

Guinea launches Ebola vaccination campaign

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Guinea launched an Ebola vaccination campaign on Tuesday after a fresh outbreak of the deadly disease struck the country this month, with officials hoping to eradicate the virus in six weeks.

The country reported new Ebola cases on February 13 —the first in

West Africa since a 2013-2016 epidemic that left more than 11,300 dead in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The latest outbreak emerged near the town of Gouecke, in the forested Nzerekore region in Guinea's southeast, and has already killed five people.

No new cases have however been confirmed for a week.

Ebola causes severe fever and, in the worst cases, unstoppable bleeding.

It is transmitted through close contact with [bodily fluids](#), and people who live with or care for patients are most at risk.

Health workers began to administer Ebola vaccines in Gouecke on Tuesday, after over 11,000 doses arrived in Guinea the previous day.

Guinea's Health Minister Remy Laham, as well as Georges Ki-Zerbo, the World Health Organization representative in the country, travelled to the town for the start of the rollout.

The WHO plans to send about another 8,000 doses to Guinea, the UN [health](#) agency said in a statement on Tuesday.

Health Minister Laham told AFP: "I think that in six weeks, we can be done with this disease."

During a ceremony outside a health centre in Gouecke, [local government officials](#) received jabs before a crowd of several dozen people. An imam and preacher also encouraged people to get immunised.

Laham, who hails from the region, said he had spent the day trying to persuade local leaders to overcome their resistance to the vaccine.

Contact tracing

Ki-Zerbo said the jabs would be administered mainly to those who had been in contact with people known to be infected, followed potentially by a second circle of people to break the chain of transmission.

The vaccination campaign also began in Dubreka on the outskirts of the capital Conakry, said Dr. Halimatou Keita, who works in a hospital there.

On Wednesday, the rollout will continue in Nzerekore, located around 40 kilometres from Gouecke.

A total of 385 people have been identified as contacts linked to the initial case and that person's relatives, said Bouna Yattassaye, deputy director of the National Agency for Health Security.

The vast majority of them are being monitored and will be among the first to be vaccinated.

Meanwhile in central Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo has also seen a new Ebola outbreak.

Officials said Sunday that four people had died while warning that people were resisting measures to contain the highly contagious disease.

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