

## **Press release: New UK aid for safe and dignified burials to tackle Ebola in DRC**

Minister for Africa announces UK aid funding for safe and dignified burials on visit to Ebola-hit region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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Harriett Baldwin MP, UK Minister for Africa, has announced new funding to help deal with the Ebola crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), on a four-day visit to the country.

It is the first visit by any UK Minister to the country since the Ebola outbreak in North Kivu and Ituri provinces began last August. The UK remains one of the largest donors to the outbreak and has taken the threat of Ebola seriously since the start.

On Monday she announced that new UK aid funds would be provided to the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) to help carry out safe and dignified burials.

Bodies of Ebola victims are particularly infectious, with transmission of the disease often occurring at funerals where people help wash their loved ones before interment. Burials have been a contentious issue in DRC as Ebola victims are put in body bags and cannot be touched.

The new DFID support will provide IFRC burial teams with essential equipment – including gloves, hand disinfectant, masks, protective gowns, goggles, decontamination sprayers, stretchers and rope, as well as biohazardous body bags. The newly introduced body bags will also come with a clear plastic window so that relatives can see their loved one as they're laid to rest.

One of the major barriers in tackling the Ebola outbreak has been a breakdown of trust between the affected community and those trying to lead the response. This new support will help local people better understand the precautions and preventative measures they need to take at funerals.

Minister for Africa, Harriett Baldwin said:

The situation on the ground in DRC is extremely precarious. Health workers are operating in a dangerous context, but there is also a lot of mistrust among the community, with some believing that Ebola is not real. We must help change that.

We learnt from the West Africa outbreak that safe burial practices were a real turning point in gripping the crisis. This new UK aid funding I'm announcing today will help build trust in affected communities by improving local understanding of the work of the burial teams.

We are also calling on our international partners to step up to help fill the funding gap. The UK has been a major donor to the response and we need others to follow our lead – after all, disease does not respect borders.

IFRC Secretary General, Elhadj As Sy said:

This outbreak has reached a tipping point. We need to double down on our efforts to contain, control and end this outbreak. Community engagement and accountability will be critical for an effective response.

We thank the UK government for its support. It will ensure that Red Cross volunteers – all of whom come from the affected area – can maintain their engagement with communities, understanding their fears and concerns and adapting our response accordingly and appropriately.

DRC is battling the second largest Ebola outbreak in history and the first-ever in a conflict zone, with more than 70 armed groups operating in the east of the country. The number of cases has surpassed 1,800 and the death toll has exceeded 1,200.

Given the deteriorating situation, the International Development Secretary announced last week that the UK would be providing more funds and sending more UK experts to help strengthen the response.

After the West Africa outbreak in 2014, DFID funded the trial of a vaccine, which has been used during the current outbreak to great effect to vaccinate people who have been in contact with confirmed Ebola cases. The UK has also provided technical expertise through the UK Public Health England Rapid Support Team, and funding to help neighbouring countries prepare should the deadly virus spread across borders.

## **Notes to editors**

- The Government of DRC has requested that donors do not announce specific funding figures to avoid putting first-line responders at further risk of attack.

- The UK is calling for a new, stronger approach to responding to the Ebola outbreak, including tackling the mistrust of communities, which have suffered decades of conflict, and in some cases do not believe Ebola is real.
- The World Health Organisation assesses the risk of regional spread as very high, particularly to neighbouring countries (South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi).
- Public Health England considers the risk to the UK to be very low/negligible.
- To download photos from IFRC activities in North Kivu please click [here](#).
- The IFRC's Safe and Dignified Burial teams tend to comprise of six specially trained volunteers. The kits provided will enable them to carry out 20 burials.
- Kits for burials in North Kivu contain:
  - 200 disposable gloves
  - 200 metres of rope
  - 120 masks
  - 100 biohazardous material bags
  - 80 hoods with integrated masks
  - 80 hooded coveralls
  - 50 disposable protective gowns
  - 6 goggles
  - 6 heavy duty reusable aprons
  - 6 chemical protection gloves
  - 1 stretcher
  - 1 backpack sprayer that can contain 12 litres of disinfectant

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## **News story: Education Secretary: “Character and resilience are key to social mobility”**

Having a go at new activities and learning from failure will boost children's character and resilience, the Education Secretary has said today.

A new advisory group of experts in character education has been set up to look at how best to support schools to run more activities, which will help build character and resilience.

Alongside this Mr Hinds has called on young people, parents, teachers and community groups to give their views on what they think are the best non-academic activities to offer young people and how to make the most of them, as well as the traits and skills they need to get on in life.

Finding the right balance between academic study and other activities is crucial to helping young people achieve their goals, overcome challenges and develop their readiness for adulthood, aiming to help the most disadvantaged to compete more equally with their advantaged peers in the labour market.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

It's a good time of year to remind pupils that in 10 years' time their exam results might be a distant memory – but the life skills they acquire will stay with them forever.

Of course, I want every child to excel at school and do well in their exams – but this is just one part of how education prepares them for the future. Through school and college, young people gain the skills and qualifications they need to get a well-paid job, but to truly prepare for adult life we also need to make sure our young people build character and resilience.

Life lessons are learned by having a go. With all of us – but particularly young people – spending more and more time online, we should all put our phones down, look up and get involved in activities that stretch and challenge us.

The reason character and resilience matter so much to me is that they are key to social mobility. Social mobility starts with giving young people the unstoppable confidence that they can achieve amazing things, teaching them to cope with the challenges life brings and recognise their achievements – because they each have their own, unique potential to fulfil.

Research published by the Department for Education suggests that activities pupils are most interested in include sports, fitness and outdoor pursuits. In a survey of more than 2,500 pupils aged 11 to 16 and their parents or carers, sports and fitness was the most popular kind of activity, chosen by 50 per cent of school pupils and 43 per cent of college students. This was followed by 'outdoor pursuits in both age groups (27 per cent), with creative activities coming in third (22 per cent and 23 per cent).

It comes as families mark the May Bank Holiday, and follows the launch of the Department for Education's activity 'passport', a list of encouraged activities for different age groups to try new life experiences endorsed by the National Trust, Scouts and Girlguiding UK.

The call for evidence will help shape the recommendations the group makes later this year on character education, to reflect the voices and experiences of teachers, young people, educational professionals and the organisations that offer the kind of activities the Education Secretary has identified in his 5 foundations for building character.

The 5 foundations for building character encompass an extensive list of activities, which help young people build character. They are:

- Sport – which includes competitive sport and other activities, such as running, martial arts, swimming and purposeful recreational activities, such as rock climbing, hiking, orienteering, gym programmes, yoga or learning to ride a bike.
- Creativity – this involves all creative activities from coding, arts and crafts, writing, graphic design, film making and music composition.
- Performing – activities could include dance, theatre and drama, musical performance, choir, debating or public speaking.
- Volunteering & Membership – brings together teams, practical action in the service of others or groups, such as volunteering, getting involved in the #iwill campaign, litter-picking, fundraising, any structured youth programmes or uniformed groups like Beavers, Brownies, Cubs, Guides, Scouts, Cadets and Duke of Edinburgh.
- World of work – practical experience of the world of work, work experience or entrepreneurship. For primary age children, this may involve opportunities to meet role models from different jobs.

The advisory group is chaired by Ian Bauckham CBE of the Tenax School Trust and includes James Arthur OBE, Director of Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, and Dame Julia Cleverdon, Co-founder of Step up to Serve.

This builds on the approach schools already take on character education. It seeks to provide a framework to help schools consider how delivering these 5 foundations can best build character, alongside the ethos set by the school, its curriculum and wider offer it makes to its pupils.

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## **Press release: Readout of PM call with Prime Minister Modi: 25 May 2019**

The Prime Minister spoke to India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi to congratulate him on his success in the election.

The leaders agreed that the election was a significant exercise in democracy and that the authorities should be commended for delivering it so efficiently.

They also discussed the upcoming Cricket World Cup which the UK will host in June and July, and the passion for the sport that is shared between our two

countries.

Both leaders looked forward to continuing the close cooperation between our countries, including at the G20 Summit in Osaka next month.

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## **Press release: Readout of PM call with Prime Minister Modi: 25 May 2019**

Prime Minister Theresa May spoke with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi following his election success.