

# Ebola is not easy to be eradicated in Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, the NERC (The National Ebola Response Center) has said it will impose a three-day lockdown in the capital Freetown and in the North. This new action will confine around 2.4 million people at their homes. The lock-down will take place from March 27 to March 29, explained Mr. Palo Conteh, Head of NERC. Mr. Conteh also mentioned that the lock-down is similar to the one imposed in September 2014. According to BBC report, Mr. Conteh explained that health workers will visit every house in the lock-down areas, and health workers will also caution people not to touch corpses or take suspected EVD patients to traditional healers. Recently, the authorities imposed quarantine in Aberdeen, Freetown in which the whole community was confined due to Ebola virus.

The Ebola virus outbreak has already killed over 3700 people in Sierra Leone. A report from WHO on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March described that a total of 150 new confirmed cases of EVD were reported in the week to 15 March, compared with 116 the previous week. On the other hand, there is also a rise in neighboring Guinea with 95 new EVD confirmed cases, a record high in 2015. So far Liberia has reported no cases in March. In early March, 90 suspected cases were reported but none of them tested positive for EVD, says WHO.

## ***Areas in Sierra Leone where Ebola virus continues to persist***

The North of Sierra Leone, towns or districts with increasing EVD infections are Kambia, Port Loko, and Bombali district. In the West of the country, there are affected areas in Freetown and Western Rural. (Please see Figure 1.) New cases of Ebola patients have been discovered every week in the country.

## ***Impact of Ebola in Sierra Leone***

Although Sierra Leone was the last of the three countries to be affected (after Guinea and Liberia), it again has the highest number of confirmed cases and number of deaths (please see Figure 2). The outbreak has spread to all the 13 districts of the country since it was first declared on 25 May 2014. The country's medical infrastructure needs helps from the international community. Since the outbreak will easily spread again, the world should do more to help Sierra Leone in eradicating Ebola. The civil war that ravaged Sierra Leone from 1991 to 2002 destroyed the country's infrastructure including its health systems. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Sierra Leone is third from the bottom in the Human Development Index. There is an acute shortage of human resources in the healthcare sector. Although there are international healthcare workers now in the country helping to combat EVD, the number of personnel is still not enough.

The amount of clinics for treating Ebola patients is low when compared to Liberia which was having the worst outbreak. The Ebola outbreak in Liberia demonstrated that bringing in satellite clinics, trained personnel, and laboratories really helps to curve Ebola infection rate to zero.

Ebola has taken a severe toll on Sierra Leone, resulting in over 3,700 deaths. It has affected the livelihood of many Sierra Leoneans, disrupting trade and public services, undermining economic growth, restricting the movement of people and goods, putting education on hold, and threatening to reverse development already put in place in recent years. Farmers have been

abandoning their farms which has resulted to severe food shortage and high prices.

According to World Bank and UN, Sierra Leone has been one of the most impoverished nations

in West Africa. The economy just started picking up, at a growth rate of over 11 % last year. The healthcare infrastructure has completely collapsed with one of the lowest doctor per capita rations in the world.

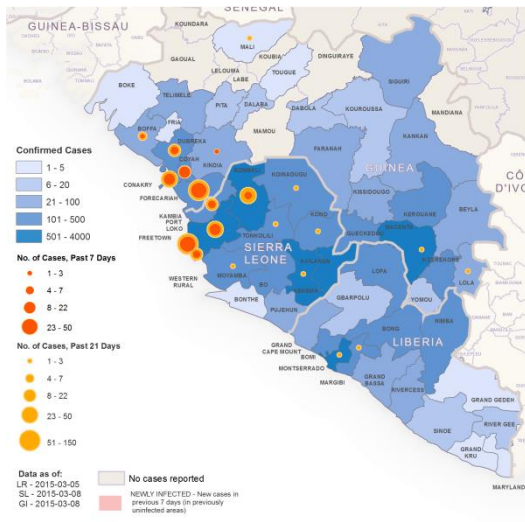


Figure 1. Geographical distribution of new and total confirmed cases. Source: WHO

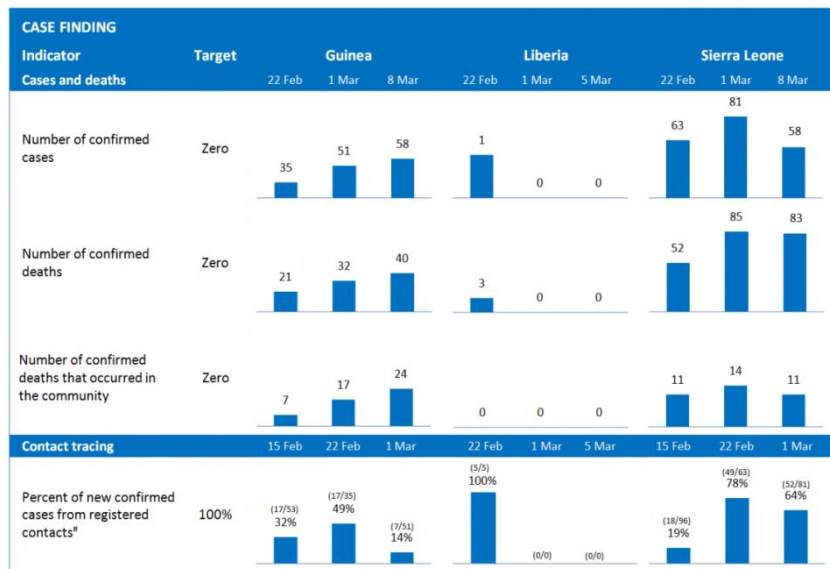


Figure 2. Key performance indicators for Phase 2 of the Ebola response. Source: WHO

**NB**

SLOF takes the opportunity to offer relevant information concerning Ebola Outbreak in West Africa, especially in Sierra Leone. Our bulletin includes news in a nutshell concerning a particular topic about Ebola which may be relevant for Sierra Leoneans living in Finland and Finnish Citizens, Finnish partners, and NGOs. SLOF information sources are WHO, FAO, CNBC, FAO, MSF, AP, WFP, AFP, BBC, Aljazeera, France 24, and CNN, The Guardian and other media. SLOF is not responsible for any misinformation.