Ebola Outbreak: Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda

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Joint UNHCR-WHO training with IDP community leaders on Ebola prevention and response, Ituri, DRC© UNHCR

Highlights

- The seventeenth Ebola virus disease outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continues to evolve, with 1,792 confirmed cases, including 625 deaths and 295 recoveries, reported across 37 health zones in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu as of 8 July. The Government has also reported two confirmed cases in Kisangani, Tshopo Province.
- The outbreak is unfolding in an area marked by persistent insecurity and displacement due to armed clashes, limiting humanitarian access and complicating Ebola prevention, surveillance and response. Ituri remains the epicentre, accounting for 91 per cent of confirmed cases and nearly 86 per cent of deaths.
- While no Ebola cases have been reported among refugees in the DRC to date, 19 internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the Kpangba, Kigonze and Bembeyi sites in Ituri are among confirmed cases. More than 2 million forcibly displaced people live in Ebola-affected or high-risk areas of eastern DRC, including 320,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, heightening the urgency of inclusive preparedness, risk communication, surveillance and access to national response systems.
- In Uganda, the outbreak remains relatively contained, with 20 confirmed cases as of 9 July, including two deaths, 17 recoveries and one patient currently admitted for care.

- UNHCR is supporting the Governments of the DRC and Uganda, alongside the World Health Organization (WHO), other United Nations agencies and local communities, to strengthen Ebola prevention and response and ensure that refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and host communities can access information, surveillance and essential services.

Needs and Response

Democratic Republic of the Congo

- UNHCR and partners continued to strengthen Ebola prevention, preparedness, surveillance and community awareness in sites hosting forcibly displaced people across Ituri and North Kivu, including temperature checks and hand washing stations at the entrance/exits of sites.
- UNHCR has facilitated WHO/Ministry of Health training with site committees on the hotlines/alert mechanisms for requests for safe, dignified burial to help to strengthen early reporting and reduce transmission risks in displacement sites.
- UNHCR and its partners continued to integrate protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) into the Ebola messaging with community groups. During the reporting period, such activities were completed in southwest Ituri, the Goma area, and northern North Kivu.
- Significant gaps in water, sanitation and hygiene services persist across internally displaced people sites, requiring urgent mobilization of additional actors. Prior to the outbreak, the Kigonze site alone required more than 500 additional latrines to meet international standards, with similarly critical needs identified in other sites across Ituri and North Kivu.
- More than 500 Rwandan refugees are currently stranded in UNHCR transit centres in Goma and Bukavu as a result of the suspension of voluntary repatriation to Rwanda and ongoing border restrictions linked to Ebola prevention measures. The prolonged stay of refugees in facilities intended for no more than 72 hours has created challenging living conditions, protection concerns and significant operational costs. Despite all refugees having remained symptom-free beyond the 21-day Ebola incubation period, repatriation movements remain suspended. UNHCR continues to advocate for practical, risk-managed solutions that would allow voluntary repatriation to resume safely and with dignity.

Uganda

- Over 90 per cent of Uganda's refugee population of 2 million people live in districts at high risk of Ebola transmission. No confirmed Ebola cases have been reported among refugees to date, and active case finding and surveillance continue across refugee settlements.
- The DRC-Uganda border remains closed and asylum admissions remain suspended, increasing the risk of irregular movements through unmanned entry points. Returnees from the DRC to refugee settlements in Uganda are monitored for 21 days for Ebola symptoms; among 69 recent returnees who completed monitoring, no Ebola cases were detected.
- UNHCR is engaging with the Government on a phased approach to restoring asylum admissions, linked to ongoing decongestion efforts, continued access to asylum in a protective manner, and the need to manage operational risks at reception facilities and border entry points.
- Surveillance systems remain in place, supported by approximately 2,000 Village Health Teams conducting community-based surveillance, identifying alerts and supporting case investigations. UNHCR is also supporting the training by the Ministry of health of 1,582 Village Health Team members and community influencers, including 720 in Kikuube District, 674 in Arua District and 188 in Ntoroko District, to strengthen community-based Ebola surveillance.

- The Ministry of Health is training 110 health care workers, including a UNHCR Surge staff, on integrated Ebola response, with 25 participants from Rwamwanja, 25 from Kyaka and 60 from Kisoro, covering both refugee and district operations.
- Risk communication and community engagement activities continued through school outreach, engagement with religious and community leaders, and house-to-house sensitization campaigns, reaching tens of thousands of people and contributing to high levels of awareness and limited community resistance to Ebola prevention measures.
- In the Northern Region, 47 new arrivals who were quarantined at Elegu Collection Point completed their 21-day observation period and were cleared by the Ministry of health for relocation to Nyumanzi Reception Centre. While in quarantine, the Government conducts health monitoring and screening and provided basic assistance, while UNHCR and partners maintained adequate site conditions, including water, sanitation, and hygiene services, and supported the distribution of essential relief items. In addition, UNHCR and its partners, commenced the distribution of 100 handwashing facilities across refugee settlements to support Ebola prevention efforts. UNHCR also continued to participate in weekly district task force meetings across the region to strengthen Ebola surveillance and promote adherence to standard operating procedures at high-risk public gathering points.
- In the Southwest Region, decongestion of transit and reception facilities continues across all locations to reduce overcrowding and mitigate Ebola transmission risks. A total of 214 individuals were hosted in reception centres, the majority of whom were protection cases. Of these, 16 asylum-seekers at Kagoma Reception Centre had completed the 21-day observation period and were scheduled for final screening during the reporting period.

Coordination and Regional Preparedness

UNHCR's Ebola Preparedness and Response Plan requires USD 14.08 million from July to November 2026 to support preparedness and response activities in the DRC and Uganda, while also strengthening preparedness capacities in Burundi, Rwanda and South Sudan. The Appeal aims to protect refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and host communities from Ebola virus disease transmission, ensure continuity of essential services, and facilitate access to national response systems. The Appeal also complement the Africa CDC and WHO Joint Bundibugyo Virus Disease Continental Preparedness and Response Plan.

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