UNICEF-Liberia
Ebola Virus Disease: SitRep #15
14 April 2014

Key Points

- The total number of suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases is 26, including 13 Ebola-related deaths, for a case fatality rate of 50%.
- The total number of confirmed Ebola cases is six.
- Foya, Lofa County, remains the epicentre of the Ebola outbreak. However, suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases have been reported in Lofa (10), Margibi (6), Bong (5), Nimba (3), Montserrado (1) and Grand Cape Mount (1) Counties.
- With US-government support, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) has established an Ebola-testing facility within the National Reference Lab.
- As of today, UNICEF has provided emergency water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies; donated tents and sheeting for establishment of isolation units; and designed, printed and disseminated communications for development (C4D) materials to support the Ebola response. UNICEF has also committed to providing additional WASH supplies to Lofa County for the isolation unit in Foya, and to scaling up C4D efforts in Margibi and Montserrado Counties.
- UNICEF recently hired two communications consultants and contracted a social mobilization firm to raise awareness and improve coordination in Lofa County; and currently has 10 staff working half- to full-time on its Ebola response efforts.
- UNICEF’s total, estimated funding requirement for Ebola-related Health, C4D and WASH interventions is around US$480,000 for the next three months, and the estimated funding gap is US$345,000.

Situation Overview

- Since 10 April, the total number of suspected, probable and confirmed cases of Ebola has risen to 26 while total Ebola-related deaths have risen to 13.1 The case fatality rate is 50%.
  - The additional case was identified in Gbarnga, Bong County, where the patient is reportedly responding well to treatment.
  - The additional death was that of the second woman who travelled from Foya, Lofa County, to Firestone Rubber Plantation, Margibi County.2 She died last week at her relatives’ home. The family refused to hand the body over to the County Health Team (CHT) and instead buried the corpse themselves, generating a number of new contacts.
- The sample taken from the woman who recently died in Margibi County tested positive for Ebola. The total confirmed Ebola cases thus stands at six.
- To date, suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases have been reported in Lofa (10), Margibi (6), Bong (5), Nimba (3), Montserrado (1) and Grand Cape Mount (1) Counties.
- Foya, Lofa County, remains the epicentre of the Ebola outbreak and the county with the highest number of related deaths (9). However, with the recent death of a confirmed case near Firestone Rubber Plantation – as well as the contacts that were generated from that case and an earlier confirmed case – Margibi County has risen to the fore as the second highest priority county for the MoHSW.
- An interagency team from the United States comprised of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Department of Defense (DoD) assisted the MoHSW in establishing an Ebola testing facility at the National Reference Lab near Roberts International Airport, Margibi County.3 The lab plans to begin testing suspected Ebola samples from within Liberia as of tomorrow (15 April). Establishment of a second lab in Foya is still under discussion.

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1 This includes the two persons who were diagnosed in Liberia but died in Guinea early in the outbreak.
2 The first woman travelled from Foya to Firestone on the evening of 29 March. She also tested positive for Ebola and died at Duside Hospital in early April. It will be recalled that this woman is a relative of one of the first confirmed Ebola victims in Foya, Lofa County, who is also deceased.
3 As indicated in the SitRep of 10 April, the national lab is affiliated with the Liberia Institute of Biomedical Research (LIBR).
UNICEF Response

In response to the MoHSW’s urgent request for additional support in Margibi County, UNICEF has committed to expanding its interventions there and is in discussion with the Ministry regarding specific activities, including scaled up C4D efforts. Meanwhile, through its Communications and Child Survival Sections, UNICEF continues to play key roles on the Health Promotion and WASH Committees of the National Task Force (NTF) on Health Emergencies.

COMMUNICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT (C4D):
- UNICEF’s two new communications consultant hired to assist with the Ebola response will be deployed to Lofa County soon. One will be based in Foya and the other in Voinjama.
- The social mobilization firm contracted by UNICEF to deepen interpersonal communications (IPC) efforts in Lofa County will also be deployed this week. The 10-member team will break down to cover the following districts as follows: Foya (4), Voinjama (2), Kolahun (2), and Zorzor (2). They will work with religious and traditional leaders, students, cross-border traders, transport unions and other key community members and structures.
- UNICEF is developing two new school and community-friendly posters on Ebola for use in all social mobilization/C4D activities, including those of the newly contracted communications consultants and the 10-person social mobilization team. The posters build upon existing materials with refined imagery and messaging on symptoms and prevention of Ebola.
- UNICEF has provided input for two new training packages: the first is designed for health workers and focuses on minimizing the risk of infection; it will be rolled out in Lofa this week and will target multiple sectors. The second is designed for those working in the areas of social mobilization and health education; it will be finalized today.
- All UNICEF-supported mass media activities are ongoing, including work with local community radio stations and key national stations.

WASH:
- Yesterday (13 April), UNICEF delivered 90 kg of chlorine to Voinjama Hospital in Lofa County.
- UNICEF has also offered additional material support to the MoHSW for the isolation unit at Foya Hospital, Lofa County. The offer follows an urgent request from MSF for additional plastic sheeting, sprayers and other supplies for the unit.
- The UNICEF-supported MoHSW-led trainings for staff at health facilities in Nimba and Bong Counties are expected to begin shortly. It will be recalled that, during a two-day meeting of the NTF WASH Committee last week, UNICEF pledged US$8,000 to the MoHSW to support trainings for officers in charge, cleaners and environmental technicians in both counties. The MoHSW is dividing the districts in each county with Global Communities/CHF International, which is also providing trainings.

UNICEF Funding Needs:
- UNICEF’s total, estimated funding requirement for Ebola-related Health, C4D and WASH interventions remains US$480,000 for the next three months, and the estimated gap remains US$345,000.

National Task Force Updates

BUDGET AND DONOR SUPPORT:
- The MoHSW’s three-month Ebola response budget still stands at US$2.5 million. It covers all 15 counties in Liberia, but prioritizes Lofa, Bong, Nimba, Margibi, Montserrado and Grand Cape Mount. The MoHSW also intends to scale up efforts in Gbarpolu, if/when possible. The Ministry of Finance has appropriated US$250,000 for the budget.

SURVEILLANCE, VERIFICATION AND LABORATORY
- The US-supported Ebola testing facility at the National Reference Lab is running trial tests on stock samples, and is expected to begin accepting in-country samples as of tomorrow. This will significantly enhance the MoHSW’s ability to swiftly test samples as they are collected, instead of sending them to Guinea for analysis. The lab is also equipped to test for Lassa fever.
- General Community Health Volunteers (gCHVs) and Liberian National Red Cross volunteers have been mobilized in Lofa County for case tracing, which will enhance surveillance.
The traditional burial of the recently deceased (confirmed) Ebola victim in Margibi County is of utmost concern to the MoHSW, as it underscores the need for additional support for contact tracing, awareness, etc. To assist, UNICEF offered to expand C4D efforts in Margibi and Montserrado Counties.

CASE MANAGEMENT AND PSYCHOSOCIAL:

- An isolation unit that meets international agency standards is being constructed at Foya Hospital and is expected to be operational by tomorrow. Hospital staff are also being trained to work in the unit. However, MSF has identified lack of case management supplies, such as plastic sheeting and sprayers, as a major challenge for the unit. UNICEF offered to provide such support.
- The cholera unit at JFK Medical Center in Monrovia, Montserrado County, is being converted into an isolation unit. In the meantime, a temporary space has been identified for isolation of Ebola cases.
- The isolation unit at Firestone’s Duside Hospital in Margibi County has undergone renovations to meet international agency standards.
- The Psychosocial Committee plans to go to Duside Hospital to speak with the nurse who treated the woman who recently died there, as well as to the woman’s family who buried her body themselves. Committee members also plan to deploy today to Foya, Lofa County, to support local health facilities.

SOCIAL MOBILIZATION:

- In addition to the UNICEF C4D activities described above, partners have committed to print an additional 15,000 copies of the Ebola brochures/related materials developed by the MoHSW, UNICEF, the WHO and other partners.
- UNMIL’s 10-day outreach to schools and communities in all 15 counties will wrap up this week.

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL MANAGEMENT:

- The MoHSW remains the authority on Ebola statistics and continues to manage information via several channels and mechanisms, including: regular SitReps; periodic press releases; daily press briefings; appearances on national radio and the UNMIL Radio-produced daily Ebola talk show; maintenance of Ebola Hotlines; and support for the press situation room at the Ministry HQ in Congotown, Monrovia.

COORDINATION WITH CHTS, GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND OTHER MINISTRIES:

- At the national-level, the various Committees of the NTF are meeting daily and often on weekends. Coordination meetings are also taking place on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
- At the county-level, daily Task Force meetings are reportedly occurring in Lofa, Bong, Nimba, Margibi, Montserrado and Grand Cape Mount Counties, under the leadership of the respective County Superintendents.

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