APRIL 9, 2014 - Conakry, Guinea – The efforts to control the outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus in Guinean capital Conakry are being intensified. More resources were mobilised and WHO and partners are streamlining their coordination of different components of the response.

To strengthen contact tracing in Conakry, the World Health Organization (WHO) organized an intensive training today for a first group of 70 trainees. They will go into the communities to follow up on specific persons who had close contacts with patients with a confirmed Ebola infection.

Training for health workers on infection control has started yesterday in different departments of the Donka national teaching hospital and will also take place in other health facilities in coming days.

Simultaneously, WHO is setting up an operation centre for alert and response within the Guinean Ministry of Health (MoH) in order to centralize the coordination of all activities linked to detection, search, transportation, hospitalisation and burial of suspect cases.

WHO clinicians continue to support Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) and MoH in providing clinical management at Donka isolation ward.

According to the latest figures, 157 people, including 101 deaths, have been infected with the Ebola Virus Disease in Guinea. As of today, sixty-six cases have been confirmed by laboratory analysis.

Spread across 6 districts of the country including Conakry, this Ebola outbreak represents a particular challenge that requires the mobilization of different resources from national and international partners to put in place the necessary response measures.

WHO has more than 50 people on the ground supporting the Ministry of Health and other partners to provide clinical management of patients, contact tracing, disease surveillance, laboratory work, logistics, as well as information-sharing and social mobilization and communication.

New outbreak management software developed by the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is presently being updated with data from the field, and will soon be used as the primary database tool by all partners. The CDC software package Epi-Info aggregates various types of outbreak data into a single database that produces statistical and visual reports on the outbreak.

Ebola can have a case fatality rate of up to 90%, and is a severe acute viral illness. It is characterized by sudden onset of fever, intense weakness, muscle pain, headache, nausea and sore throat. This can be followed by vomiting, diarrhoea, impaired kidney and liver function, and in some cases, both internal and external bleeding.

No vaccine is available, nor is there any specific treatment. Severely ill patients require intensive supportive care. Patients are frequently dehydrated and require oral rehydration with solutions containing electrolytes, or intravenous fluids. 8 patients in Guinea have so far recovered.

Raising awareness of the risk factors for infection and the protective measures that should be taken is the only way to stop transmission and subsequent deaths.

Close unprotected physical contact with Ebola patients should be avoided and those who have died from the disease should be promptly and safely buried.