UNICEF-Liberia
Ebola Virus Disease: SitRep #47
15 August 2014

*This report provides an update on UNICEF’s response to the Ebola emergency in Liberia. All statistics, other than those related to UNICEF support, are from the SitReps issued by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW).*

Summary

- The Ebola epidemic is fast creating a humanitarian crisis in Liberia. Functioning health facilities are limited throughout the country, government services have drawn-down and prices, especially of food, are rising. Liberia is officially in a State of Emergency.
- Lofa County is now quarantined with movement in and out for essential services only. Additional movement restrictions are being considered in various areas.
- The infection trend is still upward. This week saw the largest number of cases in one week – 1,232 new suspected, probable and confirmed cases of Ebola were reported in Liberia.
- The epidemic is spreading across the country. Two more counties have suspected cases. Seventy-six (76) per cent of the new cases were reported in Lofa and Montserrat Counties.
- With these additional cases, as of 13 August, the cumulative number of suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases reported during Outbreak #2 stood at 778.
- As part of the epidemic and also associated with the health system collapse is the high number of infected health workers – currently there is a cumulative total of 88 suspected, probable and confirmed cases.
- In the past week, the number of Ebola patients in the Ebola Treatment Units nearly tripled, rising from 61 on 6 August, to 175 on 13 August. Expansions are underway of the Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs) at Foya Borma Hospital in Lofa County and ELWA Hospital in Montserrat County. The latter will be the largest Ebola Treatment Unit in history. However, the rate of admissions in the last few days strongly indicates that even the expanded units will be overwhelmed.
- Plans are under way to establish a third ETU in Bong County, as well as a number of community based mid-level isolation centres in Monrovia.
- UNICEF has significantly scaled up its Ebola response plan, which now covers the period from July to December. The total budget for this plan is US$ 6 million, and the current funding gap is US$ 5 million. Support is urgently needed to implement and sustain the plan in the medium- to long-term.
- A UN Appeal was launched on Thursday 14 August, with UNICEF’s contributions amounting to the US$ 6 million referred to above.
- Over the past week, UNICEF assisted the MoHSW and partners with two stakeholder meetings for community leaders in Montserrat County; conducted refresher trainings for 100 UNICEF-supported “animators” engaged in Ebola outreach in Montserrat County; and led an Ebola awareness training for a group of influential Liberians seeking to assist in the Ebola response. The agency also donated additional chlorine, medical cots and tarpaulins for use in ETUs; and laptops and office equipment to support the MoHSW in the Ebola response.

Update on State of Emergency

- Both Houses of the Legislature have now voted in support of the State of Emergency in Liberia, which President Johnson Sirleaf declared on 6 August due to the Ebola outbreak.

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1 “The past week” refers to the period from 6 August, the date of the last UNICEF Ebola SitRep, to 13 August, the date of the latest MoHSW Ebola SitRep.
2 Outbreak #2 began on 29 May.
3 All cumulative statistics are drawn from MoHSW Ebola SitRep #90, which reports cumulative cases as of 23:00 on 13 August.
Situation Overview

- According to the MoHSW, between 23:00 on 6 August and 23:00 on 13 August (the date of the latest Ministry SitRep), 232 additional suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases and 119 additional suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola deaths were added to the cumulative totals in Liberia. Breakdown by County is as follows:
  - **Bomi**: 12 new cases (10 probable and 2 confirmed), three new deaths.
  - **Bong**: 24 new cases (11 suspected, 9 probable and 4 confirmed), 12 new deaths.
  - **Grand Bassa**: 14 new cases (8 suspected and 6 confirmed), one new death.
  - **GCM**: Two new cases (1 probable and 1 confirmed), two new deaths.
  - **Lofa**: 124 new cases (4 suspected, 93 probable and 27 confirmed), 60 new deaths.
  - **Montserrado**: 53 new cases (16 suspected and 37 probable), 37 new deaths.
  - **Nimba**: One new case (confirmed), four new deaths.
  - **River Gee**: One new case (suspected), no deaths.
  - **Sinoe**: One new case (suspected), no deaths.
- Seventy-six per cent of the new cases are in Lofa and Montserrado Counties, with Bong, Grand Bassa and Bomi reporting the third, fourth and fifth highest numbers of new cases in the past week.
- The new cases reflect the following:
  - Fourteen (14) new suspected, probable and confirmed cases among HCWs, including the first HCWs to be infected in Grand Bassa (three workers) and Grand Cape Mount (one worker) Counties.
  - Three new deaths among HCWs (one each in Bong, Lofa and Montserrado Counties).
  - Some 63 new cases in Barkedu, Lofa County, and some 38 new cases in Voinjama, Lofa County – clear Ebola “hot spots”.
  - An upshot of new cases (at least eight) in West Point Community, Montserrado County – one of the poorest slums in the city with a high population density and a very poor WASH situation.
  - The first reported cases in Sinoe and River Gee Counties (both cases are suspected).
  - Confirmation of the probable case in River Cess County, which is now classified as confirmed.
- With these changes, the total number of suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases reported in Liberia during Outbreak #2 now stands at 778 (173 suspected, 421 probable and 184 confirmed); the total number of suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola deaths stands at 402 (66 suspected, 188 probable and 148 confirmed); and the case fatality rate for probable and confirmed cases stands at 56 per cent. Breakdown by County is as follows:
  - **Bomi**: 41 cases (4 suspected, 28 probable and 9 confirmed), 13 deaths.
  - **Bong**: 83 cases (44 suspected, 25 probable and 14 confirmed), 23 deaths.
  - **Grand Bassa**: 15 cases (8 suspected, 1 probable and 6 confirmed), two deaths.
  - **GCM**: Six cases (2 probable and 4 confirmed), four deaths.
  - **Lofa**: 392 cases (61 suspected, 233 probable and 98 confirmed), 180 deaths.
  - **Margibi**: 13 cases (9 suspected, 2 probable and 2 confirmed), five deaths.
  - **Montserrado**: 208 cases (40 suspected, 125 probable and 43 confirmed), 163 deaths.
  - **Nimba**: 17 cases (5 suspected, 5 probable and 7 confirmed), 11 deaths.
  - **River Gee**: One case (suspected), no deaths.
  - **Rivercess**: One case (confirmed), one death.
  - **Sinoe**: One case (suspected), no deaths.
- The total number of suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases among health workers since the epidemic began now stands at 88, of which 36 have resulted in death.
- Confirmed Ebola cases have been reported in Bomi, Bong, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Lofa, Margibi, Montserrado, Nimba and Rivercess Counties, and suspected cases have been reported in River Gee and Sinoe Counties.

Developments and Challenges

- In the past week, the number of Ebola patients in treatment units has nearly tripled, rising from 61 persons on 6 August, to 175 persons on 13 August. The rising number of patients continues to tax...
the existing two ETUs, both of which are in the process of expansion, and both of which are being run by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

- **ELWA ETU:** The expansion of the ETU at ELWA Hospital in Montserrado County is expected to be completed by the end of this week (16 August). With the expansion, the capacity of the unit will increase from 20 to 120 beds, making it the largest ETU in the country.

- **Foya ETU:** The expansion of the ETU at Foya Borma Hospital in Lofa County is also underway, though the completion date is not yet clear. Once completed, the capacity of the unit will increase from 20 to 80 beds.

- The expansion of the ETUs by MSF is a welcome development that will improve case management of Ebola patients. However, if the number of cases continues to rise as sharply as it has in recent weeks, these ETUs will not be sufficient to meet national demands. Logistical challenges in moving patients from other counties, such as Bomi and GCM, to ETUs could also further complicate matters.

- To address the current and emerging challenges, a new policy on Ebola treatment is being developed by the Incident Management Committee (IMC). This policy includes plans for the establishment of mid-level isolation units, such as those being planned for JFK Hospital in Montserrado County, and Telewowan Hospital in Voinjama Hospital. Holding and quarantine units are already appearing in counties where there are no ETUs, or where ETUs are over-stretched. This new policy may formalize these units as part of the response system.

- The establishment of an ETU in Bong County is still under discussion, however a funding source and medical team to support the ETU have yet to be identified.

- In addition to limited bed capacity of existing ETUs, insufficient logistics – especially vehicles – for case investigation, ambulance and burial teams remain a major challenge to the Ebola response system. Resistance to contact tracing teams by communities is also hampering the response.

- Demonstrations and road blocks by community members frustrated by the slow response of burial teams remains a problem and is raising security concerns.

- The issues at the Ebola hotline centre at the General Services Agency have reportedly been resolved, with the hotlines operating relatively well. However, the delays between calls being received by the hotline and the dispatch of required teams remains a problem.

- Some counties have reportedly established their own hotlines. It is unclear how those hotlines relate to the central hotline.

**UNICEF Response**

As a member of the Ebola National Task Force, UNICEF continues to provide critical social mobilization/communications, case management/health and logistical support to the national response.

**SOCIAL MOBILIZATION/COMMUNICATIONS:**

- Over the past week, UNICEF assisted the MoHSW and partners with two stakeholder meetings for community leaders in Montserrado County. The first was held in Paynesville, the second in New Georgia. Both meetings brought together influential community members and leaders from the surrounding area, who were sensitized on Ebola and informed of an upcoming plan by the County Health Team to deploy Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) to their respective areas to conduct Ebola outreach.

- UNICEF conducted refresher trainings for 100 “animators” who work for local partner NGOs specialized in WASH. With support from UNICEF, these animators were deployed across Montserrado in mid-June. The refresher course included valuable experience-sharing and lessons learned from their work thus far.

- UNICEF also led an Ebola awareness training for Alpha Phi Alpha, a group of 35 influential Liberians seeking to assist in the Ebola response. In the coming weeks, UNICEF is also planning on providing similar training to other partner groups, including non-governmental organizations/groups.

**CASE MANAGEMENT/HEALTH:**

- UNICEF donated an additional 450 kg of chlorine, 100 medical cots/beds (65 for the ETU in Montserrado and 35 for the ETU in Lofa) and tarpaulin to support the expansion of the ETUs in Lofa and Montserrado Counties. UNICEF also donated five additional tents for the expansion of the ETU in Lofa.
EDUCATION:
- UNICEF has initiated discussions with the Ministry of Education and UNMIL on the possibility of having educational programmes on radio for children during the time that schools are closed due to the Ebola outbreak.

SOCIAL PROTECTION:
- UNICEF is now Co-Chairing the Psychosocial sub-committee with the MOHSW.

UNICEF Funding Needs:
- UNICEF is in urgent need of funding to support its response activities in Liberia in the medium- to long-term. The agency has significantly scaled up its response plan, which now covers the period from July to December. The total budget for this plan is US$ 6 million, and the current funding gap is US$ 5 million.

UNICEF Contacts

- **Sheldon Yett, Representative**
  Tel: +231-(0)770-25-7100 (office), +231-(0)770-26-7100 (mobile), Email: syett@unicef.org

- **Dr. Fazlul Haque, Deputy Representative**
  Tel: +231-(0)770-25-7400 (office), +231-(0)770-26-7400 (mobile), Email: fhaque@unicef.org

- **Prabhu Prabhakaran, Resource Mobilization Specialist**
  Tel: +231-(0)770-25-7103 (office), +231-(0)770-26-7103 (mobile), E-mail: pprabhakaran@unicef.org

- **Rukshan Ratnam, Communications Specialist**
  Tel: +231-(0)770-25-7110 (office), +231-(0)770-26-7110 (mobile), E-mail: rratnam@unicef.org