UNICEF-Liberia
Ebola Virus Disease: SitRep #17
18 April 2014

Key Points

- The total number of suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases stands at 27, while Ebola-related deaths stands at 13, for a case fatality rate of 48%.
- The total number of confirmed Ebola cases stands at six.
- Foya, Lofa County, remains the epicentre of the Ebola epidemic. However, suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases have been reported in Lofa (10), Margibi (6), Bong (5), Nimba (4), Montserrado (1) and Grand Cape Mount (1) Counties.
- The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) is in the midst of mapping partner support provided to date, and has asked all partners working on the Ebola response to send consolidated summaries of their interventions to the National Task Force (NTF) on Health Emergencies.
- UNICEF’s two new field coordinators and the 10-person team contracted from the interpersonal communications (IPC) firm are now on the ground in four main districts of Lofa County, where they are conducting daily, intensive engagement to raise awareness of Ebola in local communities. This outreach is being done alongside, or in partnership with, the County Health Team (CHT) and NGOs such as Samaritan’s Purse.
- UNICEF printed and disseminated 200 copies each of its revised Ebola awareness posters, which were sent along with the field coordinators and IPC team to Lofa County. UNICEF is currently printing an additional 10,000 copies for dissemination in Lofa and other Ebola-affected counties.
- UNICEF’s estimated funding requirement for Ebola-related C4D, Health and WASH interventions remains approximately US$500,000 for the period from 21 March to 21 June. The estimated funding gap is US$370,000. The country office has requested an advance of emergency programme funds to fill this gap in the immediate-term, and is fundraising to replenish this amount.

Situation Overview

- Since 16 April, the total number of suspected, probable and confirmed cases of Ebola remained steady at 27, with 13 Ebola-related deaths. The case fatality rate (CFR) stands at 48%, and total confirmed Ebola cases stands at six.
- A number of additional Ebola contacts have been identified by MoHSW surveillance teams, bringing the total number of contacts under follow-up to 98. The increase is a result of deeper analysis and contact tracing of past and present Ebola cases.
- The majority of contacts currently under surveillance are in Foya, Lofa County (81); the remainder are in Margibi County (17). However, one contact has reportedly travelled to Guéckédou, Guinea (exact location unknown).
- To date, suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases have been reported in Lofa (10), Margibi (6), Bong (5), Nimba (4), Montserrado (1) and Grand Cape Mount (1) Counties.
- Lofa County remains the epicentre of the Ebola outbreak, particularly Foya District. Lofa also remains the county with the highest numbers of reported suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases (10) and Ebola-related deaths (9). All six of the confirmed Ebola cases originated in Lofa, though two of these patients travelled to Margibi County after contracting the virus.
- The NTF is working to “clean” existing data on suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases and related deaths. This could include analysing the results of samples that have tested negative (around five samples, to date); and retroactively looking into cases from the past that may have been Ebola, but were not officially reported. The total cases, related deaths and CFR could therefore change in the coming days, based on this analysis. For now, however, the official numbers stand, as reported above.

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1 This includes the two persons who were diagnosed in Liberia but died in Guinea early in the outbreak.
• The National Reference Lab (NRL)\(^2\) in Margibi County was commissioned by the MoHSW on 16 April and is officially accepting Ebola samples from within Liberia.

UNICEF Response

Through its Communications and Child Survival Sections, UNICEF continues to provide critical communications for development (C4D); water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and health sector support to the national Ebola response. This work is performed in coordination with the relevant national committees and working groups: namely the Social Mobilization Committee of the NTF, which was previously referred to as the Health Promotion Committee; the Case Management Committee of the NTF; and the WASH Working Group. Updates on specific UNICEF activities include the following:

COMMUNICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT (C4D):

• UNICEF’s two field coordinators and the 10 person team contracted from the IPC firm are on the ground in Lofa County, where they are engaging intensively with communities to raise awareness of Ebola in Foya, Voinjama, Kolahun and Zorzor Districts. As previously mentioned, their efforts are targeting individuals and communities via schools, churches, mosques and marketplaces. To reach these populations, they are liaising with traditional leaders, healers, cross-border trade associations, transport unions and other pivotal community members and organizations. The field coordinator and IPC team based in Foya is partnering with Samaritan’s Purse.

• UNICEF printed 200 copies each of the two new school and community-friendly posters on Ebola, which were sent along with the field coordinators and IPC team to Lofa County. The agency is currently printing an additional 10,000 copies of each poster, which will be disseminated to Lofa, Bong, Nimba, Margibi and Montserrado Counties.

• UNICEF also printed several copies of the flip chart for use by the IPC team members in their community outreach and engagement efforts in Lofa County.

• All UNICEF-supported mass media activities are ongoing, including work with local community radio stations and key national stations. At the national level, these efforts are supported by UNMIL, which continues to carry the 30-minute Ebola talk show from 12:10 to 12:40 PM, Monday through Friday. The show is rebroadcast an additional two times per day, and is also being carried by the Liberia Broadcasting System.

CHILD SURVIVAL (WASH AND HEALTH):

• On Monday, 21 April, UNICEF plans to deliver the additional supplies requested by MSF for the isolation unit in Foya, Lofa County. These supplies include mattresses, blankets, tables and other similar support.

UNICEF Funding Needs:

• UNICEF’s estimated funding requirement for Ebola-related C4D, Health and WASH interventions currently stands at approximately US$500,000. This budget covers the period from 21 March to 21 June. Currently, the agency has received US$130,000 in funding, leaving a gap of US$370,000. To fill this gap, the country office has requested an advance of US$300,000 emergency programme funds. Fundraising to replenish these funds is ongoing, and several pledges have been made.

National Task Force Updates

BUDGET AND DONOR SUPPORT:

• The MoHSW’s three-month Ebola response budget still stands at US$2.5 million. It covers all 15 counties in Liberia but prioritizes Lofa, Bong, Nimba, Margibi, Montserrado and Grand Cape Mount. The MoHSW also intends to scale up efforts in Gbarpolu, if/when possible.

• As previously reported, the Ministry of Finance has appropriated US$250,000 for the budget, and the Mano River Union (MRU) has provided US$10,000. These funds are currently earmarked to support coordination of the response, which is being led by the MoHSW.

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\(^2\) It will be recalled that the Ebola testing facility at the NRL is being supported by an interagency team from the United States comprised of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Department of Defense (DoD).
• Many other partners and donors have provided support to the response plan and budget, though this support has primarily been in-kind. The MoHSW presented an initial mapping of this support at today’s NTF, but has requested partners and donors to send lists of their contributions to date to the NTF to ensure there are no gaps.

LABORATORY AND EPIDEMIOLOGY:
• The MoHSW commissioned the Ebola testing facility at the NRL on 16 April, and the facility is continuing to receive in-country samples for testing.
• Cross-border transmission of Ebola remains an area of concern, especially at the Guinea-Liberia border in Lofa County.

CASE MANAGEMENT AND PSYCHOSOCIAL:
• The Case Management Committee of the NTF revised the case definition and algorithm for Ebola, which will be printed and sent out to all health officers and facilities. The revisions are focused on improving diagnosis of suspected and probable Ebola cases, with an emphasis on contact tracing.
• The Case Management Committee trained an additional 12 MoHSW staff, who will be deployed to Foya Hospital in Lofa County; Firestone Duside Hospital in Margibi County; and JFK Medical Center and possibly ELWA Hospital in Montserrado County. Two of the staff that will deploy to Foya will focus on the psychosocial side of the Ebola response, which is currently weak.

SOCIAL MOBILIZATION:
• See aforementioned UNICEF Response/C4D updates.

INFORMATION AND REFE RRAL MANAGEMENT:
• The MoHSW remains the authority on Ebola statistics and continues to manage information via several channels and mechanisms, including: regular SitReps; periodic press releases; daily press briefings; appearances on national radio and the UNMIL Radio-produced daily Ebola talk show; maintenance of Ebola Hotlines; and support for the press situation room at the Ministry HQ in Congotown, Monrovia.

COORDINATION WITH CHTS, GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND OTHER MINISTRIES:
• At the national-level, the various Committees of the NTF are meeting daily and often on weekends. Coordination meetings are also taking place on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
• At the county-level, daily Task Force meetings are reportedly occurring in Lofa, Bong, Nimba, Margibi, Montserrado and Grand Cape Mount Counties, under the leadership of the respective County Superintendents.

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