

INTERNATIONAL OUTBREAKS OF IMPORTANCE

An update on Ebola virus disease outbreak, DRC and Guinea

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) declared its 12th Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak on 7 February 2021 in North Kivu Province, in the northeast part of the country. After three months, and 42 days after the last patient returned a negative test, the outbreak was declared over on 3 May 2021. This outbreak involved a total of 12 cases, 11 of which were confirmed, and included six deaths. No new cases were reported after 1 March 2021, and the last patient was discharged from the treatment facility on 21 March 2021.

Meanwhile, in Guinea, no new confirmed EVD cases have been reported in Nzerekore prefecture, the site of the current EVD outbreak, since 8 April 2021. This is 43 consecutive days with no new confirmed cases. However, 26 new suspected cases were notified, one of whom was transferred to an isolation centre. Four cases were sampled and 21 refused sampling.

As of 16 May 2021, a total of 23 EVD cases has been reported in Guinea, including 16 confirmed and seven probable cases, with 12 deaths (case fatality ratio 52.2%). The number of infected health workers remains five. Females and persons over 40 years are most affected. On 16 May 2021, 66 new alerts were reported in Nzerekore, 32 of which were investigated and 26 were validated, including 5 deaths. 17 new alerts in neighbouring prefectures were also reported, including 9 community deaths. All alerts were investigated, none of which were validated.

A 42-day countdown in anticipation of the end of the outbreak (19 June 2021) began on 8 May 2021. Enhanced surveillance

and continued support is ongoing during this period. A total of 10 081 people has been vaccinated, including 622 high-risk contacts, 8 925 contacts-of-contacts and 534 probable contacts. Among those vaccinated, 2 714 are frontline workers.

Infection prevention and control (IPC) activities, including health worker training on swab collection and biosafety is ongoing.

As the 42-day countdown to the end of the outbreak progresses, now at day 34, the situation remains unstable as Guinea continues to experience challenges around locating contacts lost to follow-up, sampling and isolating suspected patients and the continuing presence of a confirmed case within the community. Community surveillance remains poor, with most alerts reported through active case finding and poor 24-hour follow-up which is challenged by resistance to testing from suspected cases. An established funding gap for response activities will seriously impact continued surveillance and the required strengthening in contact follow-up and alert reporting if not urgently addressed.

As of 26 May 2021, there are no EVD cases reported in South Africa associated with the current outbreak in Guinea. In addition, there are no suspected cases of EVD in South Africa at present.