

DRC Ebola emergency: it is not yet under control!

With the number of cases passing 2,500, it is now by far the country's largest-ever Ebola outbreak. It is also the second-biggest Ebola epidemic ever recorded, behind the West Africa outbreak of 2014-2016.

Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) teams have been on the ground responding to the outbreak since it was first declared almost one year ago, on 1 August 2018. For months we have been warning that the epidemic is not under control and needs more concerted international attention as well as deep community engagement. <https://www.msf.org.za/ebola-drc-2018>

It is your financial support that enabled MSF to help local health care facilities prepare to handle Ebola cases and strengthening disease surveillance and prevention activities in the affected areas. However, the epidemic is not yet under control. We need still need your financial contributions as only last Wednesday, 17 July 2019, **The World Health Organization declared that the Ebola epidemic in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a public health emergency of international concern.** <https://www.msf.org.za/stories-news/press-releases/ebola-epidemic-not-under-control-and-we-need-change-gear>



Photo: Pablo Garrigos/MSF DRC 2019

Context

- Over 2,500 cases (1,600 of whom have died) have been confirmed since the Ebola epidemic began in the DRC in August 2018. *[In 2014's West Africa Outbreak there were 25,000 infected people in nine countries resulting in over 10 000 deaths]*
- More than 160,000 people have been vaccinated in the areas where Ebola has broken out.
- During the past three weeks, close to 60% of all new confirmed and probable cases have been registered in Béni and Mabalako health zones.
- Beni and Mabalako continue to be the hotspots of the epidemic.
- The Response's initial strategy focused on setting up transit centres (TCs) and Ebola treatment centres (ETCs) where all suspected patients at health centres were transferred. And as of 27 January, 2019:
 1. MSF have received 3,292 people at its ETC and TC
 2. Treated 321 patients confirmed with Ebola
 3. Vaccinated more than 4800 frontline health workers, who are among the greatest risk of contracting the disease <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcxRAeJ6cjk>
- As of July 2019, we have more than 530 staff working in DRC responding to the Ebola outbreak.

Challenges

- The response's initial strategy proved ineffective in east DRC.
- Although successful during the 2014 epidemic in West Africa, DRC's situation differs substantially due to:
 1. Lack of community engagement and information on both the disease and the treatment provided to patients
 2. Distrust of the government among the people of North Kivu
 3. At the beginning of 2019, attacks were launched against health facilities, including some where MSF was providing assistance.

<https://www.msf.org.za/stories-news/press-releases/urgent-humanitarian-response-needed-unprecedented-crisis-northeast>

MSF's solution to challenges presented

In March, we re-thought our approach to ensure it is better adapted to the context. Considering the importance of mitigating the risk of nosocomial infection, a strategy of decentralisation was thus chosen. Our response strategy now comprises of:

1. Supporting existing health facilities.
2. Strengthening capacity for detection and isolation of cases.
3. Treating patients free of charge (consultations and, when required, inpatient care).
4. Assisting with infection prevention and control in health facilities.



Photo: Pablo Garrigos/MSF DRC 2019

Our teams continue to reach out to the community, collecting people's questions, expectations and concerns. The results are indisputable, as people appear to be more prepared to accept this strategy for responding to the epidemic.

Where are MSF's Ebola Interventions?

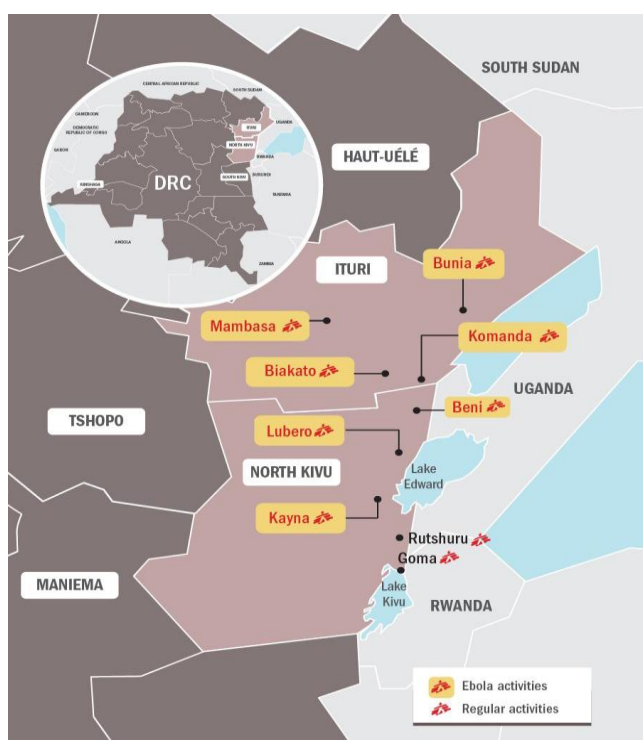
Butembo and Katwa: Medical activities have been suspended at MSF's Ebola treatment centers in Butembo and Katwa after the facilities were attacked by unidentified assailants in late February. MSF has evacuated staff from the area for their safety pending a thorough analysis of the risks associated with continuing to provide medical care there.

<https://www.msf.org.za/stories-news/news-our-projects/dr-congo-msf-suspends-medical-activities-after-ebola-treatment-centre>

Kayna – North Kivu province: MSF works in Kayna's regional general hospital (RGH). We support the RGH and four health centres in Lubero. This strategy of decentralised treatment and cooperation with health facilities is proving successful in Lubero. At one health centre in Lubero, is Kipese reference health centre that managed the case of the traditional healer who infected 12 people, including one of our nurses who had been vaccinated.

Béni – North Kivu province: In Béni, we provide support to five health centres. Our strategy here is proving effective too. The time to admission to an ETC has decreased significantly, and survival rates have increased.

Goma – North Kivu province: Goma has registered its first case of Ebola, a pastor/healer who'd travelled from Butembo. The ministry decided to send him to the ETC in Butembo by ambulance and he died on the way. The 18 people in contact with him on the bus from Butembo to Goma have been vaccinated. Two of his contacts have gone to Bukavu.



This positive Ebola case reported in Goma shows the situation continues to be concerning and is not under control. *Goma is a large city on the border with Rwanda, with roughly one million people. MSF has been present in Goma for Ebola preparedness for over 7 months now, reinforcing the surveillance system and ensuring there is adequate capacity to manage suspected and confirmed cases.* There needs to be a coordinated scale up in Goma - together with ministry of Health and WHO, MSF will continue to monitor the situation in Goma and respond as necessary.

Bunia and surrounds – Ituri province:

- Managing the 34-bed Bunia ETC: 24 beds for suspect patients and 10 beds for confirmed patients. Over 100 patients were admitted during June, of which two were confirmed as having Ebola.
- Undertaking infection prevention and control measures, including in Komanda, Bunia and Rwampara.
- Providing support to nearly 20 health centres and facilities across Komanda and Bunia, including Bunia general hospital.
- Undertaking health promotion and community engagement activities in the communities.

Biakato – Ituri province:

- MSF teams are undertaking infection prevention and control, and water and sanitation activities
- Managing, in collaboration with MoH, two small transit units, each a maximum of 5 beds.
- Providing free healthcare across four primary healthcare centres, mobile clinics and secondary healthcare for paediatrics.

<https://www.msf.org/drc-ebola-outbreak-crisis-update>

Ending the outbreak

The epidemic is not yet under control. The geographic spread of the epidemic appears to be unpredictable, with diffused small clusters potentially occurring anywhere in the region. This pattern makes ending the outbreak even more challenging. Given the appearance of new confirmed cases further south, there is a risk that the epidemic could reach Goma, the capital of North Kivu.

Your financial support is greatly needed for us to increase our efforts to engage the population as active participants in the fight against the outbreak. This includes listening to their broader needs.

We are also responding to other emergencies in DRC, including fighting a massive measles outbreak in the region that has claimed about as many lives as Ebola. <https://www.msf.org/za/stories-news/press-releases/drc-massive-mobilisation-needed-urgently-curb-measles-outbreak>

Budget



Our operational budget for the Ebola emergency in DRC is € 29 million.

MSF Southern Africa is committed to raise R15 million towards this Ebola emergency.

Help Doctors Without Borders to end the Ebola epidemic by donating.

To Make a Donation

Make an EFT donation to Doctors Without Borders (MSF) Southern Africa, the banking details are:

Account name: **Doctors Without Borders South Africa**

Bank Name: **Nedbank**

Bank account: **1944209425**

Branch code: **194405**

Branch name: **Parktown**

Our reference: **Please use your Company Name + EbolaDRC**

please email your proof of payment to bongo.magungo@joburg.msf.org

