Violent attacks on Ebola Treatment Centres threaten the lives of thousands of children in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Monday 11 March, 2019

To protect the most marginalised children, Chance for Childhood, an international children's charity based in Hampshire, is running Ebola prevention campaigns in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Since August 2018, a deadly crisis has been unfolding in the DRC. It is the largest Ebola outbreak the country has ever known and the second biggest Ebola outbreak ever recorded worldwide. According to the World Health Organisation, as of the 10th March 2019, the virus had already killed 582 people – 30% were under 18.

Just a few days ago the situation got even worse. Two Ebola treatment centres were attacked and burnt down. The remote North Kivu region has seen decades of devastating conflict and the volatile and insecure environment makes it even harder to combat the spread of this deadly disease.

As Anna-mai Andrews, CEO of Chance for Childhood, comments "We witnessed the devastation of the West African Ebola crisis five years ago, when action was not taken fast enough and tens of thousands of people died as a result. We have learned a lot from this and it is time for us to act. We need to urgently increase our support to the region to reach as many people as possible and prevent the virus from spreading. The lethal disease is now only 115 miles from the vulnerable children, families and communities we support in our existing projects. Let's act now and ensure we do not have blood on our hands."

Much remains to be done as explained by Christine Musaidizi, Director of our local partner Children's Voice, "The biggest problem is the lack of knowledge. Some people don't believe Ebola exists and they don't realise the dangers. Patients run away from treatment centres and hide in the local community, contaminating others in the process. Others want to bury their dead themselves, as is the custom here, without any protection."

Since August, Chance for Childhood and Children's Voice have been running Ebola education campaign. So far they have educated 2,650 children, 800 adults and 300 public transport users on what they can do to keep safe. Members of the communities now know how to identify the symptoms and are taking simple measures to prevent its spread. They have also provided hand washing facilities to schools. Radio has been used to reach those living in rural areas. By broadcasting across North Kivu, over 120,000 people have received information on how to keep safe.

As Alessandra Podesta, Chance for Childhood's DRC Country Representative, concludes "Ebola spreads quickly and educating vulnerable children and their families on keeping safe has never been more important. We must act quickly to make sure that a further 3,000 children can access life-saving Ebola prevention campaigns."

Chance for Childhood is urgently raising funds to extend its prevention work to a further nine schools and their local communities. To donate to our Ebola emergency appeal, go to www.chanceforchildhood.org/ebolafund

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Chance for Childhood

Chance for Childhood is an award-winning charity working in Africa to support the most vulnerable children, such as street children, disabled children, children affected by conflict and kids behind bars. Our vision is of a world where no child is forgotten!

We work with and strengthen the capacity of African visionary community leaders to implement effective, locally-relevant projects. This enables us to focus on 'hard to reach' children, both in terms of their

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complex needs (e.g. street children with learning difficulties) and location (e.g. urban violent slums or remote rural areas). Together we make ideas and impact both sustainable and scalable to protect, educate and empower even more of the world’s most disadvantaged children.

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