

# Emerging Pandemic Threats Program

PREDICT • RESPOND • PREVENT • IDENTIFY



## RESPOND

# SUCCESS STORY

### Joint training on Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response in Equateur Province, DR Congo



Dr. Elisabeth Pukuta (INRB) instructs Marie Bileko, Chief of Nursing in Yalifafu Health Zone, on the proper use of PPE materials.

**RESPOND** is one of four partner projects of USAID's Emerging Pandemic Threats Program. RESPOND seeks to build local capacity of state and non-state actors to manage outbreaks of animal-borne diseases such as H1N1 flu and Ebola virus in hot-spot regions around the world.

**Boende, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** – One of four provinces in the Salonga-Lukenie-Sankuru forest landscape in northwestern DRC, Equateur province lies within a region endemic for both monkeypox and viral hemorrhagic fevers (VHFs). Since 1976, several Ebola, Marburg and Yellow Fever outbreaks have occurred in this remote region. Despite the apparent need, resources to support the practical, applied training of human, animal and environmental health personnel responsible for the infectious disease surveillance system and outbreak response have been inadequate.

To address this deficiency, the RESPOND project and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have been working closely with three DRC ministries – Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Ministry of Environment, Conservation of Nature and Tourism (MoE) and Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) – to plan a joint, collaborative training activity in Boende, the largest town in the Tshuapa district of Equateur province. The training aimed to both increase the knowledge base of health-related personnel and familiarize them with the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) that protects against disease transmission during outbreaks and clinical work. During February 2011, the CDC collaborated with MoPH, DRC's National Institute of Biomedical Research (INRB) and the University of Kinshasa (UNIKIN) to conduct a three-day training workshop on monkeypox surveillance for 59 medical personnel from across the Tshuapa district.

RESPOND supported three supplementary days of multi-sector training in Boende for all 59 participants in the CDC training and an additional 20 professionals from the wildlife, environmental and agriculture sectors in Tshuapa district. MoPH, MoE and MoA worked together with RESPOND to plan and implement the workshop. RESPOND staff joined a team of trainers from MoA; MoPH, MoE, the INRB, UNIKIN, and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in DRC.

## Joint training on Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response in Equateur Province, DR Congo

**One Health** is an indispensable principle used in infectious disease prevention and control. It begins with a recognition that most infectious agents exist in multiple species and emphasizes that control is dependent on creating an environment that limits inter and intra-species transmission.



Dr. Didier Mazongo (WWF) interacts with participants during the CDC and RESPOND-sponsored trainings in Boende District.

RESPOND's complementary training focused on various practical topics, including:

- One Health concept of multi-sector collaboration;
- Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) guidelines from the World Health Organization's Africa Headquarters (WHO-AFRO);
- Participatory Disease Surveillance and Response (PDSR);
- Proper use and disposal of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE);
- Principal facts about other priority diseases (Yellow Fever and Chikungunya Virus) in the region;
- Roles of related professions (biologists, entomologists, anthropologists) in outbreak investigation and response.

RESPOND and CDC also worked closely with USAID's DELIVER project to provide DRC ministries with materials to prepare local personnel for disease outbreaks. RESPOND and CDC coordinated with DELIVER to send 800 individual PPE kits for outbreak investigation and response to Boende for use in Tshuapa district, along with disinfectant and disposable masks, gowns, and gloves for clinical use. An INRB expert provided participants in Boende with a practical, hands-on demonstration of how to properly use and dispose of PPEs. Each trainee received a complete PPE kit for use during outbreak response activities. The bulk of the PPE kits shipped are now stored in Boende for use by the MoPH, MoA and MoE in Tshuapa district for future outbreak investigations in the area. To boost national preparedness, RESPOND and DELIVER also delivered 800 individual PPE kits to the MoPH in Kinshasa.

This was the first IDSR provincial-level training in DRC and the first RESPOND One Health-oriented collaborative training convened for participants from the three One Health sectors. Discussions clarified the interdependence of animal, human, and environmental health, the One Health approach to disease reporting and outbreak response, and the importance of teamwork and cross-sector collaboration for improving efficiency and communication. Trainees participated in daily working group sessions related to presentations.

RESPOND played a low-profile but critical role in ensuring efficient and well-coordinated plans and minimizing duplication of activities across sectors. RESPOND will continue to work with CDC and DRC ministry staffs to empower communities in the Salonga-Lukenie-Sankuru forest landscape to better report and respond to disease outbreaks with more multi-sector provincial-level trainings in 2011. This successful collaboration among ministries and local and international actors has been an important first step in consolidating outbreak response capacity in this remote and high-risk region.