

SITUATION UPDATE



An International Medical Corps team attends a meeting at the Public Health Emergency Operation Center in Jinka.

On November 12, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI) reported suspected cases of viral hemorrhagic fever in the town of Jinka, in South Ethiopia Regional State. On November 14, following molecular testing conducted by the National Reference Laboratory at the EPHI, the MoH confirmed that the suspected cases were Marburg virus disease (MVD). As of December 8, 13 MVD cases have been confirmed, along with eight deaths, four recoveries and one patient receiving ongoing treatment.

International Medical Corps Response

From the onset, International Medical Corps has been working closely with the MoH and EPHI on the national MVD response plan, while engaging with the South Ethiopia Regional Health Bureau (RHB) and the regional EPHI. We are participating in coordination meetings at both the national and regional levels to ensure consistent collaboration and the alignment of our response with the national response framework, and to prevent the duplication of efforts.

The South Ethiopia Regional State imposed a travel restriction from November 29 to December 3 to contain the outbreak. In anticipation of the lifting of this restriction, International Medical Corps deployed a rapid response team (RRT) on December 2, consisting of an emergency response lead, a water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) coordinator, a WASH engineer, a mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) manager and a medical doctor. Our team engaged with the RHB and the leadership of the regional Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC) to identify areas requiring support.

To enhance rapid response efforts, International Medical Corps has also supported the assessment of existing treatment centers to identify gaps in case management, as well as infection prevention and control (IPC) and WASH needs. These needs include the standardization of the MVD treatment center, the establishment of screening and referral units to support peripheral health facilities, IPC support (such as IPC-specific training and improving facilities' capacity for isolation) and WASH support (including facilitating solid-waste management, promoting proper hygiene practices and providing safe water and sanitation services).

FAST FACTS

- On November 14, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health confirmed an outbreak of Marburg virus disease in Jinka, South Ethiopia Regional State.
- The outbreak was confirmed following laboratory testing of samples from a cluster of suspected cases of viral haemorrhagic fever.
- As of December 8, there are 13 confirmed cases, eight deaths, four recoveries and one case undergoing treatment.

OUR FOOTPRINT

- International Medical Corps has been providing multi-sectoral response in Ethiopia since 2003.

OUR RESPONSE

- On December 2, we deployed a rapid response team, including an emergency response lead, a WASH coordinator, a WASH engineer, a mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) manager and a medical doctor.
- In coordination with regional and national authorities, we have developed training manuals for risk communication, community engagement, community-based surveillance, case management, and infection prevention and control.
- We have developed standard operating procedures and a training manual for the MHPSS component of the response. Our mental health expert will also provide training at the Public Health Emergency Operations Center.

The South Ethiopia RHB requested the International Medical Corps RRT to provide training on self-care, stress and burnout management for staff at the PHEOC, as well as basic psychosocial skills training for frontline healthcare workers. After assessing the needs and collaborating closely with the National Incident Management System—including the MoH, RHB, EPHI, regional EPHI and other responding partners—International Medical Corps developed training manuals for MHPSS, risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) and community-based surveillance, as well as manuals for MVD case management and IPC.

Our MHPSS specialist is working closely with staff at the MVD treatment center in Jinka General Hospital to provide essential mental health support. Using the materials developed, International Medical Corps will continue to provide training to staff at the PHEOC on stress-management tools during an outbreak response, and will provide training to 30 frontline healthcare workers on the basics of MHPSS and how to provide psychological first aid in emergencies. Our team also will provide further training to health workers on RCCE, community-based surveillance and active case finding and contact tracing.

Though no new cases have been reported since December 3, further support is urgently needed to ensure that International Medical Corps can continue its response activities. Immediate strengthening of the case-management and infection-prevention pillars are critical, including the standardization of the Marburg treatment center, the improvement of IPC measures, the establishment of screening and referral units at peripheral health facilities and the continuation of basic health services. Additionally, the procurement of appropriate supplies—including personal protective equipment, IPC equipment and WASH supplies—is vital, as is ensuring sufficient staff capacity to conduct key training and to respond to the outbreak.