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### BOLA OUTBREAK:

**“WE ARE IN A GAME OF CATCH-UP UNLESS A COLLECTIVE EFFORT IS MADE THIS CRISIS IS GOING TO GET WORSE”**

The race is on to contain an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo before it spirals further in a country where decimated healthcare systems were slow to pick up on the disease and are ill equipped to stop the disease spreading, Save the Children said.

At least 500 suspected cases of Ebola including 130 deaths have been reported in the DRC since the new outbreak began two weeks ago, according to the World Health Organization.

As Save the Children prepares to launch a large-scale response to support local health systems and help Ebola-impacted families and children, the aid agency is calling for an urgent global effort to contain the virus.

In previous outbreaks of Ebola, young children infected by the disease through contact with unwell caregivers and family members have often experienced high mortality. Beyond the health risks of the disease itself, children are also at particular risk of trauma and exploitation during an Ebola outbreak. Due to the high fatality rate with the Ebola virus disease, many children may lose one or both parents in an outbreak and face being stigmatized, isolated, or abandoned.

The Ebola outbreak is yet another crisis to hit DRC which has seen a sharp uptick this year in conflict, creating one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises with 5.6 million people including about 2.5 million children internally displaced while 15 million people – almost one in every seven people – need humanitarian assistance.

Greg Ramm, Save the Children's Country Director in the DRC, said:

“The Ebola outbreak is a new massive crisis on top of an already difficult situation with a unique set of circumstances making this outbreak much more difficult to contain than we've seen recently. It is in an area of conflict, an area of humanitarian crisis, with hundreds of thousands of people displaced and healthcare systems are already severely compromised.

“This is also a different strain of Ebola to what has been seen in the province before, so the limited testing that was available in the province was testing for the Zaire strain and not coming up positive. By the time the Bundibugyo strain was detected, it had already spread quite far. We are in a game of catch-up.

“There's been a healthcare crisis across the DRC for years, yet the world's attention tends to peak at a moment of an unusual disease, like mpox two years ago and now, with Ebola. It is important that the world doesn't lose interest when this outbreak is over and that everything is done so that the children of DRC can get the basic healthcare services they need, any time they need them.

“Our priority is to stop further spread, which means getting messages out about how to stay safe, about how to reduce contact, about avoiding direct contact with somebody who is sick. It's about getting basic infection prevention and control measures into health centres and, where there's not enough chlorine or disinfectant, get those supplies out.

“Right now, it's critical the international community steps up to support efforts to protect children and families in DRC while helping halt further spread. We need the equipment, we need teams on the ground, and we need people to do what they can to keep people safe.”

Save the Children started working in DRC in 1994. Today, we collaborate with 13 local partners, alongside international organizations and government authorities, to provide life-saving support in health, nutrition, education, child protection, food security, and water, sanitation, and hygiene for children and their families.

We operate in the three eastern provinces most affected by the humanitarian crisis—North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri—where nearly six million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees are in urgent need of assistance as well as in Kasai, Kasai Oriental and Lomami on development projects in education, health and nutrition.

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