

## THE EBOLA VIRUS OUTBREAK AND CHINA'S RESPONSE

The Ebola epidemic in West Africa, which broke out in December 2013, is the most severe and complex outbreak of the virus since it was discovered in 1976. As of December 2, 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that over 17,145 cases have occurred with 6,070 deaths.<sup>i</sup> In view of the urgency, WHO issued the *Ebola Response Roadmap* in August 2014, aiming to stop Ebola transmission in affected countries within 6-9 months and prevent further spread.<sup>ii</sup> The UN Security Council declared Ebola a "threat to international peace and security" in September 2014,<sup>iii</sup> and established the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) to coordinate all relevant United Nations actors in order to ensure a rapid, effective, efficient and coherent response to the Ebola crisis. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon requested a US\$1 billion fund for this endeavor.<sup>iv</sup>

### What sort of support is China providing

The international community, including China, is playing a crucial role in combating the Ebola epidemic. Throughout four consecutive phases in April, August, September and October 2014, China contributed a total of US\$123 million, and now plays a major role in international efforts to fight Ebola. On top of financial contributions, China also provides in-kind contribution comprising of ambulances, motorcycles, medical equipment as well as prevention care packages and food aid.<sup>v</sup> In addition, China has deployed experts and plans to train 10,000 healthcare workers and community prevention and control personnel to prevent further spreading of the disease. Over 1,000 medical and disease control experts from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Health and the Family Planning Commission (former Ministry of Health) will be sent to the affected areas, of which 500 have already been dispatched, with equipment such as mobile laboratory.<sup>vi</sup>

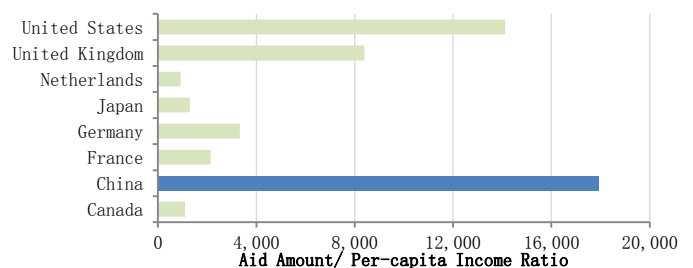
China's response to the crisis includes support to international and regional organizations, as China pledged in October 2014 to provide US\$6 million to the World Food Programme (WFP) for vital food supplies,<sup>vii</sup> as well as US\$2 million funding for WHO and the African Union respectively.<sup>viii</sup> On 2<sup>nd</sup> December, China contributed an additional

US\$6 million to complement UN emergency efforts through the UN Ebola Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund.<sup>ix</sup> In light of other major countries' contributions, China's contribution places itself at the forefront of the fight against Ebola.

### How does China's contribution compare to others

Other developing countries also contribute to the battle against the pandemic, as Cuba will send 461 health workers to affected countries,<sup>x</sup> and Uganda intends to dispatch 20 medical experts.<sup>xi</sup>

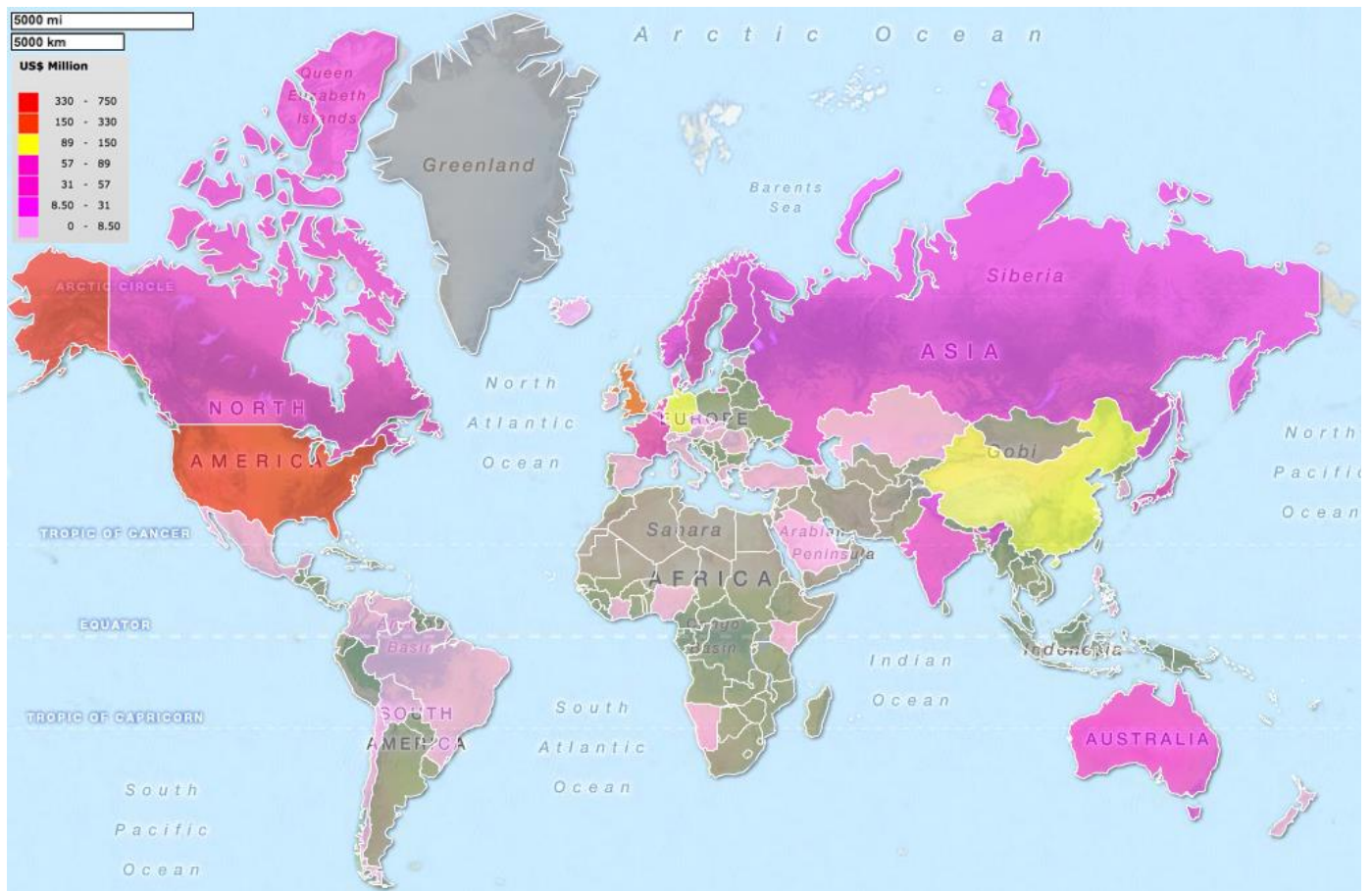
In terms of aid scale, China's contribution remains lower than that of the US, but is above such traditional donor countries as France, Japan and Canada. China's contribution is even more impressive if calculated against per capita income, having to strike the balance between supporting international interventions and addressing domestic poverty reduction challenges.



**Figure 1.** Aid amount/adjusted net national income (in 2012 current US\$) per capita ratio<sup>xii</sup>

### Why is China supporting Ebola prevention and what can be expected next

China's significant contribution to fighting the Ebola virus disease serves as a strong indication of the country's growing position within the international community as a global actor in humanitarian aid. The proactive involvement in supporting the international efforts against the Ebola outbreak is in line with policy trends captured in China's Second White Paper on Foreign Aid published in July 2014, which emphasizes the delivery of humanitarian assistance as a policy cornerstone.<sup>xiii</sup> A contributing factor to China's response to the Ebola outbreak might also come from the fact that approximately 20,000 Chinese nationals live in the three major afflicted countries.



**Figure 2.** Financial contributions against Ebola by country <sup>xii</sup>

Overall, China's response is consistent with its long-term aid strategy to invest in healthcare infrastructure and public sanitation in Africa.

The growing scope of China's humanitarian engagement globally, is part of a larger strategic positioning of China in terms of development cooperation through an emphasis on principles of south-south cooperation, distinctly different from traditional provision of aid. Further, the diversification in terms of modalities, instruments and sectors away from more traditional sectors like infrastructure (development cooperation) and food aid (humanitarian assistance) towards a broader range of support areas also signifies a much more comprehensive, demand-driven response to partner countries' needs. Finally, with a significant volume of Chinese support being channeled through

international institutions, China is increasingly backing coordinated international response mechanisms.

**More information - UNDP South South Policy Team:**  
[cn.sspt@undp.org](mailto:cn.sspt@undp.org)

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<sup>i</sup> World Health Organization, Situation summary, Data published on 02 December 2014, <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/view.ebola-sitrep.ebola-summary-20141202?lang=en>

<sup>ii</sup> UN News Centre, "UN declares Ebola outbreak global 'international public health emergency'", August 8, 2014, <http://goo.gl/AAJL8x>.

<sup>iii</sup> UN News Centre, "UN announces mission to combat Ebola, declares outbreak 'threat to peace and security'", September 18, 2014, <http://goo.gl/wpkBJ4>.

<sup>iv</sup> UN News Centre, "UN: nearly \$1 billion needed to combat Ebola outbreak," September 16, 2014, <http://goo.gl/nrpAvi>.

<sup>v</sup> Xinhua, "China calls for int'l efforts to combat Ebola," *People's Daily*, October 18, 2014, <http://goo.gl/eSg7H6>.

<sup>vi</sup> Xinhua, "China plans 1,000 more staff to fight Ebola in Africa", November 5, 2014, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/05/c\\_133768588.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/05/c_133768588.htm)

<sup>vii</sup> Xinhua, "China's Ebola aid 'timely,' additional help needed: WFP," *China Daily*, October 20, 2014, <http://goo.gl/MzZuZh>.

<sup>viii</sup> "China adds \$32 million to aid for combating Ebola," *Xinhua*, September 19, 2014, <http://goo.gl/56kXAq>.

<sup>ix</sup> UN Multi-Partner trust Fund Office <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/EB000>

<sup>x</sup> Monica Mark, "Cuba leads fight against Ebola in Africa as west frets about border security," *Guardian*, October 12, 2014, <http://goo.gl/TodkhK>.

<sup>xi</sup> "Gravely Concerned over Ebola Outbreak in West Africa, General Assembly Adopts Resolution Signaling Approval for Mission to Handle Response," UN General Assembly Meetings Coverage, September 19, 2014, <http://goo.gl/WhoKZY>.

<sup>xii</sup> Figures compiled by the authors using data from OCHA Financial Tracking Service, the World Bank and news outlets:

United States US\$750 million (Lena H. Sun and Juliet Eilperin, "U.S. military will lead \$750 million fight against Ebola in West Africa," *Washington Post*, September 14, 2014, <http://goo.gl/vJMEUC>.)

United Kingdom US\$330 million, Germany US\$ 150 million, France 89 US\$ million Japan US\$ 50 million Canada US\$ 57 million. Netherlands US\$ 44 million

(Mark Anderson and Lucy Lamble, "Ebola outbreak response: a breakdown of the key funding pledges," *Guardian*, October 9, 2014, <http://goo.gl/gB8SHB>.)

Russia US\$ 20 million (On Russia's involvement in the international efforts to combat Ebola," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation press release, October 16, 2014, <http://goo.gl/65Ok3v>.)

<sup>xiii</sup> Information Office of the State Council, "White Paper on China's Foreign Aid (2014)," <http://goo.gl/Nhb8N4>.