

INTERNATIONAL OUTBREAKS OF IMPORTANCE

An update on Ebola virus disease outbreak, Guinea

The Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak that emerged in Gouecke, in the southern N'zerekore prefecture, Guinea, in February 2021 was declared over on 19 June 2021. A total of 23 cases including 16 confirmed and seven probable cases, with 12 deaths (case fatality ratio 52.2%) had been reported. Five of the cases were identified as health workers, and one as a traditional health practitioner. Females and persons over 40 years were most affected.

The index case in this outbreak was identified as a female health worker, who developed symptoms on 15 January 2021, sought health care at two facilities and a traditional practitioner and subsequently demised on 28 January 2021. Her burial took place on 1 February, where safe and dignified burial practices were not carried out. Throughout the course of this outbreak, a further 17 secondary cases with epidemiological links to this probable case were identified.

The Minister of Health and other partners reinforced efforts to control and contain the outbreak. Multidisciplinary teams were deployed to the field for active case finding, follow-up, contact

tracing and care of patients. During this period, 1 239 samples (758 blood samples and 483 swabs) were analysed, testing capacities were expanded and reinforced. A total of 10 089 alerts was notified, 96% of which were investigated. 1 031 of the 1 110 contacts of confirmed and probable cases were followed daily by contact tracing teams. A total of 10 873 people, including 885 contacts and 2 779 front line workers, was vaccinated.

Rapid response played a significant role in prompt detection and control of the outbreak with relatively few infections and fatalities. Swift vaccination of high-risk persons, investigation of alerts and control of points of entry also played a role.

Despite the outbreak being declared over, unrecognised chains of transmission at a community level remain a possibility. With surveillance efforts further challenged by poor access to communities and the burden of other disease outbreaks, namely COVID-19 and yellow fever, the country's ability to response to a new outbreak may be impaired.