SIERRA LEONE FLASH FLOODS 2017
Addressing Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) needs of affected communities
On 14 August 2017, the capital of Sierra Leone was hit by a mudslide and flash floods due to torrential rainfalls. The mudslide, which occurred in the Regent community of Freetown, left hundreds of houses buried under rubble with around 500 people dead, 600 declared missing and other 6,000 affected (Office of National Security data).

A number of water sources in affected communities were contaminated due to the floods and the availability of clean drinking water remains a concern. An outbreak of waterborne diseases due to contamination of water sources and inadequate health services poses a serious risk. Furthermore, the lack of adequate shelter and WASH facilities leaves people at risk of diarrheal diseases, malaria and respiratory tract infection, especially vulnerable groups such as children under five and Pregnant and Lactating Women. There is a continuous need for the provision of clean and safe drinking water, access to appropriate sanitation, provision of hygiene kits and hygiene promotion to prevent the outbreak of waterborne diseases and to avoid deterioration in the public health situation.

**ACTION AGAINST HUNGER’S RESPONSE**

After the floods started, Action Against Hunger, as part of Freetown WASH Consortium, has done a rapid needs assessment and mobilized resources for the emergency response to support the victims of the floods in several communities. Action Against Hunger installed 8 water tanks (5,000 litres each) with a total of 11 water points for water trucking in Culvert, Water Street Wellington, Bottom Oku Wellington and Pa-Muronkoh Calaba Town. The organisation is trucking 40,000 litres of water per day, reaching 2667 people on a daily basis. Action Against Hunger is also distributing aqua tabs to the people to ensure the safety standards of the drinking water provided. Action Against Hunger staff, Disaster Management Volunteers (DMV) as well as Community Health Workers (CHW) conducted demonstrations of using these aqua tabs for water treatment in the communities.

In addition, Action Against Hunger has distributed hygiene kits, including Freetown WASH Consortium contingency stock, to 200 households in the Culvert community. In order to prevent spreading of diseases, with the help of DMV and CHW, Action Against Hunger is conducting hygiene promotion in Culvert, Water Street (Wellington), Bottom Oku (Wellington) and Pa-Muronkoh (Calaba Town) communities.
Culvert community is located at the foot of the Bormeh dumpsite – the largest dumpsite in the eastern part of Freetown. Culvert, as one of the communities severely hit by the flash floods, had homes flooded and properties completely or partially destroyed and washed away.

Mary Bangura is the head of a household consisting of five people. Mary’s home was one of many that was flooded following the August 14th rains. Mary has lost all her properties and she and her dependents are staying with neighbors around the community as they wait for the water level to go down before they could move back into their home. However, Mary’s greatest worry now is the health situation of her family.

“Getting safe drinking water has been our greatest challenge. I couldn’t allow any of my family members to drink from the well that we have in this community. I am afraid if we do this, we might catch cholera or other sicknesses

Instead we’ve been going far off to get safe water and we have to buy it” – says Mary.

She has been buying package water for domestic consumption since the floods occurred. This creates an additional financial strain, because as a single mother, Mary has to work hard to be able to afford to provide for her family.

In order to respond to the basic water, hygiene and sanitation needs of the affected communities, Action Against Hunger constructed four water kiosks in Culvert community with two water points to provide safe drinking water. The four water kiosks have a capacity of 20 000 liters of water and are being refilled on a daily basis.

“Today I am happy and I believe the entire community is happy seeing we have clean water running! It is now safe to drink, very close to our home and free of cost. I do not have to worry about my children getting sick or about not having enough money to buy drinking water”, says Mary.
ADDRESSING THE HYGIENE SITUATION OF FLOOD VICTIMS

Aminata Sesay is another resident of Culvert community. She and her husband have eight dependents, but all ten of them became homeless due to the floods. They are currently residing in a public school, which became one of the officially established shelters.

“I have many children and since we lost our home, we've all been staying in this school. I am worried for my children and I am worried about not being able to provide them with safe drinking water. We have been buying water for drinking, but I don't know how long we would be able to continue doing this” – says Aminata.

The hygiene and sanitation conditions in the affected communities need to be responded to. The flash floods swept away sanitary facilities and also impaired access to proper hygiene services, especially amongst people that lost their homes.

During the first days of Action Against Hunger's emergency response, Aminata's household was one of 200 households reached with hygiene kits including: water buckets, aquatabs, bathing soap, powdered laundry soap, bowls, sanitary pads, bleach and jerry cans.

Following these distributions, Action Against Hunger has trained and supported 50 disaster management volunteers and 30 Community Health Workers to carry out house-to-house hygiene promotion to create awareness on acute watery diseases in these communities, and holding Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) at the various water points.

Expressing her happiness with the assistance provided, Aminata added:

"With all the dirt from the dumpsite washed into our wells, our hygiene situation is difficult to maintain. I am so happy to receive clean water and hygiene items"
Freetown WASH Consortium comprising of Action Against Hunger, Concern Worldwide, Oxfam GB, and Save the Children has been working in Sierra Leone since 2010 to decrease mortality and morbidity stemming from preventable WASH-related causes in Western Area Urban and Western Area Rural through its water, sanitation and hygiene promotion interventions. Presently the Consortium is responding to meet immediate WASH needs of 500 flood affected households in Freetown.