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Australia's Ebola Response – observations on the Sierra Leone response, and Asia-Pacific regional preparedness

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Structure of presentation

- Context:
 - International; DFAT
- DFAT's role
 - Australian Government coordination
 - Regional contingency planning
 - Response in Sierra Leone
- Lessons and way forward
 - DFAT regional analysis and strategy
 - Australia's interests



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Context

- **International:**
 - August/September 2014: Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa declared 'a public health emergency of international concern' and a 'threat to international peace and security'.
 - weak health systems in Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia rapidly overwhelmed.
 - Slow international response – lack of usual coordination mechanisms.
 - Highlighted the need for robust international, regional and local health architecture.
- **DFAT Policy & Institutional changes**
 - Merging of Aid, Trade and Diplomacy functions
 - Strong focus of ODA on near neighbourhood and economic development
- **Regional: A DFAT perspective**

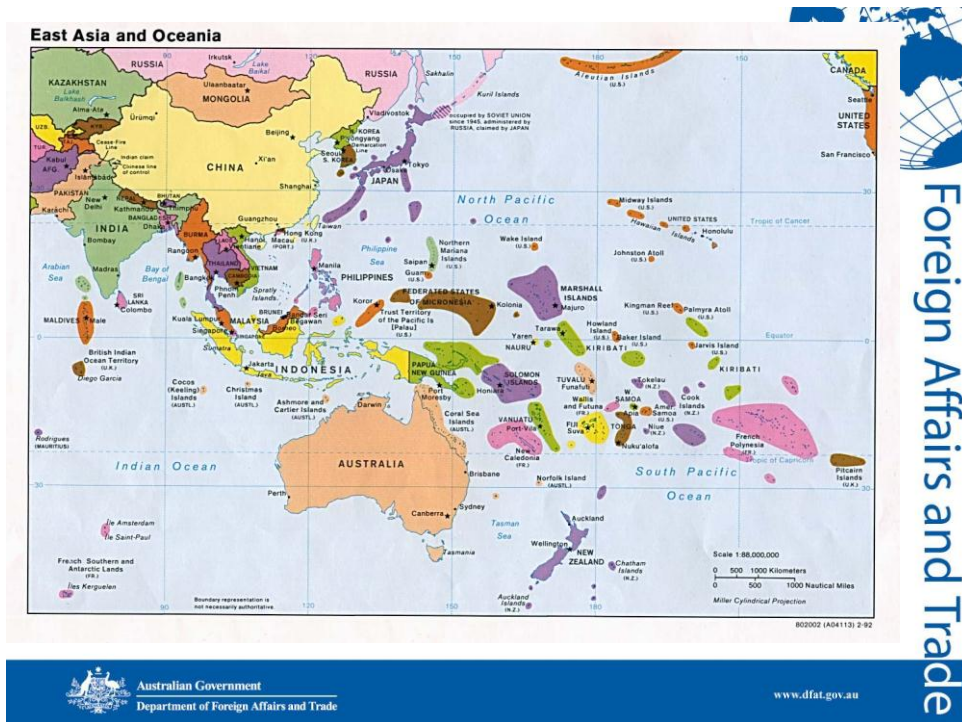


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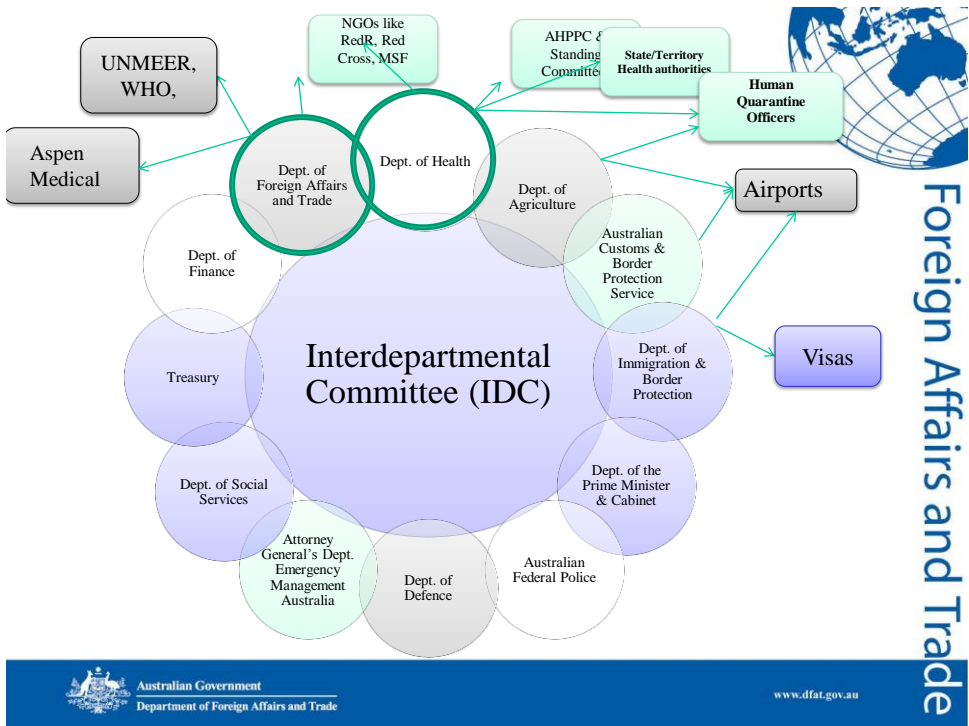





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DFAT's role


- **Whole-of-GOVERNMENT**
 - Joint lead of Australia's Ebola response with Dept Health
 - Co-chair Inter-Departmental Committee
 - Advice to National Security Committee as required on international response and policies
 - Communications with DFAT Posts
- **Humanitarian operations and programming:**
 - Liaison/partnerships with international partners – especially UK, US, NZ
 - Establish and manage agreements with Aspen Medical, UNMEER, WHO and NGOs
- **Regional Preparedness**
 - Contribute to development of and, later, responsibility for implementation of National Ebola Regional Contingency Plan
 - Lead with Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) of WHO on regional preparedness
- **Broader Strategy and Policy Development:**
 - Ebola Epi Modelling & Scenario Analysis
 - Regional health security strategy.







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Response in Sierra Leone

- Plugged into UK operation
 - Relationship worked due to prior engagement in different settings
- DFAT liaison officer seconded to UK Joint Inter Agency Taskforce in Freetown
 - An operation of civilian-military-police integration
- End-to-end management of Ebola Treatment Centre at Hastings Airfield
- Private contractor: Aspen Medical



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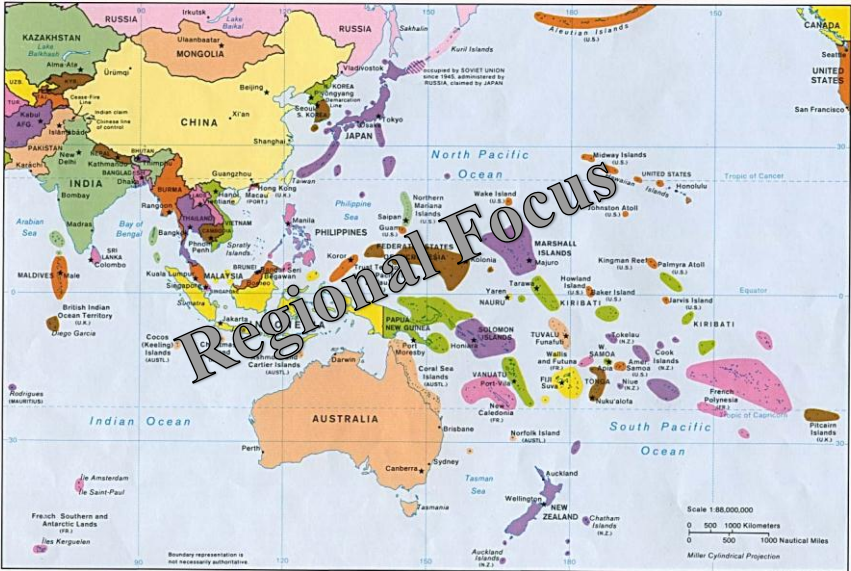


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Ebola Regional contingency planning

1. Regional Contingency Plan
 - Papua New Guinea (PNG), Timor Leste and the Pacific Island Countries.
2. WHO funding for regional preparedness
 - training of health officials and PPE procurement.
3. DFAT study: *"Risk of importation and economic consequences of Ebola in A-P region"*:
 - modelling of Fiji, Indonesia, PNG and Timor Leste
 - confirmed insufficient preparedness and capacity to respond effectively
 - but pre-emptive responses more effective than reactive
 - significant economic impacts in all 4 countries.



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Lesson learning

- International health architecture – is it fit for purpose, especially in our region?
 - WHO reform; Humanitarian; Bretton Woods?
- Balance between risk mitigation & preparedness, and emergency responses
- What if? (Avian Flu H5* mutation)
- Internal whole of Government review
 - Implementation of domestic measures to protect Australia
 - Implementation of Australia's support for the international response
 - Regional contingency planning to protect the region
 - Governance arrangements
 - Information sharing, risk assessment and management and communication arrangements.



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Regional analysis & strategy

- Concerns in relation to potentially devastating impact of Ebola importation to A-P region
 - WHO assessment - most LMIC's don't have response capacity to contain any disease outbreak
 - DFAT commissioned "Risk of importation and economic consequences of Ebola in A-P region"
- Re-confirmed - A-P region highly vulnerable to emerging health threats.
- Informed a new DFAT "health for development" strategy
 - Explicit focus on risk mitigation and preparedness
 - strengthening of public health systems for regional health security and ultimately global health security



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DFAT Health for Development Strategy 2015-2020

- Outcomes:
 - Country level health systems and services responsive to health needs
 - Strengthened regional preparedness and response to emerging threats.
- An explicit geographic focus on our near region and its priorities:
 - strengthen core public health systems and capacities to prevent, detect and respond;
 - address health threats that cross national borders;
 - a more effective global response and international health architecture in our region.



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The Way Forward

- Utilise DFAT/WoG policy influence and diplomatic leverage on partner country policy, strategy and domestic resource allocation for health security
- Work across Australian government
- Work with countries as a member state of the A-P region
- Work and coordinate with US and other key allies
- Leverage regional and global funding for the A-P region
 - Role of emerging Asian economies? (China, India?)
 - Strengthen existing and explore new partnerships (e.g. WB, ADB, Private sector)



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