

## WHO: 'Many thousands of new cases' of Ebola expected in Liberia

Written by [Larisa Epatko](#) September 8, 2014 at 2:38 PM EDT



*The World Health Organization handed over 24 motorcycles to the Ministry of Health in Guinea the first week in September to support Ebola contact tracing activities in eight districts in the country. Photo by A. Pallangyo/WHO*

In early September, the World Health Organization donated two dozen motorcycles to the Ministry of Health in Guinea, one of the countries hit hardest by the Ebola virus. A week later, WHO said motorbikes used as taxis were one of the ways Ebola was spreading in Liberia.

Health workers in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and other affected West African nations need an easy way of traveling to track down how individuals are infected and to help shut down the routes of transmission. As for the motorbike taxis, they were helping spread the disease because the bikes were rarely disinfected between passengers.

The finding on the taxis came from a team of WHO investigators who were in Liberia — considered the epicenter of the disease — working with the Ministry of Health, local health personnel and partner organizations. About half of the region's 3,500 Ebola cases are in Liberia, and nearly all of Liberia's

countries have confirmed cases of the deadly virus, the team said in a statement on Monday. The fatality rate in Liberia is among the highest at 58 percent.

“The demands of the Ebola outbreak have completely outstripped the (Liberian) government’s and partners’ capacity to respond,” the statement said. “As soon as a new Ebola treatment facility is opened, it immediately fills to overflowing with patients, pointing to a large but previously invisible caseload ... Many thousands of new cases are expected in Liberia over the coming three weeks.”

Country	Case definition	Cases			Deaths		
		Total	21 days	21 days (%)	Total	21 days	21 days (%)
Guinea	Confirmed	664	286	43	400	120	30
	Probable	151	18	12	151	35	23
	Suspected	47	35	74	4	0	0
	<b>All</b>	<b>862</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>28</b>
Liberia	Confirmed	634	434	68	508	330	65
	Probable	969	525	54	420	218	52
	Suspected	443	253	57	296	210	71
	<b>All</b>	<b>2046</b>	<b>1212</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>1224</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>62</b>
Sierra Leone	Confirmed	1234	484	39	461	148	32
	Probable	37	0	0	37	0	0
	Suspected	90	49	54	11	6	55
	<b>All</b>	<b>1361</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>4269</b>	<b>2084</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>2288</b>	<b>1067</b>	<b>47</b>

*Ebola cases as of Sept. 8, 2014. Chart by World Health Organization*

The team assessed the conditions in Montserrado county, which includes Liberia’s capital Monrovia. It estimated that 1,000 more beds were needed at Ebola treatment centers to add to the 240 beds that are currently available. About 200 to 250 medical staff members are needed for each 70-bed facility. WHO investigators said conventional ways of trying to stop Ebola that appear to be working in other countries are inadequate in Liberia because of the aggressive infection rate.

Compounding the problem is that the early symptoms of Ebola are similar to those of common infectious diseases – fever, headache and general weakness – putting medical staff at high risk of exposure. Dozens of health care workers have died in Liberia alone.

President Barack Obama said Sunday that the U.S. military will help set up isolation units and provide security for public health workers in affected countries. Britain also has promised to send medical equipment and military personnel.