

IBM offers analytics platform for Ebola fight

WASHINGTON, US: IBM has announced it will offer its analytics platform and other technology for use in African countries affected by the Ebola outbreak.



The Ebola virus. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

The US computing giant said it is offering the assistance in Sierra Leone, one of the countries hardest hit by the deadly disease, and in nearby Nigeria, which has been declared Ebola-free.

The initiative allowing residents to report Ebola-related issues and concerns directly via SMS or voice calls to public health officials in Sierra Leone enables better tracking of the disease, according to an IBM statement.

Using location information from the calls, IBM is able to create "heat-maps" to determine the areas where the disease is spreading.

"We saw the need to quickly develop a system to enable communities directly affected by Ebola to provide valuable insight about how to fight it, said Uyi Stewart, IBM Africa's chief research scientist.

"Using mobile technology, we have given them a voice and a channel to communicate their experiences directly to the government."

IBM has donated technology to Nigeria's Lagos state government to coordinate disease containment efforts.

The technology, which has been used in other humanitarian missions, "will help strengthen the coordination of public health emergency response teams and ensure that the Lagos state government is able to manage and respond to any new reported cases of Ebola or future epidemics," the statement said.

The move comes amid increased interest in using supercomputing and big data to improve detection and relief efforts in containing the Ebola outbreak.

Microsoft last week said it would make its Azure cloud-computing platform available to researchers examining the spread of

Ebola.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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