

5 **INTERNATIONAL OUTBREAKS OF IMPORTANCE TO SOUTH AFRICAN TRAVELLERS AND HEALTHCARE WORKERS**

a **Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak**

The EVD outbreak in Sierra Leone was declared over on 7 November 2015, 42 days after the last laboratory-confirmed EVD case twice tested negative on 25 September 2015 (Reference 1). Sierra Leone has managed to interrupt and halt Ebola virus transmission, and there are currently no EVD cases in this country. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that this outbreak has had a devastating impact on Sierra Leone and much needs to be done to assist the country to recover. Since the first laboratory-confirmed EVD case in Sierra Leone in May 2014, a total of 8 704 laboratory-confirmed EVD cases including 3 589 (41%) deaths have been reported. However, EVD survivors continue to experience health related problems (Reference). Sierra Leone has now entered a 90-day period of heightened surveillance to ensure that any new possible case/s can be rapidly identified. Health officials are maintaining a high level of suspicion as the possibility of re-emergence of the disease still remains.

The outbreak continues in Guinea; however in the week ending 8 November 2015, no new laboratory-confirmed EVD cases were reported. To date, in Guinea 69 contacts are under follow-up, of whom 60 are high risk. As at 8 November 2015, a cumulative total of 28 599 cases (laboratory-confirmed, probable and suspected) including 11 299 deaths with a case fatality rate of 40% has been reported in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (Table 1).

The Ministry of Health in Liberia reported a new case of EVD in a statement released on 20th November 2015 (Reference 2). There are unconfirmed reports of two subsequent cases. These new cases have arisen some time after Liberia was officially declared ebola-free. A 10 year-old boy, his father and sibling from a suburb in Monrovia are being treated, and a further 153 cases are under observation. It is not yet known how the family contracted EVD. Cross-border transmission is unlikely.

Situation in South Africa

As at 10 November 2015 there have been no EVD cases in South Africa associated with the current

outbreaks in West Africa. In addition, there are no suspected cases of EVD in South Africa at present. The risk of Ebola being introduced into South Africa still remains low. However a high index of suspicion is necessary given on-going EVD transmission in Guinea.

Enhanced surveillance

Following the announcement by the WHO on 7 November 2015 to declare the EVD outbreak in Sierra Leone over, South Africa took a decision to remove Sierra Leone from the list of high-risk countries for EVD transmission. As a result travellers to and from Sierra Leone will no longer be required to apply for permission to travel to South Africa. However several measures for epidemic preparedness and response remain in place to prevent the introduction of EVD into South Africa. Travellers from Sierra Leone will still go through the thermal screening process at the ports of entry. For more information please contact NATHOC on Tel: +27 12 395 9636

Laboratory testing

Testing for viral haemorrhagic fever viruses (including Ebola virus) in South Africa is only available at the NICD. EVD testing is neither warranted nor useful for persons that are not suffering from a clinical illness compatible with EVD, even in the event of compatible travel histories. The tests cannot be used to determine if the person has been exposed to the virus and may develop the disease later. Requests for testing (with a detailed clinical, travel and exposure history) should be directed to the NICD Hotline at 082 883 9920 (a 24-hour service, for healthcare professionals only)

Source: Division of Public Health Surveillance and Response, NICD-NHLS

Reference: (1) World Health Organisation. WHO commends Sierra Leone for stopping Ebola virus transmission. Available at <http://www.afro.who.int/en/sierra-leone/press-materials/item/8139> ; (2) Liberian Ministry of Health <http://www.mohsw.gov.lr/documents/press%20release%2020151120.pdf>

Table 1. Number of Ebola virus disease cases and deaths in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (as at 8 November 2015)

Country	Total cases (laboratory-confirmed, probable and suspected)	Total deaths	Case fatality rate	Number of cases among healthcare workers (Number of deaths)
Guinea	3 805	2 536	67%	196 (100)
Sierra Leone	14 122	3 955	28%	307 (221)
Liberia (as at 9 May)	10 666	4 806	45%	378 (192)
Liberia (from 29 June)	6	2	33%	
Totals	28 599	11 299	40%	881 (513)

Source: World Health Organization: Ebola outbreak - Ebola situation report of 8 November 2015 (www.who.int)