

This is a situation report by the Interagency Collaboration on Ebola replacing situation reports previously produced by UNMEER. The report is produced by OCHA Regional Office for West and Central Africa in collaboration with WHO and humanitarian partners. It covers the period from 05 to 18 October 2015. The next report will be issued on or around 03 November.

Highlights

- After two weeks without new cases of Ebola virus disease, three new cases were reported in Guinea in the week ending Sunday 18 October. No new cases were reported in Sierra Leone.
- Following the workshop on survivors held in Kindia, Guinea, from 5 to 7 October, the National Coordination Cell is in the process of formulating a national strategy to support the EVD survivors.
- The Interagency Collaboration on Ebola held the eighth Coordination Board meeting on 8 October. The Board recognised the importance of preserving strong national and international capacities that have the capacity to respond to flare ups across the region.
- The Ministry of Health's WASH and environmental health package for health facilities in Liberia was validated in a meeting on 8 October with over 60 participants drawn from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Public Works, WHO, CDC and other partners. The package will contribute to improve the quality of health service delivery and infection, prevention and control measures.
- WHO held the three-level meeting in Freetown, Sierra Leone from 12-14 October. There was consensus that rapid-response team capacity is not strong enough at present. Ebola Crisis Managers (ECMs) and OCHA will work with WHO to develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) that recommend minimum standards and guide the contributions of partners in country. Simulations will be planned for December and January to assess capacity.

Epidemiological status

- After two weeks without new cases of Ebola virus disease, three new cases were reported in Guinea in the week ending Sunday 18 October. The first case is a 21-year old male from Ratoma, Conakry. The second case is a 35-year old woman who was identified after post-mortem testing of a community death in Kaliah, Forécariah. Neither case was a registered contact. The third case is the 3-month old daughter of the second case.
- There were no new cases reported in Sierra Leone in the week up to 18 October. The last confirmed case was discharged from an ETC on 26 September.

Vaccination

Sierra Leone: The Ring Vaccination study first carried out in Guinea by WHO and partners has now been extended to communities in Sierra Leone. This trial is testing the rSVZEBOV vaccine. The trial uses the ring vaccination strategy- where contacts of confirmed cases, then 'contacts of contacts' are vaccinated if they consent after full explanation of the trial and the vaccine. This strategy was used to eradicate smallpox in the 1970s. During August-September 2015, a total of 220 study participants have participated in the ring



WHO team on the ground in Kambia. Credit: A. Fikru Zeleke/ WHO.

vaccination trial in Tonko Limba, Kambia District and in Robuya village, Bombali District. All study participants have been followed-up and to date, no severe adverse reactions have been recorded. However, a number of challenges have been encountered, namely, the need for community engagement, especially listening to community concerns and provision of information, is critical for acceptance of ring vaccination. Fostering collaboration between partners, government and the vaccine team is essential to enable smooth running of the vaccination programme. Regular sharing of information about the ring vaccination process with response team members overcomes misconceptions.

In **Guinea**, the Ring Vaccination study continues in the sub-prefecture of Kaliah, the city of Forécariah and the district of Ratoma in Conakry, led by the National Coordination Cell, in collaboration with WHO's immunization team. As with Sierra Leone, all participants are vaccinated if they consent to being vaccinated after being fully informed about the nature of the vaccine and the trial. When it is confirmed by laboratory testing that a person is infected with Ebola, the surveillance team defines a "ring" of people in contact with the confirmed case. Then, all people defined as contacts or contacts of contacts are offered vaccination. Currently, vaccination teams are encountering reluctance among contacts of confirmed cases.

The Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) Working Group on Ebola Vaccines and Vaccination is meeting this week from 20-22 October in **Geneva** to review current evidence on the safety, immunogenicity and efficacy of experimental Ebola vaccines and to consider potential recommendations for use of future registered vaccines.

Regional

- WHO held the three-level meeting in Freetown, Sierra Leone from 12-14 October. There was consensus that rapid-response team capacity is not strong enough at present. ECMs and OCHA will work with WHO to develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) that recommend minimum standards and guide the contributions of partners in country. Simulations will be planned for December and January to assess capacity. Similarly, ECMs and OCHA will discuss SOPs and planning for a package of services for survivors encompassing health support, psychosocial support, social protection and food security. Screening will be included in any health support programme of work.
- The results of a study of viral persistence in semen that was carried out by the Sierra Leone Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Sierra Leone Ministry of Defence, WHO and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was published online in the New England Journal of Medicine. The study tested 93 men over the age of 18 who enrolled in the study between two and 10 months after their illness began. For men who were tested in the first three months after their illness began, all were positive (9/9; 100 percent). More than half of men (26/40; 65 percent) who were tested between four to six months after their illness began were positive, while one quarter (11/43; 26 percent) of those tested between seven to nine months after their illness began also tested positive. While it is now clear that virus persists longer in semen than previously thought, the risk of people being infected with Ebola by those who have survived the disease is probably low. Although sexual transmission by survivors with persistent virus is a possibility, it appears to be rare.
- WHO and partners are currently evaluating four rapid diagnostic tests (RDT) using a series of 188 positive and 188 negative archive samples. Any of the RDTs that meet target performance criteria will be tested in a study in the field by safe burial teams. RDTs are potentially useful for surveillance and monitoring of Ebola, but none are yet approved for use by national regulatory authorities.

Cross-border collaboration

- In Kambia district, Sierra Leone, UNFPA supported 20 contact tracers and 7 supervisors who will be screening border crossing points.
- Strengthening surveillance in border areas continues to be a focus of the social mobilization response. In Forécariah, around 1,000 people traveling to and from Sierra Leone were sensitized, had their temperature checked and washed their hands at the three border sanitary control posts.
- In continuation of its support to post-EVD border control and surveillance, UNDP on 15 October turned over 16 vehicles for use by the Liberia National Police, and Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, to bolster the

operational capacity in intensifying patrols and surveillance. This has been made possible with the support of the Government of Japan, partnering with UNDP in enhancing border surveillance.

- In Liberia, a joint UNDP/GoL mission concluded a reconnaissance field trip to three border counties- Bong, Nimba and Lofa, benefitting from the enhanced border surveillance project. The mission visited a few border posts and other facilities to assess prevailing working conditions, triage facilities and surveillance activities. There were also community and local leadership engagement meetings held to provide more information about the project activities, and make them more responsive to the needs on the ground. Major challenges identified during the field mission include, inter alia: weak surveillance due to the lack of logistics; increase in the use of single barrel guns and other small arms due to weak record keeping system; poor road conditions and accommodation, and limited food supplies for officers.

Guinea

After two weeks without new cases of Ebola virus disease, three new cases were reported in Guinea in the week ending Sunday 18 October. Active case-finding activities have been launched in the most affected households (Ratoma and Dixinn in Conakry and Forécariah prefecture). On Sunday 18 October there were two confirmed patients and three suspects awaiting test results, in two Ebola treatment centres (Conakry and Forécariah). The cumulative caseload in Guinea is 3,803 with 2,353 deaths.



UNICEF-led community sensitization activities against Ebola in the district of Dixinn, Conakry. Credit: UNICEF Guinea

Operations

- WFP and UNHAS are currently meeting with partners to discuss a UNHAS operation in 2016, scaled-down to meet national needs and with a broader mandate to include recovery activities.

Survivors

- After the workshop on survivors held in Kindia from 5 to 7 October, the National Coordination Cell is in the process of formulating a national strategy to support the EVD survivors. The strategy will coordinate priority interventions in medical care, psychosocial support (against stigma), economic assistance (income generating activities), rehabilitation and social reintegration of survivors into their communities. There are 1,261 Ebola survivors in Guinea.

Contact tracing / surveillance

- As of 18 October, 246 contacts were under follow-up in Guinea, with 203 of these contacts located in Forécariah, and 43 in Conakry.
- As of 18 October, there were 253 unknown contacts in Guinea, with the majority of these contacts (209) located in Ratoma. All of these contacts are associated with the Ratoma chain of transmission.

Community engagement and social mobilization

- UNICEF, in partnership with the NGO *Zéro Pauvre*, conducted trainings on the use of RapidPro for 130 social mobilizers, one for each neighborhood of Conakry. The introduction of Rapid Pro, a SMS-based data collection system, will allow social mobilizers to transmit up-to-date information on issues such as community resistance, giving a clearer understanding of the situation on the ground and shortening the time between data collection and decision making.

Child Protection

- UNICEF and partners set up one new Village Council for Child Protection in Faranah and trained its members, bringing the total number of active councils to 836.

Food Security

- As part of its transition strategy, WFP is making distributions in food insecure areas formerly affected by the Ebola virus, and to Ebola survivors and orphans and their households.
- On 5 October, FAO launched the first phase of its operation to support draught animals in the prefectures of Coyah, Kindia and Forecariah. A total of 90 groups of livestock producers were given a plough, a harrow and a pair of oxen in 11 prefectures affected by Ebola. The use of animal traction will help increase agricultural productivity and cultivated areas, but also improve linkages between livestock and agricultural production.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- UNICEF and the NGO *Search for Common Ground* hosted a series of activities promoting hand washing and hygiene, reaching 10,158 people, including 1,845 women, through 131 video projections in youth centers in the prefectures of Beyla, Boffa, Boké, Dubréka, Forécariah, Guéckédou, Macenta, N'Zérékoré and Lola.

Other

- After violent clashes between supporters of the ruling party and those of the main opposition party (UFDG) on the eve of the first round of presidential elections, elections took place on 11 October as scheduled. The day after the first round, the opposition parties withdrew from the process. The Independent National Electoral Commission (CNI) announced provisional results of the first round on 17 October which showed the incumbent president winning 57.85% of votes. The socio-political situation remains tense but no major incidents have been reported to date.

Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, the countdown to zero + 42 days continues. Efforts to ensure there is sufficient planning and preparation for transition intensified to ensure appropriate mechanisms, structures, and parameters are in place. Efforts to ensure opportunities for integrated care for survivors are being strengthened.

Health

- In accordance with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation's (MoHS) national Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) programme and standards, IOM conducted a series of trainings for 200 persons from hospitals and health facilities.
- UNICEF supported the national geo-mapping of Community Health Workers (CHW) that included 3,679 CHWs in 347 Peripheral Health Units (PHUs) in Tonkolili, Kambia, Bombali and Kailahun districts. The same mapping will be done for Port Loko, Kono, Pujehun and Bo districts.
- UNFPA supported 15 enhanced contact tracers and 5 supervisors in Bombali district to conduct ring surveillance in 27 villages.



Students at DAC Primary School, Kasuma, in Kaffu Bullom Chiefdom, Port Loko District, have their temperatures checked before they enter their classroom. Credit: UNICEF

Community engagement and social mobilization

- UNICEF and the Social Mobilization Pillar organized a series of community meetings in Robuya village and adjoining communities in Bombali district to allow for smooth reintegration of contacts from quarantined households. The Social Mobilization pillar reactivated chiefdom task forces across all 13 chiefdoms to reinforce community ownership and vigilance.
- The Western Area ward development committees and members completed 69 Community Action Plans focusing on initiatives that can prevent spread of Ebola.

- In Port Loko, through the social mobilization stewardship project, partners Oxfam, Red Cross and Restless Development, have reached 4,068 households in 1,492 communities.

Logistics

- WFP's storage and transport support to Ebola response partners has now entered a transition phase, where services are being rolled back. This process includes the recovery and transfer of items and equipment loaned to other aid partners' ongoing operations.

Protection

- UNDP's Access to Justice (A2J) and Rule of Law (ROL) Programmes continue engagement with the justice sector, both government and civil society organizations, to collate lessons learnt from the backlog activities supported together with DFID's Access to Justice and Security Sector Programme (ASJP). Backlog of cases include Rule of Law and Justice issues, such as the cases pending for the weekend courts. The activities successfully reduced the backlog of pre-trial and remand detainees, focusing on those most vulnerable in detention, which had increased during the Ebola crisis.

Child Protection

- 2,556 children and parents from 13 districts received psychosocial support (PSS) during the reporting period, including counselling, recreational activities, healing ceremonies, and mental health services.
- The UNICEF Child Protection team has commenced a vulnerability assessment on children that have lost one or both parents to Ebola.

Education

- UNICEF in collaboration with GoSL Ministries is supporting a project for the education of teenage pregnant girls across Sierra Leone.
- With funding support from DFID, UNICEF has handed over more than US\$200,000 worth of computer equipment and office supplies to assist the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MEST) in setting-up new 'situation rooms' across the country. This will help MEST to strengthen the Education Management and Information System and improve monitoring and data information management in the country.

Food Security

- WFP has provided food assistance to the most affected populations throughout the lean season. Cash based transfers are also being provided to targeted households. During the first half of October, over 17,000 people have received cash transfers from WFP.
- Countrywide, household data collection for the Comprehensive Food Security & Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) is underway. The CFSVA will provide chiefdom level data to help inform targeted and evidence based programmes that will have the greatest impact on addressing food insecurity within the context of EVD recovery.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- In Port Loko, UNICEF partners delivered 71,000 litres of water to 11 check points, reaching 639,000 people using the hand washing stations in Port Loko District and rehabilitated the school well in Sella-Kafta village in Kambia District.

Recovery

- UNDP and UN Women, through an MPTF joint project, have finalized the compilation of a national comprehensive list of 2,500 survivors and destitute for livelihood support.

Liberia

As part of the transition phase, the transfer of EVD care from ETUs to county hospitals is being planned. A County vulnerability assessment has been done in Grand Cape Mount, Bong, Nimba, Lofa and River Gee. For these counties it is proposed a transfer of care to county hospitals from 31 October and a full decommissioning of ETUs by 31 December. The success of this transfer will depend on the effective implementation of IPC protocols and triage/isolation facilities. Global Communities has started its phasing out of support programmes to Safe Burials and to the national cemetery. WFP is currently handing over field offices and assets to WHO as part of its operational support to WHO.

Laboratory issues persist with two out of four still not functional. A laboratory training work plan is being finalized with support from partners and will include training in Rapid Diagnostic Tests (RDT). The backlog of untested samples is growing by the day (1,100 as of 12 October).



One of the participants in demonstration session of Safe & Quality Service training, Greenville, Sinoe County/MTI. Credit: Romax Zizi/ACCEL, Oct 2015

Enhanced Surveillance and rapid response

- Suspect cholera cases have been increasingly reported by County Health Teams in Nimba, Gbarpolu and Margibi though none has been confirmed yet.
- Medical Teams International (MTI) conducted a refresher training for Rapid Response Teams (RRT) members of Grand Cape Mount County. The training brought together 10 members of the county RRT staff including psychosocial/communication engagement, case investigators, case managers and IPC/WASH.
- In Sinje Town, Grand Cape Mount County the Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) training for 38 health care workers fully sponsored by WHO is ongoing since 12 October.

Health System Restoration

- UNICEF has been supporting the logistics team for the distribution of all supplies for the forthcoming integrated polio campaign (23-26 October). Seven out of 15 counties received their supplies for the campaign. Targets for the campaign include 955,400 children 0-59 months to be vaccinated against polio, 851,750 children between 6-59 months to receive vitamin A and 738,184 children between 12-59 months will receive mebendazole tablets for deworming. UNICEF is supplying the mebendazole tablets and vitamin A capsules.

Education

- Supporting the Ministry of Education's strategy on safe school environment, Liberia National Red Cross Society (LNRCS) /IFRC have committed to distributing Infection Prevention and Control kits to schools across Liberia. In addition to 500 schools already covered in Montserrado in September, a total of 179 kits were delivered during the reporting period to Bong, Nimba, River Gee, River Cess, Margibi, Grand Kru, Gbarpolu and Bomi counties.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

- A validation of the UNICEF supported Ministry of Health's WASH and environmental health package for health facilities in Liberia was held on 8 October with participation of over 60 participants drawn from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Public Works, WHO, CDC and other partners. The document provides guidance to all partners implementing WASH and environmental health interventions in health facilities. The package will contribute to improve the quality of health service delivery and infection, prevention and control measures.
- The Red Cross participated in the celebrations of Global Handwashing day on 15 October and organized two events with school children in Monrovia and Gbarpolu. Also in Monrovia the LNRCS/IFRC health staff participated in the weekly Red Cross radio talk show on Truth FM 96.1 discussing the theme "Building

Community Resilience to Mitigate Health Emergencies“ and answering questions on air. The radio show covers all the districts of Montserrado county.

- The Concern WASH Team completed 17 new hand dug wells in schools for Phase 1 in Grand Bassa County. The construction of 18 new wells and rehabilitation of 10 hand dug wells are on-going for Phase 2.
- Concern has trained 119 members of WASH Committees for 17 schools on proper management, operation and maintenance of WASH facilities. The construction and rehabilitation of 12 latrines in schools will start this week in Grand Bassa.
- The IMC WASH team is constructing and rehabilitating WASH infrastructure in Bong, Margibi, Montserrado and Nimba counties. Construction of temporary triage and short stay isolation structures at ELWA and Mount Barclay health facilities are in their final stages.

Child Protection

- A two-day UNICEF ‘lessons learned’ workshop on the child protection response during the Ebola crisis was held in Monrovia bringing together 35 participants from Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia to share experiences and best practices.
- During the reporting period, two orphanages were closed and 13 children reunited with their families while 22 remain at the Hawa Massaquoi transit home awaiting family tracing and reunion. To date, three of the five orphanages recommended for closure have been closed.

Preparedness

- During the week of 5 October, International Medical Corps (IMC) in Liberia hosted a delegation from Guinea Bissau. The delegation was in country to learn how Liberia effectively responded to the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak and apply best practices to their own country’s IPC and disease preparedness protocols. The group included the IMC country Director for Guinea Bissau, National Health Institute, National IPC Coordinator and the Deputy Director of the Simao Mendes National Hospital.

Events

- On 5-6 October WHO and partners met in Monrovia to discuss surveillance strategies as part of the Phase-3 Ebola response including the role of diagnostic tests. The main outcome of the meeting was that the surveillance approach has to be adapted according to the stage of the outbreak, transitioning from a sensitive (i.e. a high chance of detecting new EVD cases and death but with a large proportion of negative test results among those tested) to a more specific approach (i.e. a less labour intensive and less costly approach, but maintaining a high probability of detecting a cluster of cases or a community death). The importance of maintaining surveillance of deaths was critical as it acts as a safety net. Increasingly, the strategy to detect Ebola will be integrated with the Infectious Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) system that aims to detect a range of notifiable diseases. The identification of new cases will be enhanced by the development of new diagnostic tests and other tools for investigating transmission.
- The Interagency Collaboration on Ebola held the eighth Coordination Board meeting on 8 October. The Board recognised the importance of preserving strong national and international capacities that have the capacity to respond to flare ups across the region. The Board requested ECMs and Resident Coordinators in each country to reach agreements with partners on their capacity to support Rapid Response Teams and provide support to survivors throughout 2016.