



UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing Ebola Outbreaks WHO 12 February 2021

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Shotlist

1. Exterior wide shot, Place des Nations with Palais des Nations
2. Wide shot, press briefing room
3. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Margaret Harris, Spokesperson for the World Health Organization (WHO): “We know now there is 7 cases, 3 confirmed, 4 probable in Guinea, and 3 of those have died. We have identified 115 contacts and the majority of those have been traced. That’s a 109. The contacts are in Nzerekore but also in Conakry”.**
4. Medium shot, podium with spokesperson and screen
5. **SOUNDBITE (English) - Margaret Harris, Spokesperson for the World Health Organization (WHO): “We also have an outbreak going on in North Kivu, there is no connection between the two. We have not seen any evidence of any connection. But they are going on at the same time”.**
6. Medium shot, journalists in press briefing room
7. **SOUNDBITE (English) - Margaret Harris, Spokesperson for the World Health Organization (WHO): “What is critical is decentralising the operations to the lowest levels, making sure your operations are with the community and that the community owns the operations – that your work is community centered and that you work with the community. A one size fits all approach to community engagement isn’t effective. Every community is unique, and engagement has to really really be hyper contextualized with the affected communities. That’s the lesson we learn each time and each time we improve on that and need to improve on that”.**

8. Wide shot, journalist in press briefing room
9. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Margaret Harris, Spokesperson for the World Health Organization (WHO): “Insecurity adds a much higher level of complexity and certainly makes it much more difficult to do the work that’s already difficult because you are in a geographically difficult location as well”.**
10. Medium shot, monitor next to podium in press briefing room
11. **SOUNDBITE (English) — Margaret Harris, Spokesperson for the World Health Organization (WHO): “Normally the vaccination is done around reported cases and all sort of frontline workers. But again these are decisions that the local authorities make in terms of what their community needs, and also of course what is feasible”.**
12. Wide shot, spokesperson at podium
13. Close up, writing on paper
14. Medium shot, journalists in press briefing room
15. Wide shot, journalist in press briefing room

Story

Close to 300 Ebola contacts identified in the latest outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 109 more in Guinea – WHO

Following the latest resurgence of Ebola in West Africa since Guinea's outbreak in 2013-2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) today provided further details on the spread and tracking of the disease so far, both in Guinea and in the eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

« We know now there are seven cases, three confirmed, four probable, in Guinea, and three of those have died. We have identified 115 contacts and the majority of those have been traced. That's a 109. The contacts are in N'Zerekore but also in Conakry,» said Dr. Margaret Harris, a spokesperson for the WHO.

In a parallel development in the eastern DRC, more than 4'000 km away from Guinea, Dr. Harris said, **“we also have an outbreak going on in North Kivu. There is no connection between the two. We have not seen any evidence of any connection. But they are going on at the same time”**.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) reported a resurgence of the Ebola virus on the 7th of February, a week before the Guinea outbreak.

According to Dr. Harris the previous experience the health teams have in curbing the Ebola outbreaks in the two countries will be potentially be of great help to them, as contacts can be traced quickly to prevent further infection.

“What is critical is decentralising the operations to the lowest levels, making sure your operations are with the community and that the community owns the operations – that your work is community centered and that you work with the community,» Dr. Harris said.

The WHO's spokesperson stressed that **“a one size fits all approach to community engagement isn't effective. Every community is unique, and engagement has to really, really, be hyper-contextualized with the affected communities. That's the lesson we learn each time, and each time we improve on that and need to improve on that”**.

According to WHO, once an Ebola outbreak has taken place, it is likely that it will reoccur in the same area -- as seen in several outbreaks. Whether this is because Ebola persists in human beings or whether the disease is simply moving again from animal populations to humans in those areas, is still unknown. Ongoing genetic sequencing may provide this information, WHO experts say.

WHO has alerted six countries to watch out for potential Ebola cases after the recent Ebola outbreaks in Guinea and Democratic Republic of Congo. With the epicentre of the current outbreak in a border area, WHO is already working with health authorities in Liberia and Sierra Leone to scale up community surveillance of cases in their border districts as well as strengthening their capacity to test for cases and conduct surveillance in health facilities. WHO is reaching out to Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal and other countries at risk in the West Africa sub-region.

Regarding the health response in North Kivu, DRC, Ms Harris said that **“insecurity adds a much higher level of complexity and certainly makes it much more difficult to do the work that's already difficult because you are in a geographically difficult location as well”**.

WHO is also supporting the country to procure the Ebola vaccine which has proven instrumental in controlling outbreaks in the DRC.

“Normally the vaccination is done around reported cases and all sort of frontline workers. But again these are decisions that the local authorities make in terms of what their community needs, and also of course what is feasible”,

WHO's Margaret Harris said.

Guinea was one of the three most-affected countries in the 2014–2016 West Africa Ebola outbreak which was the largest since the virus was first discovered in 1976.

During the West Africa Ebola outbreak in 2014 there were 28 000 cases, including 11 000 deaths. The outbreak started in Guinea and then moved across land borders to Sierra Leone and Liberia.