INTERNATIONAL EBOLA CRISIS

Detecting and Responding to a Public Health Emergency





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The simulations have no right or wrong actions or solutions because the process, rather than the end result, is the goal. The learning experience develops organically as the students engage in the simulation. Once the simulation has been completed, students are encouraged to express how their views on diplomacy have evolved as a result of the simulation, and to contemplate how they can apply diplomatic skills to their everyday lives.

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ISSUE BACKGROUND

Virus Disease that have claimed the lives of many innocent victims. Once infected, which usually occurs after coming into contact with another person's infected bodily fluids, one may experience severe bleeding and organ failure. During one outbreak, over 80% of those infected with Ebola eventually died. An outbreak of Ebola in a country that is particularly ill-equipped to respond to infectious disease outbreaks could devastate a population.

Recent efforts to combat this infectious disease have included medical research to identify a possible vaccine to prevent Ebola transmission, and **genome sequencing** to better understand how Ebola can be detected, treated, and eventually prevented. Additionally, there is research around the use of biopharmaceutical drugs like ZMapp to treat the disease. However, none of these can help with the emotional burden of having had this illness. Even if one survives Ebola, many communities still **stigmatize** infected individuals, and various **public misconceptions** about the disease perpetuate the emotional and physical trauma of contracting Ebola.

One of the most prominent actors involved with preventing and responding to Ebola outbreaks is the World Health Organization (WHO), a specialized agency within the United Nations that deals with international health issues. WHO plays a multitude of roles during health emergencies. They distribute necessary supplies such as **personal protective equipment (PPE)** to medical responders. WHO also funds and coordinates **contact tracing**, which consists of identification, visitation, testing, and even treatment of known potentially infected individuals. The organization also uses **epidemiology** to ensure there is proper data reporting and collection to develop an accurate disease profile.

Similarly, the humanitarian international nongovernmental organization (NGO) Doctors Without Borders provides direct volunteer medical care to communities in need through **case management** which may include humanely isolating patients, providing safe beds, making vaccines and therapeutics available, and providing quality patient care within Ebola Treatment Centers. New fears surrounding disease epidemics have placed an emphasis on not just responding to outbreaks, but preventing them, resulting in an increased need to create a usable vaccine by NGOs like Doctors Without Borders.

For countries responding to Ebola, the Ministries of Health within each government are responsible for improving and protecting the health and well-being of their citizens. Governments may establish National Ebola Response Centers (NERCs) to better manage an outbreak. Diseases are transnational challenges. Neighboring countries would also be concerned with an outbreak crossing borders and infecting their own citizens, so they pay close attention to possible key **points of entry**. Establishing an effective Ebola coordination structure within these local governments is vital to achieve zero new case infections.

Unfortunately, the countries more prone to disease outbreaks are often challenged with poor health capacities and governments ill prepared to respond to outbreaks or epidemics. An Ebola outbreak can exacerbate these structural issues and make conducting diplomacy between various governments and NGOs even more difficult.

Today's simulation involves a hypothetical scenario but deals with the real world problem of a spreading epidemic. You will role play a member of a delegation at an international meeting trying to negotiate a solution. The delegations are:



National Ebola Response Center of Farfelu



National Ebola Response Center of Anyep



U.S. Department of State



World Health Organization



Doctors Without Borders

As representatives of one of the stakeholders engaged in the process, you will need to:

- Prioritize your diplomatic goals according to your group's policy position.
- Identify with who you will need to negotiate and who might be your ally/competitor.
- Determine what other participants want out of the negotiations and whether your group is willing to compromise and how.
- Identify areas of agreement and organize an implementation strategy for your negotiations.



SCENARIO

The countries of **Farfelu** and **Anyep** are two nations on a continent that share a long and joined history based on a common tribal ancestry that dates back thousands of years. 250 years ago, the tribe split in two when traders migrated north and created a smaller tribal sect, which became the country of Anyep. While the two nations have cultural and spiritual similarities, they differ in their overall development. Anyep has welcomed modern approaches to trade, infrastructure, and globalizing their economy, but Farfelu has been hesitant to adopt changes.

A year ago, an indigenous healer from Anyep travelled to a holy site in Farfelu and died of Ebola two days after arriving. It is widely believed this individual was patient zero and contracted the disease from a fruit bat. Since this initial incident, more than 10,000 people have been infected within the region. An estimated 3,000 of these cases were fatal, and 1,000 of these fatal cases were in Anyep. Daily case incidence rates are the highest they have ever been and the epidemic continues to grow. It is projected by the end of the year the two countries will see an additional 11,000 cases. Widespread public misconceptions about Ebola are partially to blame for this growing epidemic.

The indigenous people of both Farfelu and Anyep engage in burials by washing their dead without wearing protective covering. This is an important practice within their shared culture, as they believe it shows high respect for their deceased loved ones. However, this is an unsafe practice during an epidemic. In Farfelu, many individuals seek treatment from local healers who practice traditional medicine based on cultural beliefs in the country. The healers cannot effectively handle the Ebola outbreak. Lack of faith in the healthcare system and distrust of the government among Farfeluans remains the two largest challenges in stopping the deadly spread of Ebola.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) of Farfelu is continuing their case investigations of the disease through a **National Ebola Response Center (NERC)**, which is proving to be ineffective. Many health officials take bribes to under report their actual infection numbers for political favors. This corruption has led to paralyzed government at the national and district levels, theft of funds for health workers' salaries, poor infection and control practices, and a misinformed government as a whole.

The Farfeluan NERC allowed the non-governmental organization (NGO) **Doctors Without Borders** into the country to begin oversight and treatment efforts. Overwhelmed at the devastating impact the outbreak had on local populations, Doctors Without Borders made a plea to the **World Health Organization (WHO)** to declare a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), which would allocate more resources and supplies to affected communities and other regions in danger of infection. A spokesperson for WHO said they could not declare a PHEIC due to conflicting data reports.

Neighboring countries are panicked and actively establishing their own coordinated Ebola response centers, such as the NERC in Anyep, to appropriately counter the outbreak. The Anyepian NERC has called this meeting to begin effective collaboration between countries in the region to monitor possible points of entry. Like Farfelu, there are issues of internal corruption within the Anyepian NERC. Resolving internal obstacles will be necessary before these structures achieve the coordination required to defeat Ebola. The international community needs to

put pressure on these structures to promote change, but also must be wary of accusations of overreach or intervention.

The scope of this unprecedented outbreak can be attributed to the spread of Ebola into crowded urban areas, increased mobilization across borders, conflicts between key infection control practices, and prevailing indigenous traditions in this region. Engaging local governments and the international community in prevention programs and messaging, along with careful policy implementation at the national and global level, would contribute to eventually containing the spread of the virus and putting an end to this outbreak before more lives are unnecessarily lost.

National Ebola Response Center of Farfelu

The National Ebola Response Center of Farfelu is a command-and-control unit designed to provide national operational coherence, resourcing, and direction to relevant actors engaged in combating Ebola. It receives technical support from Doctors Without Borders, but it is hesitant to accept any advisory support from outside actors. Tribal citizens have been hostile towards medical responders, especially those who are American. The inconsistent data reported by NERC further hinders the responses allowed from organizations like the WHO and countries like the United States.

National Ebola Response Center of Anyep

The National Ebola Response Center of Anyep is also designed to provide national operational coherence, resourcing, and direction in the fight against the Ebola outbreak. It has welcomed assistance from outside actors, but similarly struggles with corruption. Citizens of Anyep are critical of Farfelu and some even place blame on the more traditional country for the scale of the Ebola epidemic.

U.S. Department of State

The U.S. Department of State is the lead U.S. government agency responsible for conducting international relations according to the policies set by the President. The State Department is responsible for implementing infectious disease policy overseas in the furtherance of global health security and uses its relevant expertise to advise other governments. Through various funding initiatives, the State Department gives or solicits money for or humanitarian aid organizations like WHO as well as Doctors Without Borders.

World Health Organization

The World Health Organization is a specialized agency within the United Nations that is concerned with international public health. The international organization brings together governments, private businesses, and non-governmental organizations to promote health goals, which include the eradication of infectious diseases. WHO was criticized for disputing claims that the current Ebola crisis was unprecedented. Because of its delayed response in declaring a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, it has been difficult to mobilize the international community to commit resources.

Doctors Without Borders

Doctors Without Borders is an international humanitarian non-governmental medical organization known for its projects in conflict zones and in countries affected by infectious diseases. Their presence in the region before the outbreak materialized was crucial as an early warning system for governments and other essential stakeholders. It has been difficult for the public to trust their volunteer medical work due to misconceptions about the disease and how it is spread.

WORKSHEET 1: QUESTIONS TO THINK THROUGH

Whom do you represent?
What is your overall goal?
What goals, in order of priority, would you also like to achieve?
Who can help you to acheive your goals?
Who might oppose your approaches?

What incentives and disincentives can you offer to persuade others to join in your efforts?	
What should be your strategy in dealing with the other stakeholders, i.e., with whom should you speak first? What will be the key points for each of the conversations?	

Remember: There is no "right" or "wrong" outcome. This is not a debate in which you need to win the argument; your goal is to work together to find a workable solution. Build upon common ground and look for areas where you and other parties can agree. Where you disagree, try to create options that address the other parties' concerns.

WORKSHEET 2: POSSIBLE ACTIONS

The following points are *possible* actions to take. As a team, prioritize your top two choices according to your delegation's policy position. Feel free to add actions. You will share your priorities with the other delegations in your opening statement.

- Encourage the NERCs to replace the health ministers in each country.
- Implement a widespread operation to educate the public in Farfelu and Anyep.
- Persuade WHO to increase engagement with NERCs and Doctors Without Borders.
- Encourage all actors to increase social mobilization efforts.
- Implement a daily phone call between all stakeholders for information sharing.
- Suggest that Doctors Without Borders establish more treatment centers.

Other:	 	 	
Other:			

TOOLS FOR NEGOTIATING EFFECTIVELY

Clearly determine your position and agree on your strategy:

- Clarify or restate your position if it is misrepresented by one of the other stakeholder groups.
- If during informal discussions, you decide your group should change its position, discuss it with the other group members as soon as possible.

Realistically evaluate possible actions before you propose them:

- Are the proposals possible?
- Will they achieve the results you want?
- Watch for unintended consequences.



Analyze other groups' positions:

- Why do they hold that position?
- Why do they oppose or support your proposals?
- Can you apply pressure to make stakeholders re-evaluate their positions?
- Can you offer any incentives to make stakeholders re-evaluate their positions?

Build alliances:

- Identify which stakeholders share your position and which do not.
- Do not spend all your time trying to persuade others. Listen carefully to other delegates and absorb what they are saying.
- Try to identify common interests and concerns you share with other stakeholders.
- Even if your end goal is different, what can you agree on with others?

Incentives and disincentives ("carrots and sticks"):

- Consider what incentives you can safely offer to other groups.
- Explain to other stakeholders the negative consequences (either direct or indirect) that may follow if they oppose your position.

General tips*:

- Separate the people from the problem.
- Interests: Focus on interests, not positions.
- Options: Generate a variety of possibilities before deciding what to do.
- Criteria: Insist that the result be based on some objective standard.

^{*}Excerpted from "Getting To Yes", Roger Fisher and William Ury, Random House Business Books, 1981

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Genome Sequencing

Process of determining the sequences in DNA that can help diagnose different diseases and ultimately provide faster treatment options.

Stigmatize

To regard with disgrace or strong disapproval.

Public Misconceptions

Societal conclusion that is wrong, often based on false beliefs.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Main source of protection for emergency health care workers which may include respirators, eye protection, hearing protection, and protective clothing.

Contact Tracing

Identifying and following-up with persons who might have come in contact with the Ebola virus and monitoring them for 21 days following their last known exposure to the disease.

Epidemiology

Branch of medicine that deals with the incidence, distribution, and possible control of diseases.

Case Management

Collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, care, coordination, evaluation, and advocacy for options and services to meet an individual's needs.

Point of Entry

A geographical point of entrance to a country or region.

Safe and Dignified Burials

Traditional burial process that encourages the inclusion of family and local clergy in the planning and preparation of the burial and respects the traditions of washing the body and providing appropriate safety precautions.



National Ebola Response Center of Farfelu

Background:

With the realization the Ebola outbreak was getting worse and the existing healthcare system was not doing enough to combat it, the Government of Farfelu put in place a new response management structure called the National Ebola Response Center (NERC). As Chairman of the NERC, the President of Farfelu makes high-level policy and strategic decisions. This command-and-control unit is coordinating the response at the national level, providing operational coherence, resourcing, and direction to relevant actors engaged in combating Ebola.

The traditional Farfeluan culture remains strong inside the country and is a source of national pride for its citizens. However, traditional cultural practices are ineffective against the Ebola outbreak. Some traditions, such as washing the dead without any protective clothing, accelerate the spread of Ebola.

The government has been hesitant to fully cooperate with international actors such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Doctors Without Borders, and the U.S. Department of State (DOS). While Doctors Without Borders is permitted to operate on the ground, local communities are skeptical to seek treatment from them. Citizens are especially hostile towards Americans because they believe Americans are trying to unnecessarily intervene and undermine their national identity as a culturally traditional state.

According to Doctors Without Borders staff, the official number of infections reported by the Government of Farfelu, specifically the Ministry of Health, was drastically underestimated. This contested number prevented WHO from enacting the appropriate emergency responses, such as declaring a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), to the Ebola outbreak.

Healthcare Infrastructure:

Farfelu has made recent strides to modernize its health-care system and built small clinics in every community during the last decade. These clinics openly disparage traditional healers, never have the proper medical supplies, and the doctors and nurses appear to be poorly trained. Each clinic is supposed to request supplies from the Ministry of Health, but the system is backlogged with orders and basic supplies can take months to arrive, if ever, at a local clinic.

Opening Position:

The President of Farfelu has instructed your delegation to engage with all stakeholders, but to be cautious of the influence and changes that western-centered delegations may propose. However, your NERC relies on Doctors Without Borders because of your strained relationship with the United States has restricted U.S. capacity to provide aid. You are to take the following opening positions:

- You are hesitant to accept criticism of the internal response to the outbreak, especially regarding the inaccurate numbers reported by your response center.
- You are critical of WHO not only for their delayed declaration of a PHEIC, but also for not providing adequate disease prevention education early on. You blame them for civilian intolerance of Ebola and health workers.
- To support the cultural traditions of your people, you wish to remain in control of the medical responses taken in your country. Concurrently, you understand that ending public misconceptions about the disease is necessary to end the outbreak.
- You wish to mobilize support from WHO, DOS, and the NERC of Anyep to obtain more funding and supplies for your local health clinics.



National Ebola Response Center of Anyep

Background:

With the aim of preventing further potential infection within the country, the Government of Anyep established the National Ebola Response Center (NERC). As the Chairman, the President of Anyep makes high-level policy and strategic decisions. This command-and-control unit is coordinating the response at the national level, providing operational coherence, resources, and direction to relevant actors engaged in combating and preventing the spread of Ebola.

Unlike Farfelu, the government of Anyep has been accepting and eager to work with a multitude of entities such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Doctors Without Borders, and the U.S. Department of State (DOS). The NERC in Anyep is predominantly concerned with containing individuals who have the disease, preventing further spread across borders, and is working closely with U.S. officials in this effort. There needs to be more cooperation from the Farfeluan NERC in order to successfully inhibit disease spread, as the majority of Ebola outbreaks are found in Farfelu.

Though a small population, the tribal citizens of Anyep are steadfast in their customs. Some of their traditions, such as washing the dead without any protective clothing, accelerate the spread of Ebola. This group is especially at risk of infection and proves a challenge for any public education initiative.

Healthcare Infrastructure: Anyep has moved towards a modern health-care system and has major government-run hospitals in each of the major cities. While lines can be long at some locations, services are affordable. However, in the more rural regions of Anyep, there is little access to hospitals and doctors are often out of supplies as scheduled shipments never seem to be full.

Opening Position:

As Chairman of the NERC, the President of Anyep has instructed your delegation to work with all stakeholders. You are to take the following opening positions:

- You wish to coordinate effective exit screenings and border crossings with the help of the NERC in Farfelu and the U.S. Department of State.
- You want to mobilize more funding and obtain more medical supplies from Doctors Without Borders, WHO, and the U.S. Department of State.
- You are critical of WHO for not declaring a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) earlier. You also believe they are partially responsible for the ill equipped medical centers around the country.



U.S. Department of State

Background:

The U.S. Department of State leads the United States in its relationships with foreign governments, international organizations, and the people of other countries. It aims to promote the security, prosperity, and interests of the American people around the world. It does so by creating American jobs through support for open markets for U.S. companies; issuing passports and providing emergency assistance to U.S. citizens abroad; negotiating treaties and equipping countries to respond to their own security challenges; helping countries with health, food, and humanitarian crises; promoting stability, peace, and human rights; and increasing understanding of American society and values.

The Department of State is taking a cautious role in the fight against the Ebola outbreak. U.S. officials are concerned with the disorderly response to Ebola in Farfelu and the consequences it can have on the American staff at the U.S. Embassy, Doctors Without Borders, and the World Health Organization (WHO). The American public holds a widespread fear Ebola could spread to the United States and directly threaten their national security. However, the Department is limited in their response options because of a strained relationship with Farfelu and its tribal citizens.

With the cooperation of the countries in the region, the State Department will put pressure on Anyep and Farfelu to restructure their National Ebola Response Centers (NERC). However, the Department is wary of overstepping boundaries in the region.

Opening Position:

The U.S. Secretary of State has instructed your delegation to negotiate with all stakeholders, although you may find that some stakeholders may not want to negotiate with one another. You are to take the following opening positions:

- Your overarching concerns are international peace and security, to which the Ebola outbreak is a threat. You respect the sovereignty of Farfelu and Anyep. However, urge them to reorganize their NERCs structures to be more effective.
- You will call upon all stakeholders to increase their social mobilization campaigns to end public misconceptions about Ebola, but you will also reaffirm interest in keeping local traditions, as long as they are not conducive to the spread of the disease.
- You will support formal engagement at NERC meetings to ensure there is a proper response strategy in each country and you will provide as many resources as possible to stakeholders as long as they are engaged in effective response practices.



Background:

Doctors Without Borders is an international humanitarian medical non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1971 by a small group of French doctors and journalists. They are known for their health projects in conflict zones and in countries affected by infectious diseases. Known for emphasizing "independence and impartiality," they exclude political, economic, and religious justifications for engagement with a particular nation or issue.

Doctors Without Borders was performing aid work in Farfelu before the manifestation of Ebola and has thus become the premier NGO to tackle the outbreak. Their early presence and involvement in the country allowed them to recognize the outbreak as a true crisis but most international governments and health organizations ignored their extensive early warnings and requests for help. While the Doctors Without Borders medical staff are knowledgeable and trained to administer treatment to Ebola patients, there is an extreme shortage of medical supplies. Without these necessary resources, Doctors Without Borders cannot provide treatment or train local medical staff.

Public misconceptions about how the disease is spread are preventing Doctors Without Borders from quickly engaging the community. For example, a mob recently attacked an Ebola Treatment Center because they believed that the infection-control teams, who were wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) and spraying chlorine as a disinfectant, were actually spraying the disease and wearing PPE to avoid catching Ebola. Navigating an unreceptive local population, slow moving governments and organizations, and a lack of resources will prove to be the greatest challenges for Doctors Without Borders.

Opening Position:

The International President of Doctors Without Borders has instructed your delegation to negotiate with all stakeholders, although you may find that some stakeholders may not want to negotiate with one another. You are to take the following opening positions:

- You will reaffirm the tenacity of the current outbreak and call upon relevant stakeholders to increase their engagement and funding support.
- You must treat as many individuals as possible while respecting local burial practices and other cultural traditions.
- You will continue establishing Regional Ebola Treatment Centers with help from the various NERCs and WHO but you do not feel that it is necessary to attend the daily NERC meetings because you do not conduct surveillance.
- Your delegation wants an apology from WHO for not listening to Doctors Without Borders' early warnings. You also want WHO to give international attention to Doctors Without Borders so that other countries around the world may allocate resources to you.



World Health Organization

Background:

A specialized agency within the framework of the United Nations, the World Health Organization (WHO) was established on April 7th, 1948, and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. It is an international organization concerned with global public health initiatives. It works through these initiatives by bringing together governments, private businesses, and non-governmental organizations to promote health goals such as combating infectious disease.

WHO bureaucracy was slow to respond to claims by Doctors Without Borders that the current outbreak in Farfelu and Anyep had the potential to kill thousands. The delayed announcement by WHO that the outbreak was a true Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) resulted in the slow mobilization of the international community which ultimately cost many lives. However, WHO was limited in their response options due to conflicting data reports from various stakeholders. Internally, WHO has dealt with temporary senior staffing issues and flawed regional structures, thus resulting in an unreliable pillar of support to all international stakeholders. These issues are the source of the majority of criticism regarding the response from WHO.

Another factor that restricts WHO is their capacity to collect data on the disease through contact tracing and other disease surveillance tactics. This is in part due to staffing and funding limitations but is also affected by attacks on WHO epidemiologists by organized locals who believe WHO staff is spreading the disease. Complications within WHO, combined with public misconceptions that make reliable data collection difficult, are contributing to the distrust that other actors have in WHO's capacity to coordinate international actors and enforce global norms and standards.

Opening Position:

The WHO Director-General has instructed your delegation to negotiate with all stakeholders, although you may find that some stakeholders may not want to negotiate with one another. You are to take the following opening positions:

- You are receptive yet sensitive to the criticism you are facing and are willing to implement immediate changes to your capacity, expertise, and approach on your own terms.
- You must take steps to educate the public on proper Ebola prevention methods and prevent further attacks on medical staff and volunteers.
- The problem of unreliable and inconsistent data collection means that you must get all actors on board with your epidemiologic efforts but respect cultural traditions in the process.
- You must advise countries on their outbreak responses while supporting them to become self-sufficient.

Located at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., the National Museum of American Diplomacy is a public-private partnership between the State Department and the Diplomacy Center Foundation. NMAD's education program connects high school and college students with the world of American diplomacy, increasing their understanding of skills, practice, and language of diplomats. Through simulations, online resources, and the museum's annual Educator's Workshop, NMAD inspires involvement in foreign affairs and citizen diplomacy.





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