOLA PREPAREDNESS MEASURES IN KENYA FOLLOWING THE CONTINUING OUTBREAK IN WEST AFRICA

Date: 13th August, 2014

On 21st March, 2014, the Ministry of Health was informed about an outbreak of Ebola in Guinea. This outbreak quickly spread initially to neighboring Liberia within five days and to Sierra Leone on 25th May 2014. On 20th July 2014, Nigeria became the latest West African country to confirm the outbreak.

By 11th August 2014, the Ebola virus had infected a total of 1,884 people in the four countries out of which 1,013 (55%) had died.

Ebola virus is transmitted by direct contact with body fluid or secretions such as blood, urine, sweat, saliva vomitus and stool from infected people. It is highly infectious and may kill up to 90% of the people who are infected.

The Ministry of Health has been closely monitoring the evolution of this outbreak in West Africa. We have noted that this is the most severe outbreak of Ebola on record.

- It has affected a high number of people with an equally high number of deaths
- It is taking long to put it under control
- There are confirmed cases in three different continents too: Africa, America and Europe

Kenya receives more than 76 flights from the affected countries weekly, mainly operated by KQ, Ethiopian Airlines and Rwanda Air.

Therefore, there is heavy human traffic between the affected countries and Kenya, hence the need for enhanced preparedness for prevention of possible introduction of the virus into the country, and early detection and response.

For these reasons, the Ministry has implemented the following measures in order to prevent importation of cases into the country and prepare for early detection and appropriate response to mitigate the public health impact:

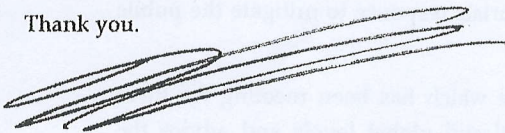
1. The Ministry has constituted a multiagency Ebola Task Force which has been meeting for three months now to assess the situation at local, country, regional and global levels and advice the Ministry on response activities. This task force that comprises public health experts and other stakeholders will continue to meet regularly until the Ebola Outbreak is controlled.
2. I issued a press statement on 27th March and on 8th July 2014 informing all health workers and the public about the outbreak in West Africa. The purpose was to create awareness and mobilize all stakeholders to collectively contribute to our Ebola outbreak preparedness and response strategies.
3. The Ministry has been working with airlines to screen travelers who come from or transit through West Africa. For such travelers, a minimum package of information (including personal details, exact location of origin/transit and presence of any suggestive signs and symptoms) are collected to aid personal risk assessment and daily follow-up for 21 days if they will still be resident in the country. To date, more than 10,000 travelers from West Africa have been screened.

4. Diagnostic laboratory for Ebola and other hemorrhagic fevers is well established at Kenya Medical research Centre (KEMRI).
5. Ebola fact sheets and travelers' information sheets indicating mode of infection, signs and symptoms, prevention and appropriate health seeking behavior have also been provided to health workers, incoming and outgoing travelers and to all airlines operating on West African routes.
6. The Ministry has established temporary holding rooms at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) where suspected cases of Ebola cases will be retained and assessed further while awaiting possible transfer to isolation facilities.
7. An isolation facility has been identified at Kenyatta National Hospital and additional isolation facility will be made available at Mbagathi District Hospital in Nairobi. Assessment for potential isolation facilities is ongoing in Uasin Gishu County, Busia County, Kajiado County, Mombasa County and other major towns near ports of entry into Kenya.
8. The Ministry has secured special Personal Protective Equipment which are being distributed in strategic regional hospitals for use if needed. These will protect our staff who may attend to suspect cases.
9. The Ministry has developed an Ebola Contingency Plan to guide the implementation of prevention, preparedness and response activities. This will create order in responding to the threat from the outbreak in West Africa and create synergy among the various actors.
10. 100 Health workers have been trained on Ebola Management and an additional 200 will be trained over the next 3 weeks.

We are currently exploring the possibility of holding a sub regional meeting involving all member states of the East African Community and Ethiopia to develop a common approach to the threat posed by Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

The Ministry of Health will remain vigilant, and continue to work closely with both international and local stakeholders to strengthen our Ebola Outbreak preparedness and response plan. In conclusion, let me thank all stakeholders including the media for their continued support to the Ministry.

Thank you.



James Macharia
Cabinet Secretary