

UNICEF-Liberia

Ebola Virus Disease: SitRep #16

16 April 2014

Key Points

- One additional suspected case of Ebola was reported in Saclapea, Nimba County, raising the total number of suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases to 27, including 13 Ebola-related deaths, for a case fatality rate of 48%.
- The total number of confirmed Ebola cases stands at 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 (4), Montserrado (1) and Grand Cape Mount (1) Counties.
- The National Reference Lab tested its first Ebola sample yesterday.
- UNICEF deployed two field coordinators and a 10 person team specialized in interpersonal communications to Lofa County, where they will work with communities to increase awareness of Ebola.
- With logistical support from Samaritan's Purse, UNICEF air-lifted urgently needed tarps, sprayers, chlorine and other supplies to Lofa County, for use in completing the isolation unit at Foya Hospital. The agency will air-lift additional supplies later this week.
- UNICEF's estimated funding requirement for Ebola-related C4D, Health and WASH interventions currently stands at approximately US\$500,000 for the period from 21 March to 21 June. The estimated funding gap is US\$370,000.

Situation Overview

- Since 14 April, the total number of suspected, probable and confirmed cases of Ebola has risen to 27 while total Ebola-related deaths remains steady at 13.¹ The case fatality rate is 48%. The additional (suspected) case was identified in Saclapea, Nimba County.
- The total confirmed Ebola cases stands at six.
- To date, suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases have been reported in Lofa (10), Margibi (6), Bong (5), Nimba (4), Montserrado (1) and Grand Cape Mount (1) Counties.
- Lofa County remains the epicentre of the Ebola outbreak, particularly Foya District. Lofa is also the county with the highest numbers of reported suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases (10) and Ebola-related deaths (9). All six of the confirmed Ebola cases also originated in Lofa, though two of these patients travelled to Margibi County after contracting the virus.
- The National Reference Lab (NRL)² in Margibi County ran its first test on a sample collected in-country. The sample, which came from Margibi County, tested negative for Ebola. The NRL Ebola testing facility is expected to be commissioned today by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW). Its operations will significantly increase the speed at which Ebola samples can be tested, which will in turn improve data on suspected, probable and confirmed cases.
- The MoHSW has revised the Terms of Reference for the National Task Force (NTF) on Health Emergencies and has redefined its component committees to include: Coordination, Logistics (which is also in charge of information sharing), Case Management, Epidemiology and Laboratory, Social Mobilization and Psychosocial Support.

UNICEF Response

Through its Communications and Child Survival Sections, UNICEF continues to provide critical communications for development (C4D); water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and health sector support to the national Ebola response. This work is performed in coordination with the relevant national committees and working groups: namely the Social Mobilization Committee of the NTF, which was

¹ This includes the two persons who were diagnosed in Liberia but died in Guinea early in the outbreak.

² It will be recalled that the Ebola testing facility at the NRL is being supported by 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).

previously referred to as the Health Promotion Committee; the Case Management Committee of the NTF; and the WASH Working Group. Updates on specific UNICEF activities include the following:

COMMUNICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT (C4D):

- As a member of the Social Mobilization Committee of the NTF, UNICEF assisted in finalizing the draft national communications strategy for the Ebola response. This national strategy will also guide UNICEF's work.
- UNICEF deployed the two field coordinators and the 10 person team contracted from the interpersonal communications (IPC) firm to Lofa County. The coordinators were deployed yesterday (15 April), while the IPC team left today.
 - The coordinators will be based in Foya, the epicentre of the outbreak, and Voinjama, the county capital. Together with the County Health Team (CHT) and partner organizations, they will continue the ongoing work with the general Community Health Volunteers (gCHVs) to raise awareness and increase understanding of Ebola at the community-level. They will also enhance support to local community radio stations in Lofa County to ensure that (1) Ebola messages are being regularly broadcast, and (2) the stations have the support needed (e.g., fuel for generators) to stay on air as long as possible. The coordinators will work closely with the Lofa CHT and will be expected to send daily reports to the UNICEF Monrovia office.
 - The 10 person IPC team will be divided between the following district capitals: Foya (4), Voinjama (2), Kolahun (2), and Zorzor (2). They will focus on these major towns, as well as nearby urban and peri-urban areas.
 - Both the coordinators and the IPC team will target schools, churches, mosques and marketplaces; and will liaise with traditional leaders, healers and other pivotal community members. The idea is to empower individual Liberians with the knowledge, resources and health facility contacts to keep Ebola from ravaging their communities.
- UNICEF finalized the two school and community-friendly posters on Ebola, as well as a flip chart for use by the IPC team in their outreach in Lofa County.
- All UNICEF-supported mass media activities are ongoing, including work with local community radio stations and key national stations.

CHILD SURVIVAL (WASH AND HEALTH):

- On 16 April, with the logistical support of Samaritan's Purse, UNICEF air-lifted a new batch of urgently needed supplies of chlorine, plastic tarpaulins, sprayers and other materials to Lofa, where MSF is providing support for emergency health services at the isolation unit in Foya Hospital. The delivery came a day after MSF requested this support at the NTF meeting on 15 April.
- By the end of the week, UNICEF will deliver additional supplies requested by MSF for the isolation unit in Foya, including mattresses and blankets.

UNICEF Funding Needs:

- UNICEF's estimated funding requirement for Ebola-related C4D, Health and WASH interventions currently stands at approximately US\$500,000. This budget covers the period from 21 March to 21 June. Currently, the agency has received US\$130,000 in funding, leaving a gap of US\$370,000. Fundraising to replenish these funds is ongoing.

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.
- The NTF committed to providing a mapping of partners' support provided to date at the next NTF meeting on Friday, 18 April.

LABORATORY AND EPIDEMIOLOGY:

- The establishment of the Ebola testing facility at the NRL has already helped screen alleged cases of Ebola. As mentioned in the overview, one sample from Margibi was tested at the center, and the results were negative, ruling out the virus.

- Volunteers from the Liberian National Red Cross are being tapped to help with surveillance in Montserrado and Margibi Counties, where the MoHSW previously reported it needs urgent support.

CASE MANAGEMENT AND PSYCHOSOCIAL:

- With the delivery of the supplies from UNICEF, the isolation unit at Foya Hospital in Lofa County is expected to be completed by the end of the week.
- Two additional MSF staff from Guékédou, Guinea, arrived in Lofa, Liberia, to assist the existing MSF team there.
- With the guidance of WHO and MSF, the MoHSW has revised the case definition of Ebola, which will be finalized and sent out to all health officers and facilities.
- The Case Management Committee led a training today for MoHSW staff who will go to Foya Hospital in Lofa County; Firestone Duside Hospital in Margibi County; and ELWA Hospital and JFK Medical Center in Montserrado County. The MoHSW staff will focus on isolation of cases, in particular.
- MSF remains concerned about cross-border transmission of Ebola, especially possible transmission during market days.

SOCIAL MOBILIZATION:

- See aforementioned UNICEF Response/C4D updates.

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.
- The next joint MoHSW-Ministry of Culture and Information (MICAT) press conference is scheduled for tomorrow, 17 April.

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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