HIGHLIGHTS

- Owing to a fragile health system in Guinea-Bissau establishing a sanitary corridor along the border regions, the islands and the capital Bissau, continues to be a major challenge.

- As a trusted partner in Guinea Bissau, UNICEF continues to perform and deliver its programme, maintaining relations with all sectors of the government, and providing technical assistance in ensuring systems are in place in case of a potential Ebola crisis.

- UNICEF provides strong support to the government and people in Guinea-Bissau in Ebola prevention on several fronts. Actions this week focused on trainings in Education, Protection and C4D (Youth).

- Community engagement initiatives continued to be implemented with UNICEF support, focusing but not limited to high risk communities of Gabu and Tombali, bordering Guinea Conakry. The activities are implemented through a network of local NGOs, community based organisations, Christian and Islamic church-based organizations, the Traditional Leaders Authority, the Association of Traditional Healers PROMETRA, the taxi drivers unions SIMAPPA and community radios.

- Several meetings were held with government and civil society counterparts both in Bissau and in Gabu province, with an emphasis on securing a commitment for more thorough coordination among partners, particularly given the entry of new players in the country, and to avoid potential duplication of efforts.

- A mission to border posts with Guinea Conakry by the WASH/Emergency team found a keen need for follow-up on previous actions and deliveries. For example, while protocols are followed by border personnel, they are sometimes unpaid and unable to perform their work due to lack of transport or shelter.

- Training sessions on the Ebola education protocol in schools was undertaken in Quinará, Tombali, Gabú and Bolama/Bijagos regions for 27 regional inspectors and 1,136 teachers from 558 schools.

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

As of 12 August 2015

500,000
Children living in high risk areas

UNICEF funding needs until August 2015
USD 5,160,712 million

UNICEF funding gap
USD 1,474,505 million
Situation Overview and Humanitarian Needs

- Guinea-Bissau show a fragile health system, and establishing a sanitary corridor along the border regions, the islands and the capital Bissau, continues to be a major challenge. The fragility of the health system can be attributed to years of neglect of rural and urban communities due to 30 years – since independence in 1974 – of political instability and civil war. A current political crisis over the past two weeks has once again resulted in an uncertain working environment, with many in government decision-making roles taking a step back, until they receive reassurances of employment continuity.

- As a trusted partner in Guinea Bissau, on the Ebola front and beyond, UNICEF continues to perform and deliver its programme, maintaining relations with all sectors of the government, and providing technical assistance in ensuring systems are in place in case of a potential Ebola crisis. The greatest threat at the moment is that without any confirmed Ebola case, there is a generalised false sense of security, and real opportunities are being missed in health system strengthening – considered the key ingredient to combatting Ebola.

Summary Analysis of Programme response

Health and Nutrition

- Case management of under-nourished children in the province of Gabu is currently at a low ebb. Local partners warned that the number of vulnerable women and children tends to grow in August and September, at the end of the rainy season, when crops in the field are still not ready to be harvested.

WASH

- In a ceremony undertaken in Gabu region, 40 communities received Open Defecation Free (ODF) certification, in the context of the UNICEF supported Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach. Undertaken in the presence of a locally elected parliamentarian and the provincial Governor, as well as the UNICEF Representative, the ceremony involved a public declaration of community leaders to adopt and maintain healthy sanitary practices. Some 15 per cent of the country still practice open-air defecation.

- On the other hand, a visit to communities and health centres in the same region - already benefitting from WASH - showed a difficulty to maintain already installed boreholes and water systems. In many cases, despite regular visits to the field, small technical glitches will quickly result in the community returning to old wells as a main source of water, with the implied reversal of handwashing practices and an increase in diarrhoea cases, in addition to greater vulnerability regarding Ebola management.

- UNICEF will facilitate linkages between donors, such as the European Union, to prioritize the most critical installations such as planned repairs and rehabilitation initiatives, while facilitating the strengthening of community water management committees.

Communication for Development (C4D)

- The Ethics Committee of the Government of Guinea Bissau has approved a Risks, Attitudes, Norms, Abilities and Self-Regulation (RANAS) study focusing on handwashing and basic sanitation practices. Supported by UNICEF Emergency, C4D and WASH sections, under the guidance of the National Institute of Sanitation (INASA), the study will be conducted across the country over a six-week period, by local NGO NADEL. The data, fed in the INASA database and analysed at the School of Environmental Social Sciences, Environmental and Health Psychology in Dübendorf, Switzerland, will provide tools for adjustments in C4D programming and WASH. This study was planned to start 12 August 2015 but is now postponed until the current political crisis is resolved.

Child Protection

- An Ebola awareness workshop was held with social services workers in Tombali and Quinara regions. With assistance from C4D, UNICEF protection officers worked with 23 social workers from the national police and hospitals in aspects of psycho-social support to Ebola victims, such as interpersonal communication and handling grief and fear. The programme was designed based on protection activities undertaken in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea Conakry.
Education

- As a measure of preparedness, and in response to Ebola, education and health security protocols were developed by Guinea Bissau’s ministries of Education and Health, with support from UNICEF and partners Fundação Fé e Cooperação (FEC) and People-to-People Development Agency. The education protocol refers to Ebola education for school-age children. The second protocol - on health security - refers to actions to be taken by schools under several Ebola infection scenarios. Scheduled for delivery in a two-phase approach, a first training on Ebola health security measures, covering 558 schools, was conducted last week for teachers and school administrators in the regions of Gabu, Tombali, Quinara, Bolama/Bijagós, on the border with Guinea-Conakry. A second phase of this training is planned for September 2015 in the regions of Autonomous Sector of Bissau, Biombo, Oio, Cacheu and Bafatá.

Supply and Logistics

- Supplies worth USD 61,127.81 were procured by 27 July 2015 for Ebola-related activities. The list of supplies includes household protection kits and equipment for treatment centers and hospitals.
- 2,700 bicycles are planned for distribution to UNICEF partners in the context of H4+ (partnership between UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, WHO and the World Bank for reproductive, maternal and newborn health), Integrated Programme for Mother-Child Health and Ebola to support health promotion and community health practices and monitoring. A purchase order for 85 motorcycles and 650 bicycles is awaiting a detailed plan from partners and the government regarding distribution.
- Notoriously poor, road conditions during the current rainy season severely hamper cross-border movements between Guinea Bissau and Guinea Conakry. However, some progress is noted between the capital Bissau and Buruntuma, at the border with Guinea Conakry.

Partnership and Humanitarian Coordination

- UNICEF Ebola Emergency section participated in coordination meetings in Bissau and Gabú. Meetings were held with government officials - Governor of Gabú province, the regional health director, the high commissioner for Ebola - and international partners such as Centers for Disease Control (CDC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Medical Corps (IMC), OXFAM, MSF, Spanish Red Cross and UNDP.
- UNICEF also participated in a weekly Ebola coordination meeting with partners and held a one-on-one discussion with the Director of INASA.

Next SitRep: 26 August 2015

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