

Introduction



The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has suffered from violent conflicts, poverty and displacement for nearly 20 years. However, the nature of the crisis is changing and humanitarian needs are escalating rapidly.

The situation has further deteriorated over the past year. From 2017 to 2018, the estimated number of people in need of urgent aid has been revised from 8.5M up to 13.1M – an increase of over 50%.

DR Congo now has more internally displaced people than any other African country. In October 2017, the crisis in several provinces within the country was declared an ‘L3 emergency’ – the highest level recognised by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – placing it alongside the crises in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen in terms of severity.

Over the last year, armed groups have been engaging in a complex internal conflict that has displaced millions of people across the country, and that continues to place lives in danger. Families fearing violence flee their villages, often losing their crops and means of income. They live in unsanitary conditions, vulnerable to exploitation and at risk of disease outbreaks. Health needs are widespread and urgent.

The political situation in the country also remains tense in the light of the upcoming elections in December 2018. There is hope that the elections will be held as planned, however it is anticipated that the security situation might further degrade.

Our work in DR Congo

Medair has worked in DRC since 1996 implementing emergency nutrition and health services, water, sanitation and hygiene facilities (WASH) and infrastructure projects. We are currently operational in some of the most severely affected areas of DR Congo. We are delivering nutrition projects in North Kivu and Ituri Provinces, and are supporting communities in South Kivu. At the end of 2017 we established a base in Tshikapa, Kasai region, to facilitate response interventions to the growing nutrition crisis there. We cooperate with partners and funders to target our interventions, reaching the most vulnerable and least served.

Since August 2018 our team in DRC has been responding to contain a new Ebola outbreak affecting the country, with a focus on three key priorities: facilitating swift, safe referral of patients, halting infection spread, and ensuring continued delivery of health services.

Ebola Crisis – Situation and Medair’s Emergency Response

On 1st August 2018, an Ebola outbreak was officially declared in Eastern DR Congo in Beni Territory. This is the 10th outbreak of Ebola in DR Congo, declared just one week after the ninth was declared over 2,500km (1,553.43 miles) west in Equateur Province, adding to an already challenging humanitarian situation in the country. Medair’s team in DRC and our Global Emergency Response Team (G-ERT) are responding.

After the Ebola outbreak was declared, the epidemic progressed significantly in the following weeks. The majority of cases were confirmed in Nord Kivu Province, along with a number of cases in Ituri Province. As of 6th November there have been 308 cases (273 confirmed, 35 probable), with 191 deaths in total. Due to the outbreak being in a conflict zone where armed groups regularly form and fragment, delivering life-saving interventions is highly complex. Activities of NGOs are restricted to specific areas and times of the day. Bringing in specialised supplies that are not available locally, recruiting quality staff and navigating long distances over poor roads to reach sites, add to the challenge of providing crucial aid in these areas.



Training session at Oicha referral hospital in Beni Territory, DR Congo. Medair staff are sharing their knowledge with Congolese health workers based at the hospital to respond to the outbreak (Sept 2018)

More than 11,300 people died in the 2013-2016 Ebola outbreaks in West Africa, in large part due to population mobility and spread of infection in urban areas. In September 2018, the identification of new Ebola cases in a large urban area in the northeast of the country, caused fear amongst local authorities and NGOs that the epidemic would spread quickly in this highly populated province. The situation is exacerbated due to difficulties accessing some areas.

Project Summary

After the Ebola outbreak was confirmed, Medair immediately started its emergency response, supporting 54 health facilities. In addition to the 47 that we were supporting prior to the outbreak with WASH programmes, we are currently working in seven additional health centres. These facilities were selected based on the level of risk of suspected cases emerging.

The risk of the outbreak spreading to other provinces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as to neighbouring countries, remains very high. Our first priority is to ensure that suspected Ebola cases can be safely identified, isolated and referred at these health facilities, in order to:

- Ensure suspected Ebola patients receive timely care;
- Prevent further spread of Ebola;
- Enable affected populations to continue to access quality primary health care in a safe environment.

Project Activities

The ways in which Medair is addressing these issues is through:

- **Identification of high risk areas** - to determine which health facilities need more comprehensive protection and immediate assistance.



Medair staff setting up an Ebola screening station at Mbau Health Centre

- **Medical staff training and equipping, continuous close monitoring and support** – since August 2018, Medair has completed Ebola awareness briefings in all supported facilities and has trained nearly 700 health staff on how to safely implement screening, isolation and referral of Ebola patients. Staff are equipped with personal protection equipment, and newly built perimeter fences ensure that all visitors pass through a single entrance to the facility, where a screening point and isolation area are located. Patients with suspected Ebola wait in the designated isolation area for transfer to the nearest Ebola Treatment Centre. Medair staff are regularly monitoring the situation to ensure that screening procedures are being implemented and that sufficient equipment is available. We will continue to provide training and support to local medical staff, developing the capacity of the local community to control the outbreak and prevent further spread.
- **Safe screening and treatment** - suspected Ebola cases are safely identified and the appropriate measures are taken by the medical staff in Medair-supported clinics.
- **Coordination** – our response is coordinated with the World Health Organization and the Congolese Ministry of Health to ensure comprehensive coverage, avoid duplication of services, and mitigate the risk of further spread of Ebola Virus Disease.

Additionally, Medair is complementing these interventions with water, sanitation, and hygiene activities and health services, to support vulnerable communities in DR Congo.

How You Can Help

We are very grateful for the funding that Trade Aid UK Foundation has given to support our work in DR Congo. We kindly ask you to stand with Medair again in bringing life-saving aid to the most vulnerable in DR Congo.

Whilst much of the funding for this specific project has been secured, there remains a funding gap of £189,134, for which we are urgently seeking financial support. A grant of £10,000 from the Trade Aid UK Foundation will be very helpful towards closing this funding gap. Your support will enable us to conduct our Ebola Response with greater speed and agility, and to be better able to scale up activities, so that the outbreak can be contained.

Project Budget	GBP
Beneficiary outputs (medicines, vaccines, health support, etc.)	575,231
Personnel (Medair national and international staff)	162,001
Equipment and Professional Services	48,538
Infrastructure	24,812
Other expenses, incl. security	41,016
Admin. contribution	127,740
Total	979,338
Funding secured (ECHO, SDC, UNICE, Private Donors)	790,204
Funding Need	189,134

Thank you for considering our request for support.