Measles Kills Thousands in Democratic Republic of Congo. Deaths attributed to Measles have outpaced Ebola this year.

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Nearly 2,000 deaths have been recorded from measles so far this year in the Democratic Republic of Congo, exceeding the number from the country’s widely publicized Ebola outbreak, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus noted yesterday (July 15) in a speech. “Frankly, I am embarrassed to talk only about Ebola,” said Tedros, who goes by his first name, in remarks reported by Ars Technica.

The numbers Tedros referred to were published in a WHO bulletin earlier this month. It states that there have been more than 100,000 cases of measles in DRC between January 1 and June 16, 2019, and 1,879 deaths from the disease. By comparison, Ebola virus has infected 2,408 people since an outbreak of the disease began in DRC last year, 1,625 of whom have died.

The measles outbreak has also affected more of the country than Ebola has, Ars Technica notes, with cases recorded in 23 of its 26 provinces. The Ebola outbreak has been concentrated in just two provinces, although health officials are concerned it could spread. On Sunday, officials identified the first case in the capital of one of the affected provinces, the large city of Goma, near the border with Rwanda.

“We often talk about the need to bridge the humanitarian-development nexus,” Tedros said in his speech. “This is the moment to practice what we preach. WHO is committed not just to ending this [Ebola] outbreak, but to strengthening DRC’s health system. . . . To build trust, we must demonstrate that we are not simply parachuting in to deal with Ebola and then leaving once it’s finished.”

Comment
The measles epidemic and indeed the increasing number of measles cases and deaths also in industrialized countries are entirely avoidable. We have an efficient vaccine which has been used for more than three decades.
The measles situation and indeed the spread of Ebola in the DRC is a result of a civil war and distrust in authorities, making systematic work in the affected areas almost impossible due to the security situation.
The measles situation also underline that although Ebola has just been declared a "public health emergency of international concern" by the WHO, measles are responsible for far more death world wide than Ebola even though we have an effective vaccine.

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