Republic of Namibia
Ministry of Health and Social Services

Statement

By

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PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE STATUS OF EBOLA PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE CAPACITY MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES NAMIBIA
There is no Ebola in Namibia. Indeed there is no Ebola in the SADC Region.

Ebola is a severe acute viral illness, usually with sudden onset. It is a zoonotic disease. Currently the disease is reported in West Africa – Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and recently Nigeria.

There are eleven thousand, seven hundred and eleven (11711) suspected cases and one thousand and seventy (1070) have been confirmed as Ebola and nine hundred and thirty two (932) deaths are reported. About fifty (50) Health Care workers have been infected, with eighty (80) deaths. Most cases are reported from Guinea.

Signs and symptoms in humans are flu like illnesses, sudden fever (more than 38 degrees), general body weakness and intense muscle pain, headache, sore throat when swallowing, nausea, loss of appetite, diarrhea and vomiting with or without blood, conjunctivitis (red eyes), skin rashes, abdominal pain, hiccups, cough, chest pains and difficulty breathing.

**What are the modes of transmission?**

The disease is transmitted through direct contact with infected people (person to person) – contact with infected blood, secretions and other body fluids. The risk of a person transmitting the disease is during the late stages of illness when the patient is vomiting, having diarrhea, or bleeding and
during funerals with unprotected body and burial preparations.

The risk during the early incubation period is low. Airborne transmission among humans has not been documented usually health care workers and families of the sick patients are regarded as contacts and are at risk of contracting the illness.

Others are mourners who have direct contact with bodies during preparation and burial.

**What are the chances of importation of the disease into Namibia?**

The chances of a plane from West Africa landing directly at one of our local Airports is non-existent since we have no direct flights from West Africa to Namibia. All flights go through O.R. Thambo Airport, Johannesburg, South Africa. The likelihood of these people being detected with thermal detectors in South Africa before proceeding to Hosea Kutako Airport is HIGH.

Other indirect routes are Luanda, Lusaka and Cape Town. The Port Health Authorities at ALL major Ports Of Entry are highly sensitized and will be able to link up with Ministry of Health and Social Services in their respective regional health offices.

Currently, the National Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Committee is active and the Contingency Plan has been activated.
The focus now is on Surveillance to be able to detect any importation. The Ministry of Health officials are ready to investigate rumors and suspected cases. Please let us avoid rumourmongering.

All risk groups such as Health workers, Traditional Healers, cleaners and Ambulance personnel will be trained to be able to deal with the importation of any viral hemorrhagic fever.

Community participation and involvement is required.

Social mobilization activities have been strengthened. The Ministry has set aside a floor in Windhoek Central Hospital 6 East to be used for treating any importation and is ready for that purpose. Social Mobilization and Surveillance is ongoing.

Stakeholders and partners such as NAC, AIR NAMIBIA, WHO, CDC, City of Windhoek, NIP, Directorate Customs, Excise and Immigration, Namibian Tourism Board, Port Health and the Media are involved in the response activities.

The Ministry of Health and Social Services is prepared and the situation is under control.

I am urging the community not to panic.