UNICEF-Liberia
Ebola Virus Outbreak: SitRep #11
7 April 2014

Key Points

- 21 suspected and probable Ebola cases and 10 Ebola-related deaths have been reported to date.
- Total number of Ebola confirmed cases in Liberia stand at 5 as of today.
- UNMIL Radio and the Liberian Broadcasting System began airing its daily, 30-minute talk show on Ebola today.
- The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) updated its Ebola action plan and related response budget, which now stands at US$2.17 million.
- Foya District, Lofa County, remains the epicentre of the Ebola outbreak in Liberia. However Lofa, Bong, Nimba, Margibi and Montserrado are all counties of high concern/focus.
- The MoHSW established a press room at its main office in Congotown, Monrovia, to handle inquiries.
- Two technical staff from MSF are due to arrive in Liberia today to assist in the Ebola response, a technical staffer from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies arrived over the weekend, and the expert on Ebola being sponsored by ArcelorMittal attended today’s meeting of the National Task Force (NTF) on Health Emergencies.
- UNICEF continues to work closely with the MoHSW to improve Ebola awareness via mass media and interpersonal communications initiatives, and to support case management and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) efforts.

Situation Overview

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

SURVEILLANCE, VERIFICATION AND CASE MANAGEMENT:

- Three new suspected and probable cases of Ebola were reported since Friday (4 April), including two in Lofa and one in Montserrado Counties. All three patients were adults (over 18) and all three died. This brings the total number of suspected and probable Ebola cases up to 21 and the total related deaths up to 10.
- Of the 10 Ebola-related deaths, seven were reported in Lofa County and one each were reported in Margibi, Bong and Montserrado Counties.
- Three additional samples tested positive for Ebola in laboratories in Guinea, bringing the total number of confirmed Ebola cases in Liberia up to five. At least four of the positive samples were taken from patients in Foya, Lofa County.
- Foya District, Lofa County, remains the epicentre of the Ebola outbreak in Liberia, though Lofa, Bong, Nimba, Margibi and Montserrado remain counties of high focus/concern for the MoHSW. Grand Cape Mount (due to its shared border with Sierra Leone) and Gbarpolu (due to its proximity to Lofa) were also mentioned as focus counties, including under the revised MoHSW budget/action plan.
- “Patient #1” – the woman who died in Foya, Lofa County, in mid- to late March, and whose sample was among the first two to test positive for Ebola – has been linked to at least five suspected and probable cases and three Ebola-related deaths in Lofa, Montserrado and Margibi.¹
  - Lofa:
    - A female relative of Patient #1, who also died.
    - Two health workers, at least one of whom died.
  - Montserrado/Margibi:
    - A second female relative of Patient #1 who travelled to Firestone Rubber Plantation, Margibi County, and died at Duside Hospital last week. This woman also tested positive for Ebola.

¹ This list reflects only the information made available by the MoHSW at the NTF meeting today and may not be complete.
The one-year-old son of the woman who died at Duside Hospital. The toddler is reportedly doing better as of today, as is the rest of the family (husband and two more children).

A motorbike rider who transported the woman who died at Duside Hospital to a local clinic. As of 9 AM this morning, the MoHSW was still trying to locate this motorbiker.²

The MoHSW is directing all hospitals in Montserrado County and counties bordering Guinea to identify isolation rooms and possible areas for use as isolation units. The cholera clinic at JFK Medical Center in Monrovia is being renovated for use as an Ebola isolation unit, and a room has been identified for examinations of all patients suspected to have Ebola.

BUDGET AND DONOR SUPPORT:

- The MoHSW updated the Ebola action plan and related response budget, which now totals US$2.1 million. The MoHSW promised to circulate both documents to NTF members by tomorrow.
- The revised budget reflects input received from MSF and other partners on various technical aspects of containing the Ebola outbreak, including, for example, the need to allocate resources to support a burial team/teams for Ebola-related deaths.
- The MoHSW again highlighted case finding and contact tracing as areas in need of considerable additional support.

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL MANAGEMENT:

- The MoHSW and the WHO have identified denial of the Ebola outbreak by some segments of the population as a major concern.
- The MoHSW dispelled reports that a person who travelled from Liberia to US has come down with Ebola, informing the NTF that the individual tested positive for Lassa fever while assuring the patient is being monitored and the case followed-up.
- The MoHSW established a press room in its main building in Congotown, Monrovia, and will hold a daily press briefing. The MoHSW also plans to provide an orientation on Ebola to journalists.
- UNMIL Radio began airing its daily 30-minute talk show on Ebola today from 12:10 to 12:40 PM. The talk show was approved by the MoHSW and was developed together with the Health Promotion-Emergency Communications Committee of the NTF. It will be simultaneously broadcast by the Liberia Broadcasting System (LBS). Other radio stations are also being asked to broadcast the program.

COORDINATION WITH COUNTY HEALTH TEAMS, GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND OTHER MINISTRIES:

- During the meetings held over the weekend, the MoHSW and its partners on the Case Management and Surveillance Committee of the NTF completed a form for use in contract tracing. Several County Health Teams (CHTs) were reportedly trained on how to use the form, which will in turn be utilized by general Community Health Volunteers (gCHV) in the counties.
- The head of the Cabinet met with the MoHSW yesterday (6 April) to request that additional communications materials be produced in simple Liberian English. The Health Promotion-Emergency Communications Committee of the NTF will finalize such a document today.
- Daily Task Force meetings are reportedly being held by the County Superintendents in Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Lofa, Bong, Margibi and Nimba; and training of health staff is reportedly ongoing in Montserrado, Lofa, Margibi and Bong Counties.

COORDINATION WITH PARTNERS:

- In partnership with the MoHSW, UNICEF and the WHO, UNMIL has increased its support to Health Promotion-Emergency Communications efforts by signing contracts with community outreach firms to improve interpersonal communications (IPC).
- Following the departure last Friday of the Ebola Emergency Coordinator for MSF-Guinea, two new MSF experts will arrive in Liberia today to provide technical assistance to the MoHSW, especially in the areas of case management and surveillance. As previously reported, the team will bring two full

² The MoHSW now believes there were two motorbike riders who transported the woman who died at Duside Hospital to and from a local clinic, prior to her being admitted at Duside Hospital. One of these motorbike riders has been located and is being followed-up by the surveillance team. The second reportedly fled Margibi to Bomi County. The MoHSW has engage with the Liberian National Police (LNP) to assist in locating him.
Ebola kits with them, each of which contains over 200 items needed for the response. They are expected to join the WHO team already in place in Foya, Lofa County.

- ArcelorMittal also informed that the Ebola specialist they have flown in from South Africa is available to assist the MoHSW, and a technical assistant from the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) recently arrived in the country to provide such support.

- In addition to the incoming MSF team, the ArcelorMittal-sponsored specialist and the IFRC expert, the MoHSW is receiving technical assistance from the WHO, Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) and the US Center for Disease Control (CDC).

- As promised, PPE kits from WHO stocks in Ghana arrived in Liberia on Friday (4 April). The kits and additional WHO staff were dispatched to Foya, Lofa County, to assist the team already in place there.

- The US government may provide additional support to the MoHSW via an existing presence in Kenema, Sierra Leone. The extension of such support is pending a formal WHO request. In the meantime, this facility has offered to accept Ebola samples for testing.

- The Liberian National Red Cross has identified 50 volunteers to assist the MoHSW with contact tracing and surveillance in Lofa County, and another 20 to assist in Bong, Nimba, Magribi and Montserrado.

- Lofa County is being covered by the following partners: Samaritan’s Purse (Foya District, and possibly Vahun District); Global Communities/CHF International (Voinjama and Kolahun Districts); and Concern Worldwide and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) (Salayea and Zorzor Districts).

- Save the Children has reached out to community radio stations with which it works in Nimba, Magribi and Bong Counties, to improve communications there.

- Rebuilding Basic Health Services (RBHS) has provided two vehicles and stationery to support coordination and transportation of materials in Nimba County.

- UNFPA, UNHCR, USAID, Plan-Liberia, Population Services International (PSI), BRAC, Pentecostal Mission Unlimited (PMU) and Liberia Teacher Training Program (LTTP) also continue to provide support.

**UNICEF Response**

**HEALTH AND COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT (C4D):**

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

- The MoHSW, UNICEF and the WHO worked with UNMIL to improve IPC efforts. As an outcome, UNMIL agreed to extend its Emergency Communications support beyond UNMIL Radio by contracting community outreach firms to increase IPC.

- Meanwhile, the Health Promotion-Emergency Communications Committee has finalized two Ebola posters on symptoms and prevention, and a partner has committed to printing 10,000 copies of each.

- Plan-Liberia has indicated it will print additional Ebola brochures, which were developed by UNICEF and approved by the MoHSW. It will be recalled that 30,000 brochures have been printed and distributed to date. UNICEF is asking all partners to print as many of these brochures, which were recently revised, as possible, and is sending out soft copies.

**WASH:**

- UNICEF continues to engage closely on the WASH Team of the NTF and will join a planning meeting of the all WASH actors tomorrow, 8 April.

**UNICEF Funding Needs:**

- UNICEF’s funding requirement at the moment is estimated at US$450,000 for WASH, Health and C4D activities. This figure is likely to be revised in coming days.

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