

DRC declares end of new round of Ebola outbreak

AGGREY MUTAMBO
THE EASTAFRICAN

Authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on Monday declared the end of the Ebola virus disease outbreak in Kasai province. This was 42 days since the last patient was discharged from a treatment centre, the outbreak marking the 16th time the epidemic was hammering the country.

Dr Samuel Roger Kamba, the Minister for Public Health, Hygiene and Social Welfare in the DRC, said scientific data had also shown that there had been no new infections from the epicentre, which usually confirms the end of an outbreak.

"On behalf of the government— and taking into account all the scientific and operational indicators confirming that the chain of transmission of the virus has been broken—I hereby officially declare the end of the 16th Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," he said in a statement. On September 4, Kinshasa declared a new outbreak in Kasai province, the third time the area was being affected. The previous cases were experienced in 2007 and 2008. Some 64 cases (53 confirmed, 11 probable) and 45 deaths were recorded during the outbreak.

The DRC has seen cycles of Ebola outbreaks since 1976 when the virus was first reported.

After over two months, authorities say they collaborated with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other partners to halt the spread of the virus in the Bulape Health Zone, a rural community in Kasai in the central region of DRC.

Some 112 WHO experts and frontline responders were deployed to support DRC's efforts, and 150 tonnes of medical supplies, and equipment delivered to protect health workers and communities.

"Controlling and ending this Ebola outbreak in three months is a remarkable achievement. National authorities, frontline health workers, partners and communities acted with speed and unity in one of the country's hard-to-reach localities," Dr Mohamed Janabi, the WHO's Regional Director for Africa, said in a statement on Monday.

"WHO is proud to have supported the response and to leave behind stronger systems, from clean water to safer care, that will protect communities long after the outbreak has ended."

Ebola virus is a severe, and often fatal illness in humans. Human-to-human transmission is through direct contact with blood or body fluids of an infected person.