

Guinea Revives Border Health Screening to Mitigate Risk of Spread of Ebola

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Guinea - Following the confirmation of a new Ebola case in Sierra Leone on January 12 – and confirmation of another case on January 20th – IOM and its partners are reactivating cross-border health screening at Guinea’s borders with Sierra Leone and reinforcing their surveillance capacity in Forecariah Prefecture, the border area closest to the outbreak.

At the request of Guinea’s National Emergency Operations Center and the Ministry of Health, IOM immediately reinforced the health screening checkpoint at the Pamelap point of entry, the only checkpoint still functioning since Guinea was declared free of Ebola.

IOM also revived the operational cross-border cooperation between Forecariah (Guinea) and Kambia (Sierra Leone) to share key information about the cases and their contacts, enhance the synergy of strategies being implemented on both sides of the border, and reactivate health screening points at major points of entry along Guinea’s borders with Sierra Leone.

“IOM and partners began by strengthening the main point of entry of Pamelap and by the end of the month, community volunteers will be deployed to perform health screening at 48 major points of entry, official and unofficial, with an average of more than 20 people crossing per day,” said IOM Guinea Chief of Mission Kabla Amihere.

This will complement the implementation of community event-based surveillance as part of post-Ebola health surveillance strengthening efforts.

“The government of Guinea is now working on the third phase of the Ebola response, which includes sensitizing communities to be more vigilant to prevent any resurgence of the epidemic and involving them in community event-based surveillance,” adds Amihere.

By 27th January, all IOM, ACF, CU, IFRC and GRC health screening supervisors, together with 122 volunteers, will be trained, equipped and deployed at the designated Points of Entry.

The volunteers will benefit from the support of Community Health Workers currently being trained and deployed by the same partners in Forecariah, all of whom will be responsible for identifying and communicating alerts to the surveillance unit.

With the support of the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance, the US Centers for Disease Control, Japan and Belgium, IOM Guinea has been providing logistics support to the Guinean government through the National/Prefectural Emergency Coordination programme.

IOM has also implemented activities to strengthen monitoring mechanisms at borders through a Health, Border and Mobility Management programme and other community mobilization activities in key villages to enforce epidemiologic surveillance for early detection of Ebola and other potentially epidemic diseases in border and maritime zones.

According to latest information from the National Coordination office, there have been 3,804 confirmed, probable, and suspected Ebola cases in Guinea since the beginning of the epidemic, including 2,536 deaths. These figures yield an estimated mortality rate of 66.7 per cent.