

EBOLA RESPONSE IN WEST AFRICA



THE WAY FORWARD

International Medical Corps was one of the first international NGOs treating Ebola patients in West Africa, the source of the largest-ever outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). Operating in all three nations with high infection rates—Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone—plus Mali, we continue to focus on the goal of reducing the number of new cases to zero. In April, 2015, we also launched a program in Guinea-Bissau, a nation that has reported no Ebola cases, but which is consider vulnerable to the recent outbreaks. Our program there supports hospital staff to take preventative steps against infectious diseases, including Ebola, through the use of surveillance, community outreach and general health system strengthening.

As we do all this, we have drawn on our nearly two decades of experience in the region to develop a longer-term strategy to diminish the possibility of Ebola's return to the region and better prepare West Africa's most vulnerable nations to fight the virus should it do so.

Our strategy for the way forward:

1. GET TO ZERO

Devote all available resources to end the current outbreak. We currently operate Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs) in Liberia and Sierra Leone which initially had a combined capacity of 300 beds but has since been reduced to 200. In Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, we administer Screening and Referral Units that have screened tens of thousands of patients entering hospitals in the region for symptoms of the virus. We also administer a training cooperative that draws on our own expertise and experience as well as that of the WHO, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) to provide the essential skills and tools to fight the virus to both national and expatriate health care workers from all organizations involved in the fight to contain Ebola.

2. ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN RECOVERY

A key lesson learned early in the current outbreak has been the necessity to engage local communities in the struggle to contain Ebola. International Medical Corps is expanding its reach into Ebola-hit communities through locally conducted workshops and person-to-person contacts to explain the need for proper hygiene, point out the dangers of long-standing burial traditions, dispel myths surrounding Ebola, and encourage support for both survivor families and community residents as they struggle with Ebola's longer-lasting social and economic fallout.

3. REBUILD HEALTH SYSTEMS

Strengthening local health care systems to lift the overall level of care is essential to improve quality of life in the region and reduce public health risks globally. It is no coincidence that Ebola has thrived in one of the poorest corners of the world, where health indicators and overall human development are among the lowest anywhere. Investing in human capital through training and re-equipping health care facilities is cost-effective, morally correct, and in the best interests of every global citizen. International Medical Corps is already engaged in these endeavors.

4. PREPARE FOR THE NEXT OUTBREAK

International Medical Corps is conveying the skills needed to fight Ebola at training centers in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Mali, strengthening the ability of agencies fighting Ebola to respond more effectively to a future outbreak. Locally and nationally, we are working with governments to build Rapid Response Teams with the capacity to react quickly to future public health threats, including Ebola. Regionally, we are partnering with the Government of Mali to develop an Ebola-response hub for French-speaking Africa from which we can deploy assets to support countries considered among those most vulnerable to a new outbreak. Globally, we cooperate with WHO and CDC to create large-scale training programs for Ebola treatment and case management.





OUR RECORD

- International Medical Corps was on the ground early in West Africa in the summer of 2014, one of the few international NGOs prepared to combat the world's largest Ebola outbreak at its source. Today, we remain one of only a handful of international NGOs in the world with the capacity to treat Ebola patients.
- We currently have a combined staff in the region of more than 1,500, roughly 90% of whom are African nationals. As we focus efforts to reduce the number of new cases in the current outbreak to zero, we are developing strategies to engage communities, rebuild weakened health systems, and prepare for potential future outbreaks.
- We opened our first Ebola Treatment Unit in Bong County, Liberia, on September 15, and followed with a second treatment unit in neighboring Margibi County that opened on November 22.
- In Sierra Leone, International Medical Corps opened a treatment center in Lunsar, Port Loko District, on December 1. A second treatment center in Makeni opened in mid-December, followed in April by a third center in Kambia. Combined, the five supported facilities had a capacity of 300 beds at the height of programming.
- In Guinea, we plan to operate 10 Screening and Referral Units (SRUs) to screen all patients entering targeted hospitals.
- In Mali, we currently focus on training health workers and volunteers, providing them the skills required to combat Ebola and provide psychosocial support to those effected by the virus. Construction work is now complete on a training center, located in the capital, to facilitate knowledge on prevention and management skills of infectious diseases, including Ebola.

- In addition to its treatment units, International Medical Corps has established several services including a multi-agency training collaborative on the grounds of Cuttington University in Bong County, Liberia, open to the staff of all national and international organizations engaged in the fight against Ebola for training on how to treat patients effectively and safely in a potentially high-risk work environment. We also conduct trainings in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Mali.

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa has claimed more than 11,000 lives, most of them in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.



To learn more about our Ebola Response, visit www.InternationalMedicalCorps.org/Ebola-Response

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Since its inception 30 years ago, International Medical Corps' mission has been consistent: relieve the suffering of those impacted by war, natural disaster and disease, by delivering vital health care services that focus on training. This approach of helping people help themselves is critical to returning devastated populations to self-reliance.

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