



Healthcare workers in the International Medical Corps-supported Makeke Hospital assess a patient in eastern DRC.

On August 14, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared mpox, formerly referred to as monkeypox, a public health emergency of international concern, signaling the severity of the growing outbreak. Though the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has seen the majority of confirmed cases, neighboring countries such as Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR) and others are beginning to report increased numbers of confirmed and suspected cases.

Due to decades of armed conflict in eastern DRC, huge populations have been internally displaced and live in camps lacking proper access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services. The crowded, unsanitary conditions enable infectious diseases such as mpox to thrive. Stigma associated with transmission keeps people experiencing symptoms from seeking treatment, furthering the spread and advancement of symptoms.

Barriers to curbing the mpox outbreak are numerous. Access to adequate primary and emergency health services is low, and healthcare providers often struggle to identify mpox over other, similar conditions such as chickenpox. Furthermore, laboratory testing to confirm a case requires that a sample be sent from local health facilities to a diagnostic lab in either Uvira or Kinshasa, which takes time and additional resources. Even when samples are able to reach testing facilities, extreme shortages in testing materials further slow the confirmation of cases. The laboratories in both Kinshasa and Uvira are currently unable to test samples due to a shortage in testing supplies.

International Medical Corps Response

In response to the mpox outbreak, International Medical Corps has scheduled training sessions in August for more than 50 health areas in Fizi and Minova provinces in South Kivu. These sessions will train healthcare workers on the identification, treatment and prevention of mpox. We also are donating personal protective equipment to health facilities in the conflict-affected Karisimbi Health Zone in North Kivu, which is the temporary home to many internally displaced populations.

Furthermore, to assist local health actors with transportation of testing samples for lab diagnosis, International Medical Corps is transporting samples to Uvira. The samples' arrival at Uvira laboratories will accelerate the confirmation of cases once they are able to be tested.

International Medical Corps will continue to work closely with international bodies, government health officials, and international and local NGOs to coordinate efforts and share information, working together to provide the most expansive coverage possible.

FAST FACTS

- Mpox was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the WHO on August 14.
- The number of cases reported so far this year has exceeded last year's total, with more than 15,600 confirmed cases and 537 deaths. Experts believe the true numbers are higher.
- Though the outbreak is centered in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, confirmed cases of mpox have rapidly been rising in neighboring countries, including four countries where mpox had not previously been reported: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda.

OUR FOOTPRINT

- International Medical Corps has worked in the DRC since 1999, providing primary and secondary healthcare, capacity building, child protection, gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and treatment, nutrition support, social and behavioral change, food security programs, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services.

OUR RESPONSE

- International Medical Corps in DRC is preparing to train healthcare providers in more than 50 affected health areas in North and South Kivu provinces, and donating personal protective equipment to Karisimbi Health Zone.