24 August 2014 - WHO is working to ensure an international health worker who is deployed for the Organization in Sierra Leone and has contracted Ebola receives the best care possible including the option of medical evacuation to another care facility if necessary.

International health workers are an important part of this Ebola response. Even before the Ebola outbreak began, after years of conflict, the area of West Africa most affected by this disease suffered from a weakened and fragile health system with a shortage of health workers. Surge capacity of international health experts is essential to supplement the work of the local frontline workers in this response.

Since the beginning of the international response to the outbreak in March, WHO has deployed nearly 400 people from across the Organization and from partners in the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) to help respond to the disease in Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. This is the first time someone working under the aegis of WHO has fallen ill with the disease.

The Ebola virus is spread through contact with bodily fluids and people giving care or working around infected patients are known to be a high risk group. In the past six months of the outbreak, more than 225 health workers have fallen ill and nearly 130 have lost their lives to the disease they were working to contain.

WHO recognizes there is a risk for health workers who work around Ebola and takes many precautions before they deploy to help them protect themselves in the field. Once there, the Organization ensures those workers have access to appropriate medical advice and support.