UNICEF Benin is scaling up its emergency response to the ongoing Lassa Fever outbreak.

- As of 19 February 2016, there have been 72 cases (6 confirmed, 12 probable and 54 suspected cases), and 27 people have died (CFR 33%). As of 19 February, 479 case contacts have been identified and 478 are under 21-day surveillance.
- No new suspect cases were recorded and no new case contacts were reported on 19 February.
- One death was recorded at the CHUD-Borgou: a woman who gave birth to a healthy child the day she was admitted to the hospital on 14 February.
- Two suspected cases are cured and discharged from the CNHU-KM Cotonou.
- A car was put at disposal by Médecins du Monde to ensure the transportation of new samples from Parakou and Cotonou to Lagos reference laboratory.
- Daily coordination meetings at the departmental and national levels are ongoing.
- Continued monitoring of the contacts listed is ongoing.
- The 8 hospitalized cases are in good apparent clinical condition.
- UNICEF has provided supplies, including more than 100 hygiene kits, buckets, gloves, masks, soap, tarpaulins, water treatment units, and thermometers.
- UNICEF will set up an isolation and treatment center for Lassa Fever in Parakou.
- UNICEF leads the national Communication and Social Mobilization Commission with the production of a range of awareness raising, social mobilization and training activities, including:
  - community engagement and inter-personal communication (C4D) is implemented through a network of health promoters from the Beninese Red Cross and various NGOs;
  - 25,000 brochures printed and distributed to partners, social mobilizers, health workers and journalists;
  - 90 journalists briefed on Lassa Fever from Beninese radio stations, print media and television;
  - A radio spot in 11 local languages and French has been distributed to 50 local radio stations and a TV spot is being produced with partners and MoH; and
  - 60,000 brochures for teachers are being printed and an educational comic is being designed to raise awareness about Lassa Fever among children at school.
With growing concern over an outbreak of deadly Lassa Fever, UNICEF in Benin is scaling up the emergency response to help prevent further spread of the disease and support affected people. Lassa Fever, which arises from human contact with the feces of infected rodents, is transmitted through bodily fluids such as blood, urine, saliva, or sperm. Those affected experience a range of symptoms including fever, fatigue, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches and abdominal pains. In its severest form, if it is not treated, the disease can lead to death. Benin was last affected by Lassa Fever over a 4 month-period in 2014-2015 when 16 cases were reported and 9 people died.

Government authorities have been on the alert since early January when the index case, a pregnant woman with symptoms of the disease died, and six health workers in the same hospital in central Benin showed similar symptoms. The date of admission of the index case was 3 January 2016. On 28 January, following the confirmation of the case of Lassa Fever at the St Martin Zone Hospital of Papané, in the Northern district of Tchaourou, the Ministry of Health of Benin declared an outbreak and an immediate response with partners, WHO and UNICEF.

As of 19 February 2016, there have been 72 cases (6 confirmed, 12 probable and 54 suspected cases), and 26 people have died (CFR 33%). As of 19 February, 479 case contacts have been identified and 478 are under 21-day surveillance. Among health personnel there have been 7 cases (3 confirmed, 1 probable and 3 suspected cases) including 2 deaths (1 probable and 1 confirmed). One of the confirmed cases is a 4-month-old child who received treatment in Tchaourou, in the north-east of the country.

Geographically, the highest concentration of cases are along the border with Nigeria.
Cases by week, from week 51 in 2015 to week 7 in 2016; Source: MoH Benin Sitrep 19 February 2016

Humanitarian leadership and coordination

- UNICEF coordinates the establishment of an isolation and treatment center for Lassa Fever in Parakou, in close collaboration with WHO and MoH.
• UNICEF leads the national Communication and Social Mobilization Commission with a range of partners including Plan International Bénin, Red Cross, USAID, Oxfam, and ABMS/PSI, etc.
• UNICEF team participates to all national crisis committee meetings, including the security forces’ emergency response platform.

Summary of response

In support of the Government of Benin, UNICEF and its partners have taken emergency measures in response to the outbreak, including:

• At the request of the MoH, UNICEF will set up an isolation and treatment center for Lassa Fever in Parakou;
• Distribution of supplies to relevant structures, including medical material and hygiene items;
• A partnership with mass media (TV, press, radio) with a focus on 50 local radio stations, which are the most followed and listened media, covering the entire territory and in the eleven main languages used in Benin and French;
• Community engagement and inter-personal communication (C4D) through a network of health promoters from the Beninese Red Cross and various NGOs; and
• Social mobilization in schools using educational materials that are currently being designed.

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