

Schools in Guinea closed amid Ebola to reopen Monday

January 16 2015, by Francis Kokutse



In this Wednesday, Oct. 22, 2014 file photo, a child stands near a sign advising of a quarantined home in an effort to combat the spread of the Ebola virus in Port Loko, Sierra Leone. On Thursday, Jan. 15, 2015, the U.N.'s Ebola chief, Dr. David Nabarro, said at least 50 Ebola hotspots remain in the three hardest-hit West African countries but new cases are declining and the deadly disease will be defeated. In the week ending Jan. 11, WHO said new cases in Sierra Leone declined for a second week to the lowest level since the end of August. (AP Photo/Michael Duff, File)

All schools in Guinea will reopen on Monday after being closed amid the deadly Ebola outbreak, Guinea's health minister said Friday.

Health minister Remy Lamah told The Associated Press in Accra, Ghana during a summit by the Economic Community of West African States that the action is being taken "because the situation has improved." In Liberia, the schools are reopening "next month," said the Liberian Embassy's Charges d'Affaires in Ghana, Musu Ruhle.

The developments mirror how Ebola is affecting the three hardest-hit nations. There have been gains against the virus, which is spread through contact with bodily fluids of a person showing symptoms, or of a corpse, in Guinea and Liberia, but the disease continues to spread in Sierra Leone.

Schools will remain closed in Sierra Leone, that country's health minister said.

"We are monitoring the situation and would take a decision after that," said Sierra Leone Health Minister Foday Sawi Lahai. "We have imported thermometers to be used for surveillance in the schools. Once that is done and the number of cases keep falling, we would consider (reopening schools)."

In the most recent 24-hour monitoring period, 16 new Ebola cases were discovered in Sierra Leone, according to government figures.

At the summit in Ghana, member states were asked to set up Rapid Response Teams at national, district and regional levels as part of the preparedness and containment mechanisms against Ebola, ECOWAS said. Also attending are the World Health Organization, the African Union, the U.N. Mission for Ebola Emergency Response as well as EU and U.S. representatives, the statement said.

Ebola has claimed over 8,400 lives, WHO reported on Wednesday. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon previously said the epidemic could be over by mid-2015 but WHO is now declining to set a specific timeline.

WHO says there are now enough beds to isolate and treat Ebola patients, but not all are in the hotspots where the disease is spreading fastest. The U.N. estimates that the number of scientists needed to track the outbreak must be tripled.

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Citation: Schools in Guinea closed amid Ebola to reopen Monday (2015, January 16) retrieved 19 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-01-schools-guinea-ebola-reopen-monday.html>

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