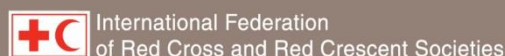


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Information bulletin

DPR Korea: Influenza A Outbreak



Glide n° EP-2018-000012-PRK	Date of issue: 26 January 2018
Date of disaster: Ongoing from 1 December 2017	Point of contact: Ri Ho Rim, Secretary General DPRK Red Cross Society
Host National Society: Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Red Cross Society	
Number of people affected: 200,000 approximately	Categorization of disaster: Yellow ¹

This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea Red Cross Society (DPRK RCS), with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has determined that available information points toward significant humanitarian needs that may require support from the IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund.

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The situation

On 19 January 2018 the Vice Minister of Public Health (MoPH) officially informed the World Health Organization (WHO) Country Office in Pyongyang of an outbreak of Influenza A (H1N1) stating that between 1 December 2017 and 16 January 2018 there was a total of 126,574 suspected influenza cases – individuals presenting with influenza-like illness. Of these, 81,640 cases were confirmed as Influenza A (H1N1) and as per the Ministry communication there had been four deaths – three children and one adult. According to the Ministry, 24.5 per cent of suspected influenza cases (numbering 31,010) were among children aged 0-7 years, 22.8 per cent (n= 28,858) were among children 8-16 years and the rest 52.7 per cent (n= 66,706), were among those who were above 17 years. The outbreak has become generalized throughout the country with 28.7 per cent of cases in the capital city – Pyongyang. The government has requested support for influenza vaccination targeting high-risk individuals with the MoPH specifically requesting 30,000 Oseltamivir tablets for healthcare workers. WHO has so far dispatched 5,000 tablets with 30,000 in the pipeline to distribute to frontline healthcare workers and vulnerable groups. There is a request to strengthen the non-pharmaceutical aspect of the operation with an emphasis on public health including surveillance and preventive activities with all agencies (WHO, UNICEF) requested to support with conducting an effective communication programme. So far, the outbreak has not been graded as WHO is awaiting further epidemiological information from the MoPH including the age break down of suspected and confirmed cases, number of pregnant women affected and confirmation of the type of influenza.

¹ Based on the IFRC Secretariat's Operational Response Framework. This categorization implies that the response intervention is within the capacity of the National Society of an affected country to manage with resources available in-country. If requested, the IFRC country office may provide any necessary technical or management support to the National Society, and if required, the IFRC regional office may support the mobilization of regional disaster response tools, with Geneva supporting the allocation of Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF).

The current priorities of the government are centered on the need to:

- Reduce mortality through case management and detection of severe cases with adequate referral systems, prioritizing the vulnerable risk population
- Vaccinate high-risk groups and healthcare workers
- Initiate and bring to scale awareness campaigns focusing on prevention through social distancing, cough etiquette, handwashing and use of personal protection including masks and gloves for healthcare workers and families with a suspected case
- Monitoring need for measures such as school closures or social distancing based on evidence on a case by case basis
- Reduce anxiety if any in the population through dissemination of accurate and timely information
- Review of the epidemiological pattern of flu epidemic this season in northern China to assess any relationship
- Conduct accurate and timely weekly collection of data.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea Red Cross Society (DPRK RCS) is meeting daily with the MoPH to coordinate activities and better understand the needs and gaps. The IFRC country office in Pyongyang met with WHO on Tuesday 24 January and were briefed along with other UN and NGO agencies on the developing situation. The IFRC and DPRK RCS met on 25 January to assess how Red Cross can contribute to efforts in limiting the outbreak. The DPRK RCS may require support in assisting the MoPH with procurement of some key consumables such as Rapid Testing Kits and support social mobilization focusing on prevention and surveillance.



**DPRK RCS Volunteers in H1N1 preparedness training in Ponghung ri, Kumya county, South Hamgyong province.
Photo: DPRK RCS**

The DPRK RCS has on-going programmes in health, water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and disaster management (DM)/disaster risk reduction (DRR) and have trained staff and volunteers in epidemic control, and as such is well placed to assist with social mobilization focusing on signs, symptoms, prevention and treatment of the illness. The DPRK RCS will discuss the priority geographical locations with the MoPH understanding that the outbreak is nationwide with 28.7 per cent of cases in Pyongyang where they do not at present have community activities. They have community-based activities using the Community Based Health and First Aid (CBHFA) approach and have 35 trainers in the Epidemic Control for Volunteers (ECV) methodology as well as having trained 200 volunteers in ECV. Additionally, the DPRK RCS has strong links with 500 health facilities where they have for many years distributed medicines.

The National Society has actively commenced preparations for Red Cross volunteers to be equipped with personal protection equipment (PPE) and provided with training or refresher training in ECV.

The IFRC DPRK country office is supporting the DPRK RCS in disseminating updates to Movement partners and is coordinating with the IFRC country cluster support team (CCST) in Beijing and the Asia Pacific regional office in Kuala Lumpur. The IFRC continues to closely coordinate with the DPRK RCS to determine the appropriate response and to process possible request for support from the IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF).

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

Democratic People's Republic of Korea Red Cross Society (DPRK RCS)

- Kim Jong Ho, DM director, phone: +850 2 4350, email: dprk-rc@star-co.net.kp
- Ri Un Hye (Mrs), Health director, phone, +850 2 4350, email: dprk-rc@star-co.net.kp

IFRC DPRK country office, Pyongyang

- Joseph Muyambo, acting head of country office; phone: +850 2 381 4350; +850 191 250 1149; email: joseph.muyambo@ifrc.org
- John Fleming, Health & WASH manager: john.fleming@ifrc.org

IFRC regional office for Asia Pacific, Kuala Lumpur

- Martin Faller, deputy regional director; email: martin.faller@ifrc.org
- Johanna Arvo, surge operations coordinator; mobile: +60 19 272 6114; email: johanna.arvo@ifrc.org
- Rosemarie North, communications manager ; email : rosemarie.north@ifrc.org

For IFRC Resource Mobilization and Pledges support:

- Sophia Keri, resource mobilization in emergencies coordinator; email: sophia.keri@ifrc.org

Please send all pledges for funding to zonerm.asiapacific@ifrc.org

For Performance and Accountability support (planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting enquiries)

- Clarence Sim, PMER manager; email: clarence.sim@ifrc.org



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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

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The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.