

# OUTBREAK - The impact of leadership decisions in a crisis

A research-led scenario which tests decision making in pandemics and global events

## Facts:

- **Gamification**
- **8 Real life FCO scenarios**
- **Web-hosted**

## Handling a crisis

21st Century leaders are required to balance their focus across multiple areas all demanding attention at the same time.

Managing and balancing complex choices as a leader is a problem that should be carefully considered by all organisations. This is even more critical in a crisis. Lessons learnt during virus outbreaks, such as the Ebola outbreak in 2015, showed that successful containment of the virus was, in part, down to the leadership skills of the deployed tactical co-ordinators. This indicated that a training intervention to assess and improve the leadership skills of a deployed crisis team would be advantageous.

## A realistic scenario

CDS Defence & Security undertook its own research and development to investigate the use of training in such situations to aid leaders. Using the UK's support to the DRC to assist with the Ebola outbreak as the test scenario, our foundations in behavioural psychology provided an effective grounding from which to analyse the leadership requirements. Our appreciation of humanitarian operations through our work with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and The Ministry of Defence, enabled us to develop realistic scenarios.

Drawing on the evidence that containment and treatment success was partially down to leadership skills, we created an innovative diagnostic and development course to assess leadership capabilities prior to deployment. As well as seeking to understand abilities, we also sought to better understand the training requirement that would be needed to address any gaps.

## Can you control the outbreak?

Combining our research and development capability with the gamification skills of our Technology Enhanced Learning team, a 'can you control the outbreak' training scenario was created. The scenario places participants in the role of tactical coordinator, self-assessing their leadership experience before working through eight FCO drawn scenarios to assess their decision-making ability.

Once completed, they are given an immediate score of their performance. The web-hosted scenario (<https://outbreak.cdsds.uk/>) continues to be assessed, continuously building our understanding of the leadership skills required.

## Future use

We created a fully operational gamified training solution, that not only demonstrates the blend of research, gaming, digital learning design and learning analytics (exploiting xAPI), but one that could be applied to multiple real-life scenarios and future outbreaks.

Research and analysis of the trial is still ongoing, with further test periods scheduled for this year. So far, it seems that participants who stated a greater level of leadership experience were quicker at decision making. More research time is being used to capture, analyse and understand the findings of this work.

In time, this research has the potential to allow us to contribute knowledge on the following:

- **Issues that leaders have been facing and the solutions available to them**
- **Training and decision making under pressure**
- **Identifying individual learning needs**