

UNICEF-Liberia Ebola Virus Disease: SitRep #20 2 May 2014

Key Points

- Based on a retrospective analysis of the data, the National Task Force (NTF) on Health Emergencies has removed 22 suspected Ebola cases from the official statistics. As a result, the total number of suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases now stands at 13 (six confirmed, two probable and five suspected).
- The total number of Ebola-related deaths remains steady at 11, though this figure may change upon further analysis.
- Foya, Lofa County, remains the epicentre of the Ebola epidemic, although suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases have been reported in Lofa (7), Nimba (2), Margibi (2), Bong (1) and Montserrado (1) Counties.
- Six of the eight confirmed and probable Ebola cases reported to date were female, and all eight were over the age of 18. The contacts generated by these cases have included children.
- The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) and its partners continue to emphasize the need to remain heavily engaged on Ebola response activities at the Liberia-Guinea border in Lofa County, with particular focus on Foya District. This is based on the fact that new Ebola cases continue to be received by health centers in Guéckédou, Guinea, which borders Lofa.
- Earlier this week, UNICEF provided the additional requested materials to Foya Hospital in Lofa County and JFK Medical Center in Monrovia, Montserrado County. The materials were used to complete the isolation units at both facilities, and included a generator for Foya.
- The two UNICEF field coordinators and the 10-member interpersonal communication (IPC) team has continued to raise awareness of Ebola in Lofa County via visits to border towns, mosques, churches, marketplaces and schools, as well as meetings with key local and traditional leaders. A major focus of their work has been identifying key misconceptions about the disease, which UNICEF and the Social Mobilization Committee of the NTF are now using to develop targeted behaviour change messages.
- UNICEF's estimated funding requirement for Ebola-related Communications for Development (C4D), Health and WASH interventions stands at approximately US\$500,000 for the period from 21 March to 21 June. The current funding gap is US\$187,000.

Situation Overview

- With technical assistance from the US Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the WHO, the MoHSW has completed an initial review of the Ebola statistics, during which all suspected Ebola cases reported to date were analysed against specific reclassification criteria. This led to the exclusion of 22 suspected Ebola cases from the official case total, which stood at 35 as of 29 April.
- With the exclusion of the cases, as of today, the total number of suspected, probable and confirmed Ebola cases stands at 13, including six confirmed, two probable and five suspected.
 - Confirmed Ebola cases have been reported in Lofa (4) and Margibi (2) Counties.
 - Probable Ebola cases have been reported in Lofa County (2).
 - Suspected Ebola cases have been reported in Nimba (2), Bong (1), Lofa (1) and Montserrado (1) Counties.¹
- The removal of the suspected cases from the case total has in turn led to the further removal of 51 Ebola contacts. With these exclusions, as of today, Ebola contacts stand at 141, of which 131 have completed their 21 days of Ebola follow-up and been declared Ebola-free.
- The total number of Ebola-related deaths stands at 11, though this figure may change upon further review.

¹ Prior to the revision of the Ebola data, suspected Ebola cases had also been reported in Grand Gedeh and Grand Cape Mount Counties. Deeper analysis excluded the cases in both counties. Ebola affected counties thus include Lofa, Margibi, Nimba, Bong and Montserrado.

- Data on the six confirmed and two probable Ebola cases (all of which are deceased) reveals that six of the eight were female, and that all eight were over the age of 18. The contacts generated by these cases, however, include children.
- Foya, Lofa County, remains the epicentre of the Ebola epidemic, while Lofa and Margibi remain the counties of highest concern. The latter is due to the fact that all confirmed and probable cases reported to date have been reported in Lofa and Margibi, with only suspected cases reported in Nimba, Bong and Montserrado.
- The MoHSW and its partners continue to emphasize the need to remain heavily engaged on Ebola response activities at the Liberia-Guinea border in Lofa County, with particular focus on Foya District. The need for this ongoing focus is underscored by the fact that new Ebola cases continue to be received by health centers in Guéckédou, Guinea, which borders Lofa. Until this “hot spot” cools down, ongoing vigilance is required.
- The motorbike rider who carried the first woman who died of Ebola in Margibi County reportedly died in a community in Montserrado County sometime around 28 April. It will be recalled that the MoHSW has been trying to track down this individual since the now deceased woman was hospitalized in early April. He was unwilling to cooperate with the authorities, despite repeated attempts to trace him. The Montserrado County Health Team is following up the report, including confirming the information and attempting to locate the body, with the assistance from the Liberian National Police (LNP).

UNICEF Response

Through its Communications and Child Survival Sections, UNICEF continues to provide critical 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; the Case Management Committee of the NTF; and the WASH Working Group.

COMMUNICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT (C4D):

- Over the past week, UNICEF’s two field coordinators and the 10-person team contracted from the IPC firm continued to engage intensively with communities in Foya, Voinjama, Kolahun and Zorzor Districts, Lofa County. Their collective outreach efforts have included regular attendance at Ebola coordination meetings in Foya; visits to local communities, including border towns, mosques, churches, schools and marketplaces; and meetings with local and traditional leaders and community groups.
- During their interactions with local religious and traditional leaders as well as community members, the coordinators and the IPC team have identified a number of erroneous beliefs and misconceptions about Ebola. The most dangerous of these is outright denial of the existence of Ebola. There is also a high level of suspicion of the health system in Foya and Voinjama, where many interviewees cited a belief that the health centers and hospitals in these areas will lock people up in isolation even if there is nothing seriously wrong with them.
- To address these misconceptions and suspicions, UNICEF’s C4D team is working with the Social Mobilization Committee of the NTF to develop new messages to address resultant behavioural issues, such as reluctance to seek treatment at health centers and hospitals.
- All UNICEF-supported mass media activities are ongoing, including work with local community radio stations and key national stations. At the national level, these efforts are supported by UNMIL.

CHILD SURVIVAL (WASH AND HEALTH):

- This past week, UNICEF procured and delivered the additional requested materials to complete the isolation units at Foya Hospital in Lofa County and JFK Medical Center in Monrovia, Montserrado County. For deliveries to Foya, Samaritan’s Purse provided logistical assistance.
- The supplies delivered to Foya Hospital included a generator, which is reportedly being used to maintain lighting in the hospital until 12 AM. A request for a tap and pipes is still in process. However, even without these items, the isolation unit in Foya is reportedly able to accept patients, as is the isolation unit at JFK Medical Center.

UNICEF Funding Needs:

- UNICEF’s estimated funding requirement for Ebola-related C4D, Health and WASH interventions remains approximately US\$500,000 for the period from 21 March to 21 June. The office has received

the following support to date: US\$100,000 from the Japan National Committee for UNICEF; US\$100,000 from the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance/OFDA (provided through UNICEF Regional Office for West and Central Africa); US\$30,000 from the UK Department for International Development/DFID (re-programmed funding); and US\$ 83,000 from the UK Committee for UNICEF. The funding gap remains US\$187,000.

National Task Force Updates

BUDGET AND DONOR SUPPORT:

- The MoHSW's three-month Ebola response budget remains US\$ 2.5 million. It covers all 15 counties in Liberia, with emphasis on Ebola-affected counties.
- As previously reported, the Ministry of Finance has appropriated US\$ 250,000 for the budget, and the Mano River Union (MRU) has provided US\$ 10,000. These funds were earmarked to support coordination of the response, which is being led by the MoHSW.
- Many other partners and donors have provided support to the response plan and budget, though this support has primarily been in-kind.

LABORATORY AND EPIDEMIOLOGY:

- The National reference Lab (NRL) tested a new sample from a suspected case in Grand Gedeh. The results were negative for Ebola.

CASE MANAGEMENT AND PSYCHOSOCIAL:

- Isolation units are established and able to accept patients at Foya Hospital in Lofa County; JFK Medical Center in Monrovia, Montserrado County; and Duside Hospital at Firestone Rubber Plantation in Margibi County.
- To support case management in Lofa County, the MoHSW has requested additional supplies, including gloves. WHO indicated it could assist with additional personal protective equipment (PPE) kits.

SOCIAL MOBILIZATION:

- In addition to UNICEF, many other partners continue to support efforts by the Social Mobilization Committee of the NTF. These include UNMIL, Samaritan's Purse, Global Communities/CHF International, the Liberian National Red Cross, Making Change Liberia, Plan-Liberia, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and ArcelorMittal iron ore mining company (among others).

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; 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. All informational material used for social mobilization for the outbreak should be cleared by the Ministry.

COORDINATION WITH CHTS, GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND OTHER MINISTRIES:

- At the national-level, coordination meetings for the NTF have been reduced to twice a week and occur on Mondays and Fridays, while meetings by the various committees of the NTF are occurring on a more regular basis.
- At the county-level, Task Force meetings have also been reduced to twice a week and when necessary.
- In Foya District, Lofa County, daily meetings are reportedly ongoing between local government authorities and partners.

UNICEF Contacts

- **Sheldon Yett, Representative**
Tel: +231-(0)770-25-7100 (office), +231-(0)770-26-7100 (mobile), Email: syett@unicef.org
- **Dr. Fazlul Haque, Deputy Representative**
Tel: +231-(0)770-25-7400 (office), +231-(0)770-26-7400 (mobile), Email: fhague@unicef.org

- **Prabhu Prabhakaran, Resource Mobilization Specialist**
Tel: +231-(0)770-25-7103 (office), +231-(0)770-26-7103 (mobile), E-mail: pprabhakaran@unicef.org
- **Adolphus Scott, C4D Specialist**
Tel: +231-(0)770-25-7113 (office), +231-(0)770-26-7113 (mobile), E-mail: adscott@unicef.org