

African Partner Outbreak Response Alliance (APORA)

Information Paper



INTRODUCTION

The threat of emerging and reemerging especially dangerous pathogens in Africa is made more alarming by the lack of adequate early warning detection and early and efficient response.

African militaries play significant role in outbreak detection, response and recovery.

The recent Ebola outbreak is one of the largest Ebola outbreaks in history and is the first to hit West Africa. Ebola has been detected across West Africa, causing over than 3,000 deaths to-date. West African nations, with fragile health-care systems had no experience in fighting the disease. Lack of comprehensive outbreak response plans, trained health-care workers and commodities contributed to the widespread of the disease.

In addition to the impact of disease outbreak on Partner African Nations, the unidentified emerging infectious diseases pose a significant threat to the US personnel involved in missions in Africa. Moreover, global health security and political stability are threatened by outbreaks of diseases.

Reducing the risks of disease outbreak requires reliable and validated response plan that include detection, response and recovery. This project provides a comprehensive plan to fill the gaps and needs of African Partner Nations to combat disease outbreak at different levels.

The action plan will take into account the International Health Regulations 2005 (IHR-2005) guidelines. The purpose and scope of the IHR (2005) are “to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic.”¹

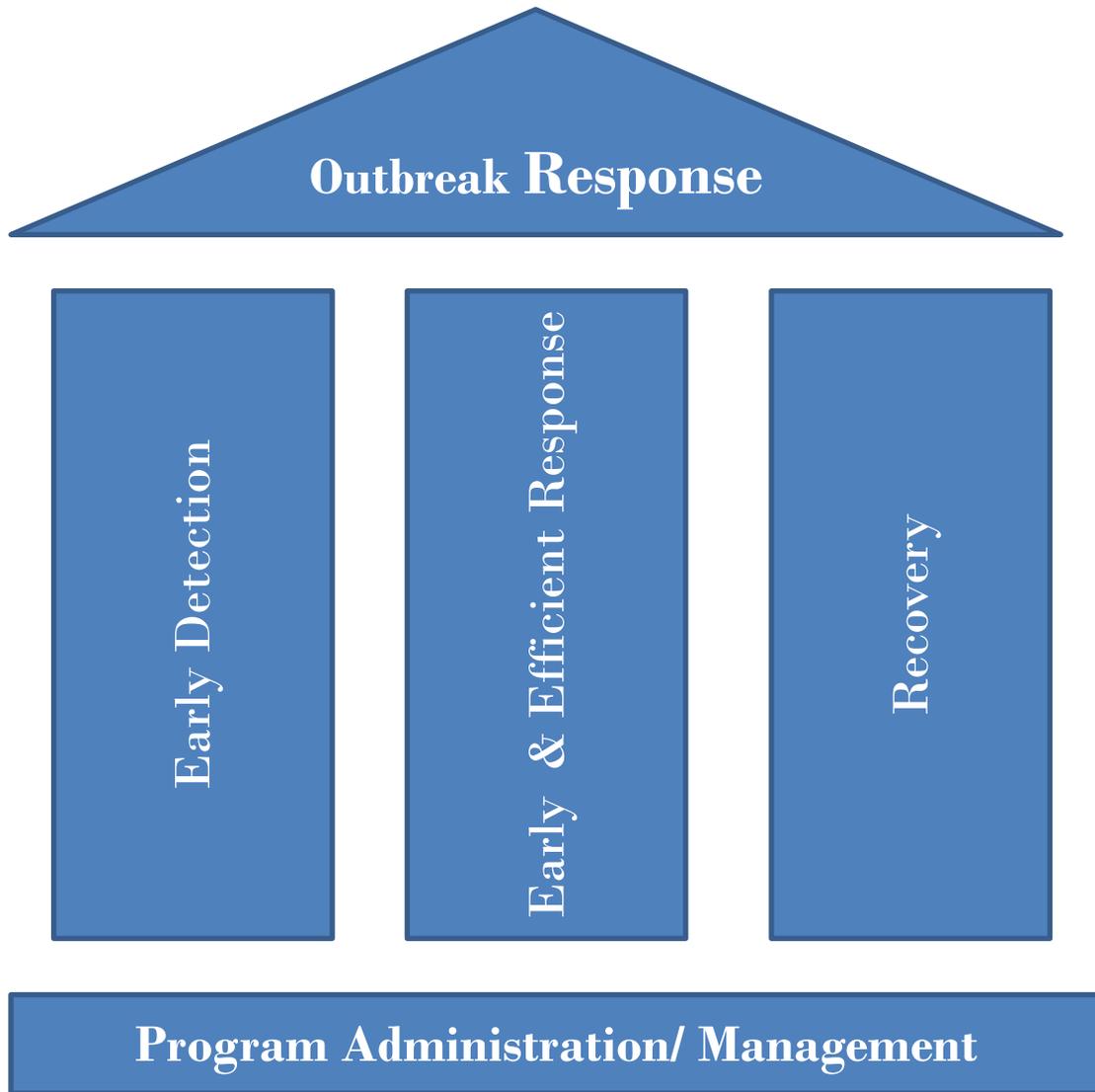
OUTBREAK RESPONSE

An outbreak is defined as a situation when the observed number of cases exceeds the expected number. However, with certain especially dangerous pathogens such as Ebola, a single case justifies an in-depth epidemiological and environmental investigation. This information paper

¹ IHR (2005) http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241580410_eng.pdf

provides summary of the outbreak pillars, milestones to identify and fill gaps in outbreak response.²

Outbreak Response Pillars:



Early Detection

² World Health Organization http://www.who.int/topics/disease_outbreaks/en/

- Disease surveillance that provides accurate and complete information on the nature of the disease, location, affected population, etc.
- Establish collaboration between veterinary and human health care facilities
- Clinical case definitions that are usable to both clinicians and public health workers
- Investigative teams prepared for deployment to the outbreak site within 24 hours.
- On-the-spot investigations, confirmation of diagnosis, handling of dangerous pathogens and case detection

Early and Efficient Response

- Prevention of further spread of the disease
- Patient management, containment
- Provision of logistics in the form of staff and supplies (PPE, antiviral, and vaccines when available, temporary shelters, quarantine centers)
- Risk Communication
- Security and law enforcement (border monitoring, secure logistics and supplies, secure quarantine sites etc.)
- Safe burial of corpses

Recovery

- Assess effectiveness of emergency plans
- Document lessons learned
- Revise emergency response plans as needed
- Evaluate financial and social impact
- Resettlement of IDPs and refugees
- Reconstruction of damaged health care facilities

Program Administration/Management

The success of any health program depends on investment in capacity building of human resources in terms of strengthening their skills for better program planning, management, implementation and communication. Investing in military program managers is an opportunity to advance their abilities in the field of management of health programs, facilitation and strategic planning.

Program administration/management would provide:

- **Leadership skills:** To identify and strengthen personal and professional leadership to design and implement outbreak response programs at different levels.
- **Program Management:** To enhance effective program planning, team building, develops and applies techniques and tools for effective outbreak response program management.
- **Financial Management:** To enhance the trainees' abilities on budgeting, planning and financial record keeping
- **Communication:** Understands and applies strategic communication techniques to educate, motivate, and mobilize communities, policymakers, and international donors.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ALLIANCE:

- Advocate among national, regional, and international health and security organizations regarding the importance of the role of the military in outbreak response.
- Promote effective military-civilian partnerships in the health and security communities.
- Encourage regional and national program coordination and development by providing financial assistance to regional and national programs for military services.
- Provide technical assistance through identifying, documenting, and disseminating tools and guidance such as lessons learned, best practices, and research results.
- Identify areas for applied research to address gaps in pandemic response.
- Identify best practices from Africa Partners.
- Utilize current partners and mobilize new partners and additional financial resources for pandemic programs for the military services, and continued engagement with current partners.

Benefits of working at regional level:

- 1) Cost effective program administration
- 2) More viable and cost effective infrastructure projects
- 3) Avoid duplication of costs borne by individual states for the same services
- 4) Allow member nations to share the means of evaluating, comparing and exchanging knowledge and expertise

- 5) Improve cross-border and regional coordination
- 6) Promote and exchange policies and regulations among member nations
- 7) Improve communication with member nations in data sharing and collaborative actions during pandemics

PROJECT MILESTONES

AFRICOM will establish African Partner Outbreak Response Alliance using the already established Malaria Task Force network.

Phase one of the project will include the following countries:

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. Membership of the Alliance is open to any Partner Nation willing to join and contribute to the Alliance objectives.



1- Gap Analysis

Gap analysis is a process that helps compare actual performance with potential performance. The gap analysis process tries to answer the questions “Where are we?”, "Where do we want to be?" and “How do we get there?”

Gap analysis identifies disparities between current program performance and the optimized allocation and integration of resources. This process will help all parties identifying, documenting, and evaluating program requirements and current capabilities. Once the gaps are documented, it is possible to compare each country's perceived programmatic needs with the assets that are available to address those programmatic gaps.

USAFRICOM will develop tools to conduct gap analysis. Each member nation will be requested to conduct a gap analysis for the various outbreak components (Early Detection, Early and Efficient Response, Recovery).

The results of the gap analysis will be shared with different US agencies that are willing and capable to fill the identified gaps.

1- Alliance Meeting

Upon receipt of the gap analysis results, the Alliance member nations will be invited to a meeting in one of the West African Nations. In addition to member nations, different US agencies will be invited to present and discuss their proposals to fill the gaps with member nations. The meeting will achieve the following objectives:

- Discuss gap analysis results – conclusions of strengths and weaknesses of current programs
- Prioritize gaps according to their urgency and feasibility to fill
- Draft a roadmap for future capabilities and capacities needed by member nations
- Assign roles and responsibilities for the Alliance members to achieve the desired goals (short, medium and long term goals)
- Present and discuss US agencies’ proposals to fill gaps identified by member nations

2- Roadmap

Based on the results of the gap analysis and discussions at the above proposed meeting, a roadmap will be drafted.

The roadmap aims to:

- Establish roles and responsibilities of the Alliance’s member nations
- Plan the short-term and long-term goals in order to strengthen disease outbreak at the three levels (Detection, Response, and Recovery).
- Establish a timeframe to achieve short, medium and long term goals
- Guide and coordinate the regional response to disease outbreak
- Discuss programs Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) options

