

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

REPUBLIC OF CONGO: EBOLA OUTBREAK

8 June 2005

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 1/2005) is being issued for information only, and reflects the status of the situation and information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

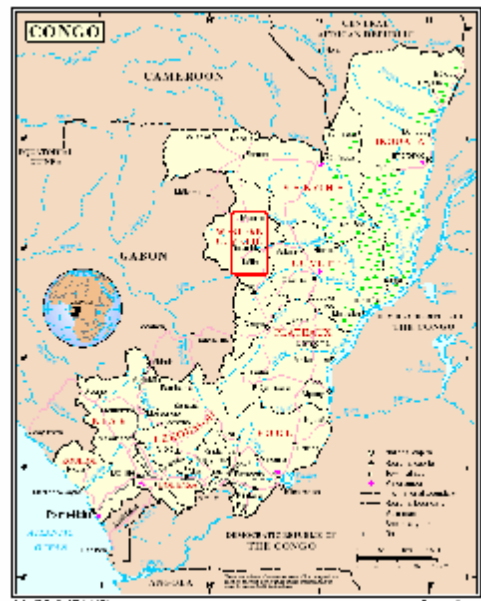
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All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

The Situation

The districts of Etoumbi and Mbomo in the Cuvette Ouest Department in the Republic of Congo are affected, beginning 27 April, by a haemorrhagic fever epidemic the clinic symptoms of which are highly suspected to be the Ebola filovirus, following a communiqué of the Ministry of health of the Republic of Congo. On 17 May 2005, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Congo confirmed the fact that it was an Ebola haemorrhagic fever epidemic. As of 8 June 2005, 12 cases have been reported amongst which 10 deaths. 2 people are recovering. Contrary to the other Ebola Haemorrhagic virus Fever the department has been affected by in 2001, 2002 and 2003, we notice a relative control of the situation. The number of contacts has decreased from 84 people to 12 currently under observation. The first signs were observed around elephant's hunters.



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Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Congolese Red Cross¹ volunteers started sensitizing people at the onset of the epidemic in Kelle and Mbomo. In Itoumbi, the epicenter of the Ebola outbreak, the community was skeptical about the epidemic. Red Cross actions there basically consisted of the burial of deceased under adequate hygienic conditions, the monitoring of people hospitalized, and disinfection. One hundred Congolese Red Cross volunteers have been mobilized in the areas of Itoumbi, Mbomo and Kelle during the emergency phase.

Since 27 May, a Congolese Red Cross headquarters team went to the field to support actions that were initiated by local branches. The Federation delegation in Kinshasa is supporting the Congolese Red Cross by funding the present operation and sending a technical delegate on a two-week mission to the national society. This operation allows better organization of the local committees for social mobilization against the epidemic in relation of strategies and actions carried out during the previous operations. Local branches are also supported by disinfection products (chlorine) and spraying equipments.

Please note that the Red Cross volunteers were among the first to warn health services in the concerned areas of a possible Ebola epidemic. Most partners intervening in this epidemic depend on Congolese Red Cross volunteers. Current efforts at containing the epidemic are a result of the excellent work of these volunteers, trained and supervised in previous Ebola response operations implemented by Congolese Red Cross.

Please refer to the Final Report dated 20 July 2004, Republic of Congo: Ebola outbreak, Emergency Appeal no. 24/2003 – http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?03/2403fr.pdf

Co-ordination

A crisis committee has been set up and is coordinated by a representative of the Ministry of Health and comprising of Congolese Red Cross, Federation, WHO, the Ministry of Health, political and administrative officials, WFP, MSF-Holland, security services and other NGOs. The crisis committee comprises of three sub-commissions, namely, health, psychosocial and security.

In addition to Red Cross support the crisis committee has benefited from the following:

- protection equipment from WHO and MSF,
- laboratory for sampling (WHO, MSF),
- disease surveillance (Ministry of Health, WHO),
- installation of an isolation centre (MSF-Holland),
- food items for supporting affected families (WFP), and
- logistics support (ECOFAC, a private forest exploitation company).

Needs

Besides the equipment for protection and disinfection (boots, gloves, masks, aprons, and robes), social mobilization needs to be strengthened for disease surveillance, and for a change in food treatment and eating habits through a long-term and large-scale programme.

All International Federation Operations seek to adhere to the Code of Conduct and are committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org/>

For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's 2005 Annual Appeal for the Republic of Congo, no. 05AA036 - http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual05/05AA036.pdf .

¹ Congolese Red Cross – <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/check.asp?countryid=184>