



By: TA | AP Brief

WHO declares global health emergency over Ebola outbreak in Congo and Uganda



WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declared the **Ebola disease outbreak** in Congo and neighboring Uganda a public health emergency of international concern on Sunday after more than 300 suspected cases and 88 deaths.

In a post on X, the World Health Organization said the **outbreak** does not meet the criteria of a pandemic emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic, and advised against the closure of international borders.

WHO said a laboratory-confirmed case has also been reported in Congo's capital of Kinshasa, which is about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) from the **outbreak's epicenter** in the eastern province of Ituri, suggesting a possible wider spread.

It said the patient had visited Ituri and that other suspected cases have also been reported in North Kivu province, which is one of Congo's most populous and borders Ituri.

Ebola is highly contagious and can be contracted via bodily fluids such as vomit, blood or semen. The disease it causes is rare, but severe and often fatal.

It's a rare, hard to treat variant of Ebola

Health authorities say the current outbreak, first confirmed on Friday, is caused by the Bundibugyo virus, a rare variant of the Ebola disease that has no approved therapeutics or vaccines.

Although more than 20 Ebola outbreaks have taken place in Congo and Uganda, this is only the third time the Bundibugyo virus has been detected.

Congo accounts for all except two of the cases, both of which were reported in Uganda, the WHO said.

The global response to previous declarations has been mixed

The Bundibugyo virus was first detected in Uganda's Bundibugyo district during a 2007-2008 outbreak that infected 149 people and killed 37 people. The second time was in 2012 in an outbreak in Isiro, Congo, where 57 cases and 29 deaths were reported.

WHO's emergency declaration is meant to spur donor agencies and countries into action. However, the global response to previous declarations has been mixed.

In 2024 when the WHO declared **mpox outbreaks** in Congo and elsewhere in Africa a global emergency, experts at the time said it did little to get supplies like diagnostic tests, medicines and vaccines to affected countries quickly.