

# *Sierra Leone Health Workers Go Door-to-door in Search of Ebola Patients*

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Freetown, February 19 (RHC)-- Healthcare workers in Ebola-stricken Sierra Leone go door-to-door in a two-week search for Ebola patients in the western part of the country. After a rise in cases affiliated to unsafe burials and patients being hidden from authorities, health workers started their final search on Wednesday deep into remote parts of Port Loko district, the fourth most populous district in the country, which is located in the east of the capital, Freetown.

“Teams of health workers backed by security personnel are trekking into outlying areas and knocking on doors of houses ... to check whether people are telling us the truth about not hiding sick people,” said Morlai Dumbuya, a coordinator of the operation.

In a previous operation in December 2014, hundreds of volunteers knocked on doors as part of a 15-day program to look for any sick person being hidden from authorities.

The Ebola epidemic, which hit West Africa more than a year ago, has claimed more than 3,400 lives in Sierra Leone, home to some six million people. Over 11,000 cases have been reported in the country during the time span, according to a new Ebola data and statistics update published by the World Health

Organization (WHO) on February 17.

Soon after Sierra Leone's President Ernest Bai Koroma lifted country-wide quarantines on January 23 because of "steady downward trend" in new cases, the WHO reported the number of cases in the country and neighboring Guinea has witnessed a sudden rise.

Dumbuya said the increase in new cases was due to "secret burials and hiding of sick people in homes." People are ordered by law to report Ebola deaths so that the victims can be buried safely, as traditional burial rituals involving washing of the bodies was one of the key early causes of the spread of the epidemic.

Ebola can be spread through direct contact with the bodily fluids of a patient.

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