

Press Statement

For Immediate Release



Media workers at a local health facility in DRC Photo credie: ActionAid DRC

“Each day I worry about how I will provide the next meal for my family,” w omen reveal economic toll of Ebola outbreak

As confirmed Ebola cases pass 300 in Ituri province, ActionAid warns that the outbreak, compounded by an armed conflict, is decimating livelihoods. Women in the province have revealed how movement restrictions and fear of infection have limited their economic activities such as trading in local markets.

“In an area already destabilized by armed conflict, this outbreak is breaking the few safety nets women had left. Sadly, some women are being forced to choose between the enhanced risk of contracting the disease in crowded areas or the immediate threat of going hungry if they stay at home,” said **Dr. Saani Yakubu, the Country Director at ActionAid DRC.**

ActionAid’s recent rapid needs assessment in Nyankunde, Nizi and Bunia found that 58% of households reported being unable to access food markets regularly, while 74% of men interviewed reported severe economic impacts on their households due to market disruptions, fear-driven movement restrictions and illness-related costs. The assessment also found that 64% of surveyed households reported reduced access to healthcare, markets and education because of fear, insecurity and movement restrictions linked to the outbreak.

The burden of crippled local markets and disruption to children's education during a critical exam period is cause for concern.

Dheve Lotsove, an internally displaced woman living with her husband, mother, and seven children in Lonyo, Irumu territory, describes the heavy toll on her family;

"Since the Ebola outbreak was announced, everything has changed for me. Before, I used to support my family by selling vegetables, onions, tomatoes, bananas, and avocados. Every morning, I would carry a basin on my head and walk from village to village. On a good day, I could earn between \$20 and \$30, enough to feed my children and meet our basic needs."

"Today, I can no longer travel freely or go to the main market in Bunia where I used to buy my goods. Business has almost stopped, and each day I worry about how I will provide the next meal for my family. As a mother, my biggest fear is for my children. We are already eating less than before, and I worry that they could become malnourished."

The anxiety is spreading rapidly to neighbouring communities like Lita, where supply chains from the provincial capital have been severely impacted. **Maria Zora**, a mother in Lita, said;

Here in Lita, most of the food and goods we need come from Bunia. Since the Ebola outbreak began and the number of cases keeps increasing, many of us are living in fear. As a mother, I worry every day about the safety of my children and my family. We are trying our best to stay hopeful, but this situation is taking a toll on families like mine.

Women are finding psychosocial support in women's groups that are unfortunately unable to offer economic support due to limited resources.

"Sometimes, we gather to talk and encourage one another because it helps us stay strong. If we keep our worries to ourselves, it becomes very difficult emotionally," added Maria.

The outbreak has also left some students unable to sit for their examinations. In Nyakunde, a school authority, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told ActionAid;

"Some students from our school have been placed under quarantine following the death of a parent from Ebola. This is very concerning because they will not be able to attend school for 21 days. Unfortunately, this comes at a critical time, as end-of-year examinations began on June 2 and will continue until June 12. We are worried that these children may miss an important part of their education due to circumstances beyond their control."

There is an urgent need to fund women and young people's organizations as community response leaders to prevent transmission, maintain essential services and provide cash transfers for women to support them as their livelihoods are disrupted.

ActionAid is implementing urgent protection programmes to support women and school children in Ituri province.

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Spokespeople are available for media engagements. Contact the media office on media-enquiries@actionaid.org to arrange.

About ActionAid

[ActionAid](#) is a global federation working for a world free from poverty and injustice. We want to see a just, fair and sustainable world, in which everybody enjoys the right to a life of dignity, and freedom from poverty and oppression. We work to achieve social justice and gender equality, and to eradicate poverty.