

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONSORTIUM FOR EPIDEMICS RESEARCH AND RESPONSE (ICER) POSITION STATEMENT

CALL FOR ACTION FOR NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES AND THE AFRICAN UNION TO SUPPORT EFFORTS TO CONTAIN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO'S RESPONSE TO THE OUTBREAK OF BUNDIBUGYO VIRUS DISEASE

Background

At the peak of the West African outbreak of ebolavirus disease; the African Union mobilized different African countries to support the three affected countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea to control and contain the epidemic. Even then, 22,000 cumulative cases and 11,000 fatalities accrued within a protracted period of 3 years (2013 to 2016) with estimated losses of approximately US\$54 billion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Over the past 2 months since 15th May 2026 when the WHO and Africa CDC declared the outbreak of Bundibugyo virus disease (BVD) in DRC and Uganda a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and Public Health Emergency of Continental Security (PHECS) respectively, there has been no organized efforts by African countries and the African Union (AU) to support the affected countries.

With the exception of Uganda – whose strategy for response to the threat of continued importation of cases from the epicentre in Ituri Province included the plan to deploy surge capacities within key border points in the DRC, all that we have seen other neighboring countries do is prepare and wait.

Mobilization of resources has largely been by multilateral health agencies with little or no support from African and indigenous bodies.

The call to action

In lieu of the following:

1. The rapidly evolving epidemiology of this outbreak (whereby 3973 cases and 1801 fatalities have accrued in under three (3) months; numbers reminiscent of the total cases and fatalities seen during the 2018-2020 Kivu outbreak
2. The threat this outbreak poses to not only the DRC, but regional and continental stability
3. With the exception of Uganda, the inertia or inaction from the region and nations neighboring the DRC and other member States of the African Union.

Academics, scientists, researchers and innovators working on epidemics under their regional umbrella of the Interdisciplinary Consortium for Epidemic Research and response (ICER) – East and Central Africa, hereby:

- 1. Thank the government of DRC for its openness and willingness to embrace the regional, continental and international community as partners to support local efforts to contain this outbreak**
- 2. Call on all Nations neighboring the DRC, to mobilize resources inclusive of personnel, to support the DRC in the manner Uganda has already done, to meet the surge needs of the DRC response to the outbreak, before it spills over to another country**
- 3. Beckon the African Union to mobilize other member States and Global Partners, to arrest this outbreak in its trenches, before it turns into a similar or even worse disaster as was the case of the 2013-to-2016 EVD outbreak in West Africa.**

The scientists under the umbrella of ICER collectively author and support these recommendations. The scientists are drawn from countries in East and Central Africa i.e., Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, DRC, Zambia, Central African Republic.