

Mali scrambles to trace Ebola toddler's contacts: WHO

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Health authorities in Mali are monitoring at least 43 people who had contact with a toddler declared the country's first Ebola case, the World Health Organization said Friday.

"As soon as the case was confirmed, [local authorities](#) began tracing everyone who had contact with the little girl and her grandmother," WHO spokeswoman Fadela Chaib told reporters.

"Around 43 contacts are being monitored. Ten are health workers, including those who dealt with the girl at a paediatric clinic," she added.

Mali's health ministry announced Thursday that the two-year-old girl had tested positive for Ebola.

It said the girl and her grandmother had visited Kissidougou, a town in the southern part of Guinea where the outbreak began in December 2013.

Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone have borne the brunt of the deadly virus, which has claimed almost 4,900 lives.

The girl was diagnosed after arriving at a hospital in the western town of Kayes on Wednesday, having fallen ill on Monday.

Chaib said that besides rushing to trace all contacts, Malian [health authorities](#) had thoroughly disinfected the paediatric clinic.

By coincidence, Chaib said, WHO had deployed a team of experts to Mali on Sunday to assess the country's ability to detect and deal with suspected Ebola cases.

A separate team was also deployed to Ivory Coast, she added.

Earlier this month, WHO announced it was ramping up Ebola protection efforts in a host of African nations, amid growing fears that the disease could spread like wildfire.

Most focus is on Mali, Ivory Coast, Guinea Bissau and Senegal, which border Ebola-ravaged Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Eleven other nations—Benin, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Mauritania, Nigeria, South Sudan and Togo—have been singled out for special assistance based on their road and trade ties to the affected region, and the poor state of their [health](#) services.

Senegal has seen one non-fatal Ebola case, while there have been 11 in Nigeria, with five deaths.

Both countries have won praise for moving swiftly to stop a wider spread, and have been declared Ebola-free after the benchmark 42 days passed with no new cases.

But in international alarm has been stoked by cases beyond Africa, including the United States and Spain.

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