As of February 2015, almost 10,600 people are known to have died from the Ebola disease. The recent outbreak in West Africa has not been brought under full control since it became part of international attention early 2014. Not only does it outnumber cases and deaths of all previous outbreaks (before 2014, the World Health Organization had recorded 2,387 cases and 1,590 deaths), but the geographic patterns are also different this time. The above cartogram shows the distribution of the total number of deaths of all outbreaks of Ebola as recorded by the WHO and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The dominance of the current outbreak, with the three most affected West African countries being labelled, becomes dramatically visible.

According to the figures published in early February, 22,522 cases were counted with a total of 8,994 deaths to date. Exact numbers have to be treated with caution due to too many uncertainties in the counts of cases, but at least they provide a basis upon which health workers and organisations dealing with the crisis can act.

The WHO update in early February indicated an increase in the weekly case incidence for the first time in 2015 and combined an increasing geographical spread in Guinea and a widespread transmission in Sierra Leone. These figures show that fighting Ebola remains a big challenge. This is even more significant with the wet season approaching, bringing difficulties in accessing the more remote areas. These are crucial locations for getting the spread of the virus under control as the facilities there to treat patients and safely bury the dead are not of an equally high standard as those in the more densely populated urban centres. Preventing the further spread of the virus is therefore more problematic in these areas even if the population densities are much lower.

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