

Social Science in Humanitarian Action

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Remote response to Ebola outbreak in DRC

The Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform is supporting UNICEF, WHO, IFRC and other partners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to respond to the Ebola outbreak in Equateur Province. The Platform has four key streams of action:

1. Rapid briefs

A series of rapid operational briefs are being produced. These focus on key socio-cultural considerations regarding i) context and local specifics that may influence transmission and response; and ii) key themes that we can predict will be significant to the outbreak (e.g. local burial practices, health seeking behaviours etc). The briefs agreed to date are:

- a) *Key socio-cultural considerations: vaccine introduction and related community behaviour* (available in English and French, <http://www.socialscienceinaction.org/resources/socio-cultural-considerations-vaccine-introduction-community-engagement-ebola-outbreak-drc-may-2018/>)
- b) *Key socio-cultural considerations: local burial practices* (to be released by 6 June)
- c) *Key socio-cultural considerations: health beliefs and behaviours* (to be released by 15 June)
- d) *Key socio-cultural considerations: Equateur Province, DRC* (to be released by 15 June)

The rapid briefs present high-level key-considerations and action-orientated recommendations that can be used to shape interventions and engagement. As such, they will be of use across the response in addition to community engagement work. There is scope to develop more briefs depending on need and in response to direct requests from partners.

2) Tools – question bank

A question bank is being produced that will include key questions clustered around a series of themes including: health beliefs and health-seeking behaviour; local burial practices; knowledge and perceptions of Ebola; knowledge and perceptions of the Ebola vaccine; trusted communication channels; and key influencers. These will be shared on the Platform's website, with partners in the DRC, and with the social mobilisation pillar of the response.

The questions can be tailored by partners to fit their needs on the ground and can be adapted for different methodologies (e.g. KAP studies, focus group discussions, key informant interviews etc.)

Additional themes and questions can be developed, and expanded into more detailed frameworks for rapid research depending on need and in response to direct requests from partners. As with the briefs, the question bank will be produced in English and French.

3) Technical expertise and remote analysis

When helpful and appropriate, the Platform can support partners on the ground by providing additional technical expertise to assist with the development of tools and rapid research protocols (in line with the GOARN Social Science Group). The Platform can also undertake rapid analysis of data gathered and help translate the findings into operational recommendations as needed.

4) Network of advisors

The Platform, in collaboration with the GOARN Social Science Group, the LSHTM and other partners including the Réseau Anthropologie des Epidémies Emergentes is developing a network of advisors who can provide additional expertise as required. These include international and national social scientists from a number of disciplines who have relevant experience related to outbreaks and response, Ebola, vaccine introduction, the DRC (particularly Equateur Province) and neighbouring countries engaged in preparedness activities.

If you have a direct request concerning the response to Ebola in the DRC, regarding a brief, tools, additional technical expertise or remote analysis, or should you like to be considered for the network of advisors, please contact us.

To contact the Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform directly, please email Juliet Bedford (julietbedford@anthrologica.com) and Santiago Ripoll (s.ripoll@ids.ac.uk)

Key Platform liaison points: UNICEF: Ketan Chitnis (kchitnis@unicef.org)
WHO: Ashaluck Bhatiasevi (bhatiaseviap@who.int)
IFRC: Ombretta Baggio (ombretta.baggio@ifrc.org)
Social mobilisation pillar in DRC: (jdshadid@unicef.org)



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