

THE EBOLA OUTBREAK: IMPACT AND RESPONSES ON GLOBAL MINISTRIES PARTNERS

The ongoing Ebola crisis across affected regions highlights both the profound challenges faced by local communities and the extraordinary resilience of international relief efforts. Grounded in the thematic vision of "**Revealing Life, Strength and Hope**," this overview introduces the critical work being done on the front lines to combat health emergencies, restore stability, and care for vulnerable families.

[Ebola Outbreak: Current Situation](#) (U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION)

[Outbreak in the DRC ‘the fastest-spreading Ebola epidemic ever recorded,’ as country struggles to contain infections.](#) (source: ALJAZEERA, Aug 31, 2026)

[Mapping Ebola Outbreak Index](#)

[Ebola Misinformation Fuels Protests in DR Congo video](#) provides additional visual context on how community mistrust and false information shape the local response on the ground. (Source: [CHANNELAFRICA](#))

The ongoing Ebola outbreak in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) – primarily driven by the rare [Bundibugyo virus strain](#)—is profoundly affecting local Christian communities, including the **Church of Christ in Congo (Église de Christ au Congo or ECC)** and partner denominations.

- **Alteration of Worship & Sacraments:** To prevent transmission, churches have been forced to adapt or temporarily suspend traditional practices. Congregations have instituted strict handwashing and sanitizing protocols, modified how communion is distributed, and eliminated close-contact practices like physical handshakes, embrace greetings, and traditional laying-on-of-hands during prayer or healing services.
- **Disruption of Traditional Funeral & Burial Rites:** Traditional Congolese Christian mourning rituals—which typically involve touching, washing, and close gathering around the deceased—have been restricted due to high viral loads present in deceased victims. Church leaders have been tasked with urging members to avoid unsafe, unmonitored burials to stop secondary infections.
- **Role in Risk Communication & Countering Misinformation:** Church leaders and local clergy are serving as front-line public health communicators. Because deep-seated community mistrust and rumors surrounding Ebola have hindered medical interventions, health agencies are leaning on trusted church networks to encourage members to follow safety guidelines and seek early medical care.

- **Compounded Distress in Conflict Zones:** The outbreak heavily overlaps with areas in eastern DRC (such as Ituri and North Kivu) that are already suffering from armed conflict, poverty, and displacement. Congregants face a double burden of physical insecurity and public health restrictions, straining local church resources and pastoral care initiatives.
- **Psychological & Spiritual Toll:** Believers and church staff experience severe anxiety, grief from loss, and the stress of isolation (e.g., 21-day quarantine periods for contact cases). Pastors and church workers are navigating the challenge of providing spiritual comfort while strictly adhering to safety measures that enforce physical distance.
- **Ecumenical & Inter-Faith Advocacy:** Partnered with international faith-based organizations (FBOs) to host regional workshops (in locations like Goma, Bunia, and Butembo) to harmonize faith-led health interventions and advocate for community-led response strategies.

As an institution created and maintained under the umbrella of the Church of Christ in Congo (*Église du Christ au Congo* or ECC), the **Congo Protestant University (*Université Protestante au Congo — UPC*)** in Kinshasa plays a strategic academic, medical, and social role during regional Ebola outbreaks:

- **Academic & Public Health Research:** UPC's medical faculty and research departments contribute to regional epidemiology and public health literature, analyzing community perspectives, response strategies, and the post-recovery clinical outcomes of Ebola survivors.
- **Training Healthcare Workers:** As a primary training ground for Protestant healthcare professionals, medical students, and nurses in the DRC, UPC incorporates outbreak control, biosafety standards, and containment protocols into its curriculum to prepare personnel for deployment to affected provinces.
- **Institutional Campus Safety:** Whenever Ebola warnings or alerts extend toward Kinshasa, the university institutes campus-wide preventive measures, including mandatory temperature screenings, hygiene stations, and public health guidelines to safeguard its large student body.
- **Spiritual & Pastoral Care Frameworks:** Working in alignment with the ECC network, UPC's theology faculty assists in developing pastoral care materials that help clergy reconcile Christian funeral and liturgical practices with strict biological safety constraints during health crises.
- **Advocacy for Community-Led Containment:** Researchers and academics affiliated with the university emphasize community-based monitoring, localized contact tracing, and non-violent engagement over militarized biohazard containment measures.

The **Community of Disciples of Christ in Congo (*Communauté des Disciples du Christ au Congo — CDCC*)**, a founding member community within the Church of Christ in Congo

(ECC) comprising over 800,000 members across 540 congregations, experiences both operational disruptions and frontline involvement during regional Ebola outbreaks:

- **Straining Community Health Facilities:** Operating 6 general hospitals and 147 local healthcare centers across the DRC, CDCC health facilities face extreme pressure when triaging suspected Ebola cases. Local clinics must absorb the financial and supply costs of personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitation products, and isolation units to protect staff while maintaining non-Ebola services like malaria treatment.
- **Readaptation of Liturgical & Communion Rites:** To adhere to sanitation guidelines, CDCC congregations adjust traditional church services. This includes changing how Holy Communion is served (often replacing shared cups with individual disposable methods), eliminating physical greeting practices, and setting up mandatory hygiene/temperature-check stations at church entrances.
- **Spiritual Mobilization & Disaster Relief Networks:** Supported by ecumenical partners such as Global Ministries and Christian Aid, the CDCC mobilizes relief efforts to deliver hygiene supplies, soap, and emergency support to affected regional zones.
- **Role of Clergy in Safe Burials & Trust-Building:** Because community skepticism and fear can hamper health responses, CDCC pastors serve as trusted messengers. They work directly with health agencies to promote safe, dignified burial protocols that honor Christian faith traditions while curbing viral transmission.
- **Compounded Vulnerability for Women Members:** Women make up a large portion of the CDCC's active lay leadership and primary caregivers. Because they often attend to sick family members at home and lead local hospitality initiatives, women within the church face heightened infection risks during active outbreaks.

Sources

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- [Christian Aid — Ebola Outbreak in the DRC: How We Are Responding](#)
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- [Religion News Service / SECAM — Church in Congo Suspends Sacraments as Ebola Spreads](#)
- [ODI Humanitarian Practice Network — Faith Leaders and Faith-Based Organizations in the DRC Ebola Response](#)
- [Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform — Contextual Notes & Resistance Analysis on Ebola Response in DRC](#)
- [Scite.ai — Université Protestante au Congo Research Contributions on Ebola](#)

- [Oxford Open Forum Infectious Diseases — Long-Term Sequelae in Ebola Virus Disease Survivors in the DRC](#)
- [Global Sisters Report — Faith under siege: Religious sisters confront Ebola in eastern Congo's war zone](#)
- [Catholic World Report — Faith over fear: The Church's response to the escalating Ebola crisis](#)
- [Church Mission Society \(CMS\) — DR Congo: Ebola outbreak and response](#)
- [CDC Health Alert Network — Ebola Disease Outbreak in the DRC](#)