

# 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 EPIDEMIC

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Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Allocated: NA

*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 180 countries.*

For more information: [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

### **In Brief**

**This document is being issued based on the needs described below reflecting the information available at this time. Based on further updates and details from assessment reports, or should the situation deteriorate, the Federation will consider international support through an Appeal.**

### **The Situation**

The Cuvette Ouest Department is in the North-East of the Republic of Congo, more or less 900 kilometres away from the capital city of Brazzaville. Two of this department districts, namely Kellé and Mbomo, have been struck by the epidemics of the Ebola Virus Haemorrhagic Fever since 2001.

The access to both Mbomo and Kellé is extremely difficult under normal circumstances; five hundred km beyond Brazzaville, the road leading to these districts is bumpy. The situation is even more critical in the rainy season, particularly from October to January.

The recent epidemic outburst dates back to the end of December 2002 and the beginning of January 2003. A total of 142 cases have been recorded: 125 in Kellé and 17 in Mbomo. Of these 142 cases, 128 died (90.14%): 115 in Kellé and 13 in Mbomo. Fourteen persons survived the epidemic: ten in Kellé and four in Mbomo.

Six months later, the end of the epidemic was officially announced on 5 June 2003 by the Health and Population Minister of the Republic of Congo. This second epidemic outburst was much more significant than that of December 2001, considering its length and the number of victims.

The current epidemic outburst dates back to 13 October 2003 in Mbanza, a village located 18 km from Mbomo: two young people ate the meat of a hunted wild boar. A few days later, both of them had diarrhoea. The first death occurred on 16 October and the second three days later. A third person died on 23 October 2003 and by 31 October, five cases were recorded. All these death cases are from the same family.

On Friday, 31 October 2003, bouts of diarrhoea, presumed to originate from water, affected 15 people in Mbanza village: 13 cases of persons aged 0 to 8, and 2 cases of persons aged 20 and 40.

From 3 November 2003, the clinical picture of the patients affected by the diarrhoea has improved. There are reports of high figured fever, bloody vomits, anorexia and severe asthenia. Five contacts are recorded.

On 4 November 2003, two new cases are recorded and the total death cases is raised up to seven.

On 5 November 2003, there are two more victims whose diagnostic is not optimistic (one in Mbanza and one in Mbomo).

In the district of Kelle, no suspect case is reported.

(**Sources:** The Fight against the disease Department of the Ministry of Health and Republic of Congo Etoumbi Red Cross Committee – phonic messages).

## **Red Cross and Red Crescent action**

As soon as the information was received, the national society contacted the Federation Delegation for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo, based in Kinshasa. A strategy was developed, and addressed the collecting of data to issue an information bulletin, contacting health sources and assessing the national society capacities.

At the national level, the [Congolese Red Cross](#) Health and Social Action Department:

- Approached the Health Ministry Fight against the Disease Department to set up a plan of action;
- Got into contact with the other partners (WHO, UNICEF, MSF, ...) and
- Gave instructions to Mbomo, Kellé and Etoumbi committees to strengthen sensitization and epidemiological surveillance activities.

At the operational level, Red Cross volunteers continue sensitization activities in the three districts (Mbomo, Kellé and Etoumbi), as well as assist with the burial of the dead in Mbanza and Mbomo.

## **Capacities of the National Society**

### **Number of trained volunteers**

- During the 2001 operation: 62 volunteers were trained.
- During the 2003 operation: the 62 trained volunteers went on a refresher course and 64 were trained.
- Total: 126 volunteers are trained in Mbomo, Kellé and Etoumbi.

### **Experiences gained during previous operations**

- With the last two epidemic outbursts, the national society volunteers are well trained on contamination mode, protection methods and sick and contact persons' isolation.
- They could involve themselves in the committees of the fight against the epidemic outbreak which may be set up for a forthcoming operation.
- However, the refresher course, the activities coordination and contacts with other partners would require the supervision at the central level.

### **Relations with local health and political authorities**

- Mbomo and Kellé local committees and the national committee of the Red Cross have very good relations with local health and political authorities; prior Red Cross response and activities were well appreciated by all.

### **Material available**

- Part of the material used (radio, bicycles, megaphones, spraying machines, relief kits, boots, aprons) during the recent operation (January to March 2003) is available and could be used for an upcoming operation.

## Needs

Needs are stated in terms of:

- Deployment to the affected areas to update data, and assess the very human, material and training needs of the Kellé, Mbomo and Etoumbi Red Cross committees members;
- Producing sensitization materials;
- Producing the volunteers' manual on Ebola Virus Haemorrhagic Fever;
- Providing the committees with protection materials, disinfectants and IEC<sup>1</sup> materials;
- Organizing refresher course for former volunteers and training new ones;
- Motivating volunteers.

[Click here to see a related article from Red Cross Red Crescent Magazine \(Issue 2 – 2003\).](#)

For a full description of the national society profile, see [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

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*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 Annual Appeal.

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<sup>1</sup> IEC – Information, Education and Communication