



An International Medical Corps staff member trains local healthcare staff on proper use of Ebola-relevant personal protective equipment.

As of September 29, there have been 53 confirmed and 11 probable cases of Ebola virus disease (EVD), including 42 deaths (31 confirmed and 11 probable) in the Kasai province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Rapid response to this outbreak, which is the Zaire strain of Ebola, has proved extremely challenging, given that it's taking place in an isolated province with an already overburdened health system and chronic poverty-related food insecurity. Lack of clean water, internet access and adequate medical facilities further limit ease of response.

Though the World Health Organization (WHO) is working with the UN Humanitarian Air Service to bring a air travel to Bulape Health Zone, Kasai province remains extremely isolated, making response challenging and delaying the import of critical supplies. Major gaps remain in the response to this outbreak. An 18-bed Ebola Treatment Center (ETC) at the Bulape General Hospital has been quickly overwhelmed, with confirmed and suspected cases being treated in the same area, which goes against proper infection prevention and control (IPC) practices. The larger community is no longer able to access hospital services, as the full health facility has become a "red zone," with serious risk of EVD transmission. This has led community members to turn toward traditional healers.

Concerns about the disease are widespread, as Ebola has been detected now in six areas within Bulape Health Zone. There are rumors of community members fleeing affected areas, which could lead to the virus spreading outside of Kasai province into neighboring provinces, or even over the border into Angola. Vaccinations are available for some frontline health workers, but the supply of vaccines is not sufficient.

International Medical Corps Response

International Medical Corps first began operations in the DRC in 1999 and has extensive experience with EVD, both in and outside of the DRC. We were key players in responses to outbreaks of EVD in West Africa in 2014–2016 and in DRC between 2018 and 2022, and have made significant contributions to research that have informed treatment protocols. Consequently, our rapid response teams (RRTs) have mobilized rapidly to respond to this critical outbreak in Kasai, assessing needs on the

FAST FACTS

- On September 4, the DRC Ministry of Health officially declared an outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in the Bulape and Mwaka health zones in Kasai province. Since then, the virus has spread to Bambale, Bulape and the surrounding community, Dikolo, Ingongo and Mpianga health areas, inside of Bulape Health Zone.
- According to the World Health Organization, as of September 29, there have been 53 confirmed and 11 probable cases of EVD, and 42 deaths (31 confirmed, 11 probable) in Bulape Health Zone.
- Gaps remain in the response, including in case-management capacity, blood supplies and more.

OUR RESPONSE

- International Medical Corps has been responding in the DRC since 1999, and currently has offices in Goma and Kinshasa.
- We immediately deployed a Rapid Response Team (RRT) to Kasai, to support coordination of case management and infection prevention and control (IPC) efforts. Staff members have set up a temporary isolation unit at the Ingongo Health Facility in Bulape Health Zone, as well as a screening and referral unit.
- We have deployed a roving mental health specialist to address the psychological toll of the outbreak on healthcare staff, patients and families.
- Staff members are training several DRC-based organizations on Ebola-specific topics. We also have trained 40 health workers in Bulape on EVD case management, IPC, and proper water, sanitation and hygiene procedures. This was the first training conducted in Bulape that follows the standardized Ministry of Health training modules and methodology.

ground and leading surveillance working groups at both the national and provincial levels. We have deployed qualified health personnel to support case management, provide training in IPC and risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), and help manage efforts involving water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

International Medical Corps has set up an isolation and triage room at Ingongo Health Facility, about 11 kilometers from Bulape, that has already begun seeing patients. Our team has constructed a screening and referral unit, enabling EVD patients to be safely quarantined and treated, and has begun procuring personal protective equipment (PPE), pharmaceuticals and critical cleaning supplies (including chlorine) to support the response. Our team is also preparing to procure additional medical equipment and supplies, pharmaceuticals and patient supplies to support case management and is ready to provide further training to healthcare staff in Bulape.

Through International Medical Corps' LEARN initiative to strengthen the capacity of health providers in the DRC to treat infectious disease, we are equipping local and national non-governmental organizations with the critical skills needed to respond effectively to Ebola. Leveraging both globally recognized materials and DRC Ministry of Health-approved content, we have customized our training curriculum to address key Ebola-specific topics, including IPC; RCCE; safe and dignified burials; triage, isolation and notification; transmission-based precautions; community-based surveillance; contact tracing; and safe, effective, and accountable programming. By delivering these targeted modules directly to DRC-based organizations, we are strengthening their readiness and capacity to act at the community level, ensuring that local actors can more effectively support containment efforts.

To support first responders, patients and community members, we have deployed one of our roving mental health and psychosocial support specialists to Bulape, reaching staff at several health facilities responding to EVD—including the ETC at the Bulape General Hospital—to ensure that they have critical mental health support.

Further support is critically needed to ensure that International Medical Corps can continue responding to this Ebola outbreak. Immediate procurement of appropriate supplies—including PPE, IPC equipment and WASH supplies—is especially important, as is the ability to support key personnel in the field as they respond to the outbreak and conduct training.