**Beat: Miscellaneous**

# Disease outbreak kills 70, sickens more than 500 in DR Congo

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**USPA News -** An illness suspected to be haemorrhagic gastroenteritis has killed at least 70 people and sickened more than 500 others in the northwestern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Friday, ruling out any link to Ebola. The outbreak is thought to have begun in mid-July in the Boende Moke area of Ãƒ‰quateur province, about 300 kilometers (186 miles) east of Mbandaka, the regional capital.

The disease then spread to neighboring areas, sickening hundreds of residents in just three weeks, likely through human-to-human transmission. WHO spokesman Pieter Desloovere said 592 cases had been reported by Thursday, including 70 deaths. "The only information we have so far is of an illness suspected to be haemorrhagic gastroenteritis," he said. "Samples are being send to Kinshasa for further analysis in the laboratory. Results are pending." Gregory HÃƒ¤rtl, another WHO spokesman, said the outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is "definitely not Ebola." A situation report by the World Health Organization said the first reported case was a pregnant woman in the village of Isaka, located in Tshuapa district of Ãƒ‰quateur province. "The first case was a pregnant woman who showed signs of fever, diarrhea and vomiting, as well as hematuria and melena," the report said. The woman later died, after which doctors carried out a Caesarean section to deliver the baby. "Following the post-mortem Caesarean section performed on the woman, similar cases have been found among the health care team, including the doctor and his assistants, in the week following the surgery," the report said. It did not say whether the baby survived. A total of 592 cases, including 70 deaths, were reported in the region between July 7 and August 17, according to figures provided by local authorities. The deaths include a doctor, four nurses, and two assistants who were on duty at medical centers. "This reinforces the hypothesis of transmission between humans," the report said.

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