

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

a **Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak: situation update**

In Sierra Leone, after the re-emergence of EVD cases on 14 January 2016, no new laboratory-confirmed EVD cases have been reported since 21 January 2016. Associated contacts of the two recent cases reported in Sierra Leone in January 2016 after the country was declared Ebola free on 7 November 2015 have completed their 21-day monitoring period. However 48 remain untraced, of whom 18 are considered high risk. Efforts to trace the contacts are ongoing and will continue for at least a further 21 days from 3 February 2016. Guinea and Liberia were declared free of Ebola transmission on 29 December 2015 and 14 January 2016 respectively and have since entered a 90-day period of heightened surveillance. As at 14 February 2016, a cumulative total of 28 603 cases (laboratory-confirmed, probable and suspected) including 11 301 deaths with a case fatality rate of 40% has been reported in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. A summary of case numbers and deaths reported is shown in Table 3.

The EVD outbreak in West Africa had a devastating impact in the three countries (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone) that experienced widespread and intense transmission. As a result, these countries still need to recover and have to build health systems that can be able to prevent, detect and respond to outbreaks. The World Health Organization (WHO) continues to support and strengthen surveillance activities in these countries. They are currently assisting the Ebola-affected countries and other countries in the region with assessing, restructuring and strengthening their

integrated disease surveillance, preparedness and response systems. More details are available at <http://www.who.int/features/2016/rebuilding-health-systems/en/#> and <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/health-systems-recovery/surveillance/en/#>

Situation in South Africa

As at 10 February 2016 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 West Africa.

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 patient 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; (outbreak@nicd.ac.za)

Table 3. Number of Ebola virus disease cases and deaths in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (as at 14 February 2016)

Country	Total cases (laboratory-confirmed, probable and suspected)	Total deaths
Guinea	3 804	2 536
Liberia	10 675	4 809
Sierra Leone (as at 7 November 2015)	14 122	3 955
Sierra Leone (from 14 January 2016)	2	1
Total	28 603	11 301

Source: World Health Organization: Ebola outbreak - Ebola situation report of 17 February 2016 (www.who.int)