

Tribute to Dr Richard Mouzoko

ITM alumnus Dr Richard Valery Mouzoko Kiboung was killed last week in an attack on an Ebola centre in the DRC.

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Dit is de omschrijving

The entire community of the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp (ITM) is shocked and saddened by the loss of our alumnus Richard Mouzoko. Dr Richard Valery Mouzoko Kiboung, a Cameroonian public health physician deployed by the WHO in the Ebola outbreak in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), was killed in an attack on Butembo University Hospital last Friday 19 April 2019. While chairing a coordination meeting, Dr Richard - among MPH students and staff also known as Dr Valery - was surprised by assailants demanding the departure of the international community engaged in the Ebola response.

Dr Richard dedicated his professional career to improving the health of communities in his country and far beyond. He was involved in the fight against malaria in the Cameroonian region Adamaoua from 2008 to 2012. After completing his Master in Public Health at ITM in 2012-2013, he was employed at central level by the Ministry of Health where he was committed to the development of a national health insurance system. To this end, he returned to ITM for a Short Course on Health Policy in 2014-2015. In addition to his national engagement, he worked for the WHO to contribute to the Polio Eradication Initiative in Chad in 2014 and more recently in the fight against Ebola in DRC.

ITM teaching staff and former MPH and short course students remember Dr Richard as a brilliant person with a rich field experience. He had a great sense of professionalism and was remarkably perseverant to achieve his objectives. Thanks to his open-mindedness, he easily integrated in a multicultural and multidisciplinary team.

ITM's Dr Veerle Vanlerberghe was Dr Richard's thesis promotor: "He showed to be very concerned about vulnerable population groups when he explored the effect of policy changes and health service organisation on the occurrence of severe malaria, an important cause of mortality and morbidity in Cameroun. He was always eager to learn new methods and to apply them in the combat of diseases thriving on his continent. After the course he was happy to spend time with his family, especially as his wife gave birth to their son Baudouin while he was studying in Antwerp."

In the ongoing DRC Ebola crisis, Dr Richard put himself on the frontline to save lives in a health crisis marked by violence and mistrust. His engagement, and that of thousands of other health workers and researchers including ITM staff, deserves the utmost respect and gratitude. It is beyond tragic that he, who was trying to help combating a deadly outbreak, was targeted because of his good actions. We want to state loud and clear: health workers and facilities should never be a target.

We will remember Dr Richard for his courage, professionalism and big heart. Our thoughts are with his family, friends & colleagues. The passing of Dr Richard is a huge loss for the ITM alumni family and the global public health community. He will not be forgotten.

Testimonies and condolences can be shared on [ITM's Facebook page](#) or [via e-mail](#).