

[New Ebola outbreak confirmed in DR Congo: UN health agency scales up response](#)

Two new cases of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) have been confirmed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) by Government scientists there, prompting the UN health agency to immediately scale up its response.

The new Ebola cases were identified on Tuesday in a remote area of the country's north-west, near the town of Bikoro, near the Congo River.

In a [statement](#), the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), said the two positive samples, out of five tested overall, had come from the Iponge health facility, located close to Bikoro, and additional specimens were being collected for further testing.

[“Our top priority is to get to Bikoro](#) to work alongside the Government and partners to reduce the loss of life and suffering related to this new Ebola virus disease outbreak,” Peter Salama, the Deputy Director-General for Emergency Preparedness and Response at WHO, said in Tuesday news release.

“Working with partners and responding early and in a coordinated way will be vital to containing this deadly disease,” he added.

WHO is employing the model it [successfully deployed following a similar Ebola outbreak last year](#), which included a timely alert by local authorities of suspected cases, prompt testing, immediate notification of results, and a fast response by local and national authorities together with international partners.

Response thus far

A multidisciplinary team of experts from WHO, Médecins Sans Frontières and the Government has already been deployed to Bikoro to coordinate and strengthen the response.

Matshidiso Moeti, the Regional Director for Africa at WHO, underlined the importance of strong coordination from the outset, saying that a comprehensive response was vital.

“We will work closely with health authorities and partners to support the national response,” he said.

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WHO has also assigned dedicated staff and resources across the agency to tackling the outbreak, and released some \$1 million from its emergency contingency fund to support efforts over the next three months, and stop the disease spreading.

The situation on the ground in Bikoro, situated along Lake Tumba in Equateur Province is particularly challenging, given its distance from the capital and the limited availability of health services. Facilities in the town have had to rely on international organizations for fresh medical supplies.

Ninth outbreak in the DRC since 1976

This is the ninth outbreak, since the discovery of the Ebola virus in the country in 1976.

The virus is endemic to DRC, and causes an acute, serious illness which is often fatal if untreated. The virus is transmitted to human through contact with wild animals and can then be passed from person to person. Ebola is fatal in about 50 per cent of cases.

An outbreak in West Africa which began in 2014 left more than 11,000 dead across six countries, and was not declared officially over by WHO until the beginning of 2016.

[First symptoms](#) generally include the sudden onset of fever, fatigue, muscle pain, headache and sore throat. This is followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, rash, symptoms of impaired kidney and liver function, and in some cases, both internal and external bleeding.