

# Previous major Ebola outbreaks

August 30 2019

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Ebola virus particles (red) on a larger cell. Credit: NIAID

The death toll from the latest Ebola epidemic in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) crossed 2,000 on Friday, making it the second worst ever outbreak of the disease.

As UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Saturday visits the country for a first-hand assessment of the fightback, here is a recap of previous major outbreaks:

## **1976: First known outbreak**

Ebola was first identified in central Africa in 1976 and named after a river in northern DRC, then known as Zaire.

It claimed 431 lives that year: 280 in the DRC and 151 across the border in Sudan, in an area that is today part of South Sudan, according to the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Three years later the virus re-emerged in the same region of southern Sudan, killing 22.

## **1995: Congo again**

In May 1995 Ebola struck again in the DRC, in the forested region of Kikwit in its southwest. It spread quickly and lethally, killing 250 people from 315 reported cases.

## **2000-2001: Uganda**

In September 2000, the Sudan strain of Ebola spread for the first time to Uganda, infecting 425 people in the northern and southwestern regions, of whom 224 died.

## **2001-2003: Gabon, Congo**

Affected by the Zaire strain of Ebola on three occasions between 1994 and 1997 with nearly 100 people dying in total, Gabon saw a sudden rise

in cases between October 2001 and May 2002.

The epidemic hit the province of Ogooue-Ivindo in the northeast, an area which had previously been infected. Fifty-three of 65 people reported to have contracted the virus eventually died.

It spread to the Republic of Congo, DRC's neighbour, where it killed 44 in 2001 and 128 in early 2003.

Several months later a third [outbreak](#) killed another 30 people in the region.

## **2013-2016: deadliest**

The deadliest epidemic of Ebola broke out in West Africa in December 2013 and lasted more than two years, killing more than 11,300 of the 29,000 recorded cases.

Around 99 percent of the victims came from three neighbouring countries. In Guinea, where the epidemic started, more than 2,500 died, while in Sierra Leone more than 3,900 perished and Liberia lost around 4,800 people.

This toll, which the World Health Organization says is an underestimate, was seven times the total number of deaths in previous epidemics since the virus was identified.

## **2018-2019: ongoing in DRC**

The current epidemic was declared on August 1, 2018 in DRC's North Kivu province, on the border with Uganda, and spread to neighbouring Ituri and South Kivu.

It is the worst since that which hit West Africa from 2013-2016.

The tenth outbreak in the country since 1976, it has claimed 2006 lives, according to DRC health authorities on Friday.

In response to the advancing [epidemic](#), Uganda, where four people have died, and Rwanda have taken strict measures at their porous borders with DRC.

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