Key Points

- Four new suspected Ebola cases and one new Ebola-related death were confirmed by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW).
- The total number of suspected cases now stands at 18, including seven related deaths.
- Lofa, Bong, Nimba, Margibi and Montserrado remain the main counties of concern.
- The MoHSW has updated its original US$ 1.2 million emergency response budget reflecting contributions made by various partners to date.
- The MoHSW has established a Situation Room to improve its coordination and monitoring efforts and is seeking to improve communication between Monrovia and the counties.
- An expert from the US Center for Disease Control (CDC) arrived in Liberia today.
- Together with the MoHSW and other partners, UNICEF has ramped up its Communications for Development (C4D) initiatives.
- Nonetheless, UNICEF continues to face funding gaps for its response efforts in the areas of C4D and WASH, though DFID has permitted reprogramming of up to US$ 25,000 toward the WASH efforts.

Situation Overview

At the daily meeting of the National Task Force (NTF) on Health Emergencies, relevant staff from the MoHSW and key partners provided the following updates:

**SURVEILLANCE, VERIFICATION AND CASE MANAGEMENT:**

- The MoHSW confirmed four new suspected cases of Ebola and one additional Ebola-related death. This brings the total number of suspected cases up to 18 and the related deaths up to seven. Total confirmed Ebola cases remains stable at two, though additional samples have been sent to the Bernhard-Nocht Institut of Tropical Medicine laboratory in Guékédou, Guinea.¹
- The one additional death reflects that of the woman who tested positive for the Ebola virus, and who travelled from Lofa County to Margibi County, via Montserrado County, earlier this week. The woman was being treated at the recently established isolation unit of Duside Hospital at Firestone Rubber Plantation. It will be recalled that this woman contracted Ebola in Lofa County from her sister, who also tested positive for the virus and died from the disease.
- The Ebola Emergency Coordinator for MSF in Guinea assisted in the burial of the woman at Duside Hospital to ensure proper procedures were followed.
- The four new cases include the following:
  - A health worker who treated the original woman who tested positive for Ebola before passing away in Foya, Lofa County.
  - The one-year-old son of the woman who recently died at Duside Hospital in Margibi County.
  - The motorbike rider who transported the woman who died at Duside Hospital from her home in Margibi County to the hospital. The location of the motorbike rider was unknown at the time of the meeting, classifying him as a runaway.
  - A three-year-old boy hospitalized in Sanniquellie, Nimba County, who reportedly recently travelled to Liberia from Guinea. Note that as of now, the child is only presenting with fever, indicating may not have Ebola.
- A total of 21 specimens have been collected for testing to date. Several of these specimens are en route to Guinea for testing.
  - The Ebola Emergency Coordinator for MSF in Guinea is departing for Guinea today. While on the ground, the representative assisted in a training of 60 health workers from Nimba, Bong and Margibi Counties in Kakata, Margibi County and visited the Duside Hospital at Firestone Rubber Plantation and made suggestions for improvement of its isolation unit.

¹ According to an MSF press release dated 3 April, the two laboratories in Guinea are run by two different institutions: the one in Conakry is run by Institut Pasteur, while the one in Guékédou is run by the Bernhard-Nocht Institut of Tropical Medicine.
- Oversaw the burial of the additional Ebola-related death at Duside Hospital.
- Distributed one Ebola kit for use by the MoHSW and partners in managing an isolation unit.
- With the support of ECHO, MSF reiterated its plan to dispatch additional experts as well as Ebola kits from Europe, with the kits likely to arrive on Sunday.

**BUDGET AND DONOR SUPPORT:**
- The MoHSW has updated its original US$ 1.2 million Ebola emergency response budget reflecting contributions provided by partners to date.
- One major gap in the existing mapping is in centralizing information on partner support provided directly at the county-level. The MoHSW has requested that partners working at the county-level share updates with them.
- Regarding funding provided to date:
  - The Ministry of Finance has released $US 250,000 to support the government’s Ebola response budget.
  - The Mano River Union (MRU) has provided US$ 10,000 in support (as previously reported).
  - The EU/ECHO will use a portion of the 800,000 EURO earmarked for Ebola response in the sub-region to assist in bringing MSF to Liberia (as previously reported). The specifics on the amount that will be allocated to Liberia are under discussion.
- Regarding gaps in specific areas of activity/related budget lines, the MoHSW highlighted a need for more support for contact tracing, isolation units and interpersonal communications (IPC).

**INFORMATION AND REFERRAL MANAGEMENT:**
- UNMIL Radio will be producing a live talk show on Ebola between 12:10 and 12:40 PM each day. The national radio station of Liberia, ELBC, will be airing the shows simultaneously to maximize listenership. The talk shows will feature MoHSW staff as well as experts on Ebola.
- The MoHSW continues to issue regular press releases and to engage with media, including UNMIL Radio, to increase awareness and allay fears of the population.

**COORDINATION WITH COUNTY HEALTH TEAMS, GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND OTHER MINISTRIES:**
- In terms of national-level coordination:
  - An emergency Cabinet meeting was held on 1 and 2 April to discuss the Ebola outbreak.
  - The Minister and Deputy Minister of Health briefed the Legislature earlier this week (as previously reported).
- In terms of county-level coordination:
  - Response plans have been developed for Montserrado County and Foya District of Lofa County.
  - Four additional national MoHSW officers were deployed to Margibi County to assist in response.
  - ArcelorMittal has reportedly flown in an expert to assist the County Health Team in Nimba.
  - The MoHSW reports it has continued to deliver supplies to County Health Teams (including supplies from partners like UNICEF).
- With support from WHO and INGOs, a Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop was held in Lofa County on Ebola response for 40 health workers and Environmental Health Technicians (EHTs) for two districts (Voinjama and Kolahun). *(Source: Global Communities.)*
- Despite the aforementioned efforts, the MoHSW recognizes that overall coordination remains weak, especially at the county level.

**COORDINATION WITH PARTNERS:**
- The partner mapping presented by the MoHSW this morning reported that the following partner are supporting the below areas of intervention (note that the MoHSW admitted this list is not comprehensive and is awaiting further details from partners on the support they have provided to date, especially those partners in the field):
  - Technical Assistance:
    - Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), WHO, CDC, MSF (with support from the EU/ECHO) and ArcelorMittal
  - WASH:
    - UNICEF, WHO, Save the Children and Liberian National Red Cross
  - Health Promotion:
    - UNICEF, UNFPA, Plan-Liberia
Case Management and Surveillance:

- MSF, WHO, the Liberian National Red Cross, UNHCR, Save the Children and UNICEF

Additional support is coming from the following groups, particularly at the county-level, though the MoHSW is still mapping their involvement:

- UNMIL, notably through the Public Information Office (PIO), which is airing regular programmes on Ebola.
- Samaritan’s Purse, Global Communities/CHF International, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Population Services International (PSI), BRAC, Pentecostal Mission Unlimited (PMU), Liberia Teacher Training Program (LTTP).
- Tiyatien/Last Mile Health and Concern Worldwide have also indicated readiness to provide support.

The 50 personal protective equipment (PPE) kits provided to the MoHSW by the Liberian National Red Cross were insufficient for use in Ebola isolation units. However, they were complete enough for use by health workers in clinics and are being utilized accordingly.

MSF has provided a possible tool for use in contact tracing, an area that has been identified as facing a critical gap in support by the MoHSW.

MSF suggested that the MoHSW request the CDC provide support to establish an Ebola testing facility here in Liberia.

UNICEF Response

HEALTH AND COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT (C4D):

- UNICEF’s C4D Specialist continued to play a leading role on the Health Promotion Committee of the NTF, particularly in the area of Emergency Communications.

  Multimedia efforts are ongoing:

  - Yesterday, UNICEF and other Committee members met with UNMIL, which will produce the aforementioned daily Ebola radio programme, and has also finalized two posters on Ebola, which were developed with the assistance of UNICEF and the Health Promotion Committee.
  - Additional Ebola spot messages and dramas are being finalized in five additional local Liberian languages (Kpelleh, Bassa, Mano, Gio and Vai).
  - 30 CDs with Ebola dramas and spot messages were distributed in five local languages (Gbandi, Mende, Lorma, Mandingo and Kissi).

  Interpersonal Communications (IPC) work has been ramped up:

  - General Community Health Volunteers (gCHVs) have been increasingly engaged for IPC efforts in rural areas/counties outside Montserrado and Margibi.
  - Local leaders have also successfully been engaged, including through the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL).

WASH:

- UNICEF continues to engage closely with the MoHSW, including through the WASH Committee of the NTF, to ensure adequate WASH support. Since yesterday, no further material commitments have been made. UNICEF is working to take stock of support provided to date, existing WASH material reserves and the government’s stated needs regarding WASH to finalize allocations.

UNICEF Funding Needs:

UNICEF’s funding requirement at the moment is estimated at $450,000 for WASH, Health and Communication for Development activities. This figure is likely to be revised in coming days.

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