

CDC in the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC of the CONGO



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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2002 with an initial focus on health systems strengthening. CDC's support expanded with the launches of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in 2004 and U.S. President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) in 2005. Since 2015, CDC works with the Government of DRC through the Global Health Security Agenda (GHS) to address other infectious diseases and strengthen laboratory systems, preparedness and disease outbreak response, surveillance, and workforce capacity to respond to disease outbreaks.



CDC partners with the Ministry of Health (MOH) to implement the National Public Health Institute (NPHI) that was established in April 2022. The NPHI is a hub of expertise and coordinates core public health functions



CDC supported emergency management training for more than 80 MOH staff in four provinces. These staff support various outbreak responses, including COVID-19



CDC trained 20 trainers who support Rapid Response Team (RRT) managers and team members



Since 2015, more than 430 trainees graduated from DRC's Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP)



With CDC support, 30 epidemiologists deployed across the DRC to respond to COVID-19 in 2021. Seventeen epidemiologists deployed in 2022



CDC and partners provided antiretroviral treatment (ART) to more than 100,000 people with HIV



CDC established a laboratory accreditation program for 16 laboratories in partnership with Global Health System Solutions (GHSS) and MOH



For each of the last five Ebola outbreaks, CDC supported laboratory testing and deployment of epidemiologists to investigate alerts, find active cases, and trace contacts



CDC and WHO's capacity-strengthening efforts shortened the turnaround time of laboratory-confirmed diagnosis of meningitis from two months to one week



CDC helped train more than 3,800 healthcare providers in malaria diagnosis and treatment between 2020 and 2021



Since 2010, CDC has supported molecular diagnosis of monkeypox at the national laboratory



In 2006, CDC partnered with DRC to begin sentinel surveillance for influenza and increase the National Influenza Reference Laboratory's capacity to process influenza specimens

Global Health Security

The DRC has a large population, covers a wide geographic area, and shares borders with nine other countries. CDC works with the DRC Ministry of Health (MOH) and other partners to prevent, detect, respond, and control infectious disease outbreaks. Strong rapid response capacity in DRC is critical to addressing public health threats within the country and preventing the spread of disease regionally and globally. CDC supports a working group that provides technical expertise in outbreak preparedness and response. CDC also helped develop standardized training materials for rapid response teams and public health emergency management.

Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP)

Through FETP, CDC strengthens the DRC's workforce capacity to investigate and respond to disease outbreaks before they become epidemics. Participants strengthen their skills in data collection and translation of data into evidence-based action. FETP graduates primarily include national and district public health staff whose expertise have been critical to DRC's Ebola and COVID-19 responses.

COVID-19

The first case of COVID-19 in the DRC was confirmed on March 10, 2020. The Kinshasa province accounts for the majority of cases but all 26 provinces in the country have reported cases. Since the pandemic was declared, CDC has supported the DRC with disease surveillance and data management, laboratory systems, and vaccination. CDC's community-based surveillance support was critical to the country's COVID-19 response. FETP graduates are also crucial to the country's COVID-19 response as they lead risk assessments, case investigations, contact tracing, and risk communication in Haut Katanga, Kinshasa, and North Kivu.

HIV and Tuberculosis (TB)

HIV is a leading cause of death and a health threat to millions worldwide. As a key implementer of PEPFAR, CDC partners with the DRC government to continue strengthening health systems and provide patient-centered, integrated HIV and TB services. CDC works with the MOH to sustain epidemic control by providing services in Kinshasa and Haut-Katanga, including:

- Scale-up of HIV prevention and treatment programs through case-finding, treatment initiation and continued treatment for people with HIV, elimination of mother-to-child transmission, increased viral load coverage, and increased access and uptake of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)
- Integration of HIV and TB care and treatment programs
- Strengthening of disease surveillance, health information systems, laboratory capacity, and health workforce development

Laboratory Capacity Building

CDC helps strengthen laboratory functions, such as diagnostics, network optimization, and quality management systems. CDC helps enhance laboratory infrastructure to meet the increasing need for early diagnosis of HIV in infants, viral load testing, TB, and emerging infectious diseases. CDC also helped develop the national laboratory strategic plan that guides laboratory systems strengthening in the DRC. In Lubumbashi, CDC donated a high-temperature incinerator to the provincial public health laboratory to enhance waste management. CDC also assessed a sample system to optimize the diagnostic network in Lubumbashi. During the COVID-19 pandemic, CDC donated equipment and safety materials to laboratories to promote safe sample processing.



During the COVID-19 pandemic response, a community animator facilitates a village-level assembly in Mont Ngafula Health Zone and counts votes during the Community Animation Cell election in 2022.

Photo by Eric Ahasa/Bizzell

Ebola

As of July 2022, the DRC has experienced 14 Ebola outbreaks since the first case was reported in 1976. In the last four years, six outbreaks occurred in two provinces (North Kivu and Equateur). On August 1, 2018, the DRC MOH reported an outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in the North Kivu province that was the second largest Ebola outbreak after the 2014-2016 West Africa Ebola outbreak. CDC supported the MOH's outbreak responses through disease surveillance, laboratory support, border health, data management, infection prevention and control (IPC), vaccination, risk communication, and community engagement.

Meningitis

The northern part of the DRC forms the southern border of the meningitis belt. In 2021, the DRC MOH reported an outbreak of bacterial meningitis in the Banalia health zone, Tshopo province. The first suspected cases were reported in June 2021 and the outbreak was confirmed in September 2021. At the end of the outbreak, the country reported more than 2,660 suspected cases, 40 confirmed cases, and 200 deaths. CDC partnered with the World Health Organization (WHO) to train MOH staff and establish the latest testing technology for bacterial meningitis to increase in-country laboratory diagnostic capacity. CDC is supporting decentralization of meningitis bacterial testing in the Tshopo provincial laboratory.

Typhoid Fever

CDC supports the DRC MOH's responses to recurrent typhoid fever outbreaks. In 2021, the DRC national laboratory (INRB) confirmed two distinct salmonella outbreaks in the Popokabaka and Mushie health zones. In 2022, the Popokabaka health zone experienced an increase in the number of suspected typhoid fever cases and intestinal holes that required surgery. CDC supported MOH staff to conduct an outbreak investigation and pilot new rapid diagnostic tests. CDC also works with national authorities and other partners to support water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) activities to permanently establish a safe water supply in the Popokabaka health zone.

Malaria

Malaria, a disease transmitted by mosquitoes, is a leading cause of preventable illness and deaths around the world. The DRC accounts for 11% of global malaria deaths, with 60% of all hospital visits in the country attributed to malaria. Through PMI, CDC supports implementation and scale-up of malaria prevention and control activities and research in DRC. CDC-supported activities include:

- Monitoring mosquito behavior and resistance to insecticides
- Providing long-lasting insecticide-treated bed nets (LLINs)
- Preventing malaria during pregnancy
- Enhancing diagnostics, case management, surveillance, and monitoring and evaluation of malaria-related activities
- Researching social and behavioral changes that impacting malaria prevention and case management.

Monkeypox

Monkeypox is a disease that causes symptoms similar to smallpox. However, monkeypox is associated with milder symptoms than smallpox and is rarely fatal. Historically, monkeypox is endemic to West and Central Africa, with the majority of annual cases reported in the Congo Basin. CDC has supported laboratory-based monkeypox surveillance in DRC's Tshuapa province since 2010. This robust surveillance system is a platform for clinical research and enhanced understanding of monkeypox transmission.

Influenza

With financial and technical support from CDC, the DRC began influenza surveillance in 2006. Currently, there are four sentinel sites conducting influenza surveillance in Kinshasa, DRC's capital. Influenza surveillance is focused among outpatients with influenza-like illness and inpatients with severe acute respiratory illness. These surveillance activities served as the backbone for conducting COVID-19 surveillance in DRC.



CDC STAFF

12 U.S. Assignees
32 Locally Employed



AT A GLANCE

Population: >92.3 million
Per capita income: \$580
Life expectancy: F 63 / M 59 years
Infant mortality rate: 64/1,000 live births

Sources: World Bank 2021, Democratic Republic of the Congo



TOP 10 CAUSES OF DEATH

1. Malaria
2. Tuberculosis
3. Lower respiratory infections
4. Neonatal disorders
5. Diarrheal diseases
6. Stroke
7. Ischemic heart disease
8. Road injuries
9. Hypertensive heart disease
10. Cirrhosis and other chronic liver diseases

Source: GBD Compare 2019, Democratic Republic of the Congo

For more country information
www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/drc/

