

## Media Release

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **SAVE THE CHILDREN DEPLOYS EMERGENCY HEALTH UNIT TO HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF EBOLA**

Save the Children is deploying a team of medical workers in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to help raise public awareness of the deadly Ebola virus—especially among children.

Heather Kerr, Save the Children’s Country Director in DRC said: “While the DRC has successfully rooted out previous outbreaks of the disease, this one is proving tougher to eradicate as a result of its spread to the city.

“Compared to rural parts of the country, people who catch the disease in urban areas are predicted to come into contact with three times as many people who could potentially become infected and therefore need tracing. As a result of the spread to the city of Mbandaka, modelling for the number of potential cases has tripled.”

“Total vigilance is now required to ensure there is no spark to ignite an epidemic.

“Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the disease—leaving them at risk of losing their parents and caregivers, and of suffering stigma and isolation due to fear of.

“Education and awareness will be key to eliminating this outbreak, which so far has claimed the lives of nearly 30 people.”

Working in close coordination with the government of DRC and the and the World Health Organisation (WHO), the team of four emergency health unit workers will be helping people in and around Kinshasa recognise the signs and symptoms of the deadly virus, and how to help stop its spread. They will also train health staff, supply existing health facilities with medical supplies, and develop child-friendly materials to ensure critical messages reach the most vulnerable communities.

“For DRC, an outbreak in the Kinshasa – the capital of nearly ten million people which is connected to the affected area by the Congo river – would be the worst case scenario. It’s vital we mobilise there now to ensure that doesn’t happen,” Ms. Kerr added.

Authorities and health partners in the Equateur area have been working on a quick and effective response plan for controlling the outbreak, which includes surveillance, case management, infection prevention and control, safe and dignified burials.

A new vaccine—which is part of new and important developments in treatment options for Ebola since the 2014 outbreak—is also currently being rolled out to health workers in the affected areas.

Despite this progress, there are fears the latest Ebola outbreak in DRC risks making an already dire humanitarian situation worse.

“Racked by conflict and hunger, thirteen million people are in need of urgent life-saving aid, making it one of the world’s largest—yet most underreported—humanitarian crises,” said Ms. Kerr.

“The international community and donors must not ignore the plight of the Congolese. We urge them to continue providing life-saving funds so that organisations providing vital healthcare, education and emotional support to vulnerable children affected by this country-wide emergency can continue their life-saving work.”

## **ENDS**

### **About Save the Children**

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In New Zealand and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children’s unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

### **To arrange interviews, please contact:**

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