

Ebola Resurfaces

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Ebola crisis in 2014 had a severe effect on multiple African governments.
- The disease has returned in parts of “Democratic Republic of Congo” (DRC) with new outbreaks getting reported recently.

\n

\n\n

How is the current outbreak playing out in Congo?

\n\n

\n

- Recently, just days after World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that the Ebola crisis had ended in DRC, newer incidences were reported again.
- The current outbreak in Northern Province of Kivu appears to be unrelated to the previous occurrence about 2,500 km away at Equateur Province.
- While Ebola is a constant threat in DRC, the detection of incidences is said to be an indicator of a properly functional health surveillance system.
- Importantly, the response of the DRC government to the current episode was praised as prompt and skilful (having learnt from previous events).
- On its part, the WHO too released \$1 million from its Contingency Fund for Emergencies immediately after the outbreak was reported.
- 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.

\n

\n\n

How is the current episode in contrast with the 2014 one?

\n\n

- \n
- In 2014, Ebola had struck three West African countries namely - “Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone” and caused high mortality.
- \n
- At that time, local and international health initiatives to counter the outbreak were slow and resultantly the disease spread widely.
- \n
- Notably, in contrast to the current WHO response, its “Emergency Committee” convened in 2014 only after some 1,000 people had died.
- \n
- Further, the current episode has not been declared as a ‘Public Health Emergency of International Concern’, by the WHO.
- \n
- This is mainly because, the swift response by the DRC government, WHO team and other partners is felt to have averted any major risk.
- \n

\n\n

At what stage is the vaccine development at?

\n\n

- \n
- “VSV-EBOV” vaccine, which was developed recently by Canadian researchers, is now under testing, and holds considerable promise to curtail Ebola.
- \n
- Notably, pending comprehensive trial results, the vaccine has already been approved for compassionate use in case of emergencies.
- \n
- Currently, the first batch of more than 4,000 doses of vaccine was recently dispatched to DRC through a WHO monitored project chain.
- \n
- Health workers and vulnerable populations are being selectively administered the vaccine to curtail the spread of the disease.
- \n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n\n

\n

