

## Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp sends experts to Ebola outbreak

**On Saturday (26 May), ITM will send two researchers to Congo to assist its partners in the Ebola outbreak.**

25-05-18



Dit is de omschrijving

**Since the beginning of May 2018, over fifty possible cases of Ebola have been reported in the northwest of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The Congolese government, the World Health Organization (WHO) and partner organisations are doing everything they can to prevent a major outbreak like the one of 2013-2016 in West Africa. On Saturday (26 May), the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) in Antwerp will send two researchers to assist its Congolese partners.**

While humanitarian organisations are responsible for the first response in the event of an outbreak, ITM offers research expertise during outbreaks. In April 2018 the Institute set up an [Outbreak Research Team](#) with funding from the Department of Economy, Science and Innovation (EWI) of the Flemish government. Outbreak research can help improve interventions during ongoing and future epidemics.

ITM cooperates with four institutional partners in the DRC, including the Institut National de Recherche Biomédicale (INRB). They already worked together in Yambuku during the very first Ebola outbreak in 1976. Jean-Jacques Muyembe, currently the Director of INRB, and former ITM professors Guido van der Groen and Peter Piot have since been known as the co-discoverers of the Ebola virus.

Since the beginning of May ITM is in daily contact with INRB. At their request, ITM now sends an epidemiologist and a laboratory expert to Kinshasa. Anja De Weggheleire will assist in epidemic surveillance. Apart from the Congolese Ministry of Health and the INRB, also the WHO and several other partner organisations are involved. Birgit De Smet will support the laboratory team of the INRB in confirming Ebola diagnoses. De Smet is already involved in an ongoing research collaboration with Congolese and international colleagues in the search for the reservoir of the Ebola virus. Other ITM researchers may leave for the affected area at a later stage.