

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Liberia
HG Plaza
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Monrovia, Liberia

Weekly Country Update

Ebola Emergency Response

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Update Number I

September 5, 2014

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Introduction

In Liberia, the first ever outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) was reported in late March 2014 in Lofa County which is on the border with Guinea where the Ebola outbreak started in West Africa. Government and medical emergency partners quickly intervened and nearly eradicated the disease, and nothing was heard about Ebola-related illnesses until late June and early July. Since then, the government and people as well as their partners have been overwhelmed and engulfed by a strange “attacker” that has resulted to hundreds of deaths. According to the Ministry of Health (Liberia) Situation Report (Sitrep) #110, which is the update latest, released on September 2, 2014, the cumulative/total (nationwide) of confirmed, probable, and suspected cases of Ebola is 1,839. This means the figure is going up and the disease is spreading and attacking more people, hence affecting farming, livelihoods, the economy, services sector, education sector (all schools remain closed), and travel.

When the EVD first emerged, FAO, based on a request from the Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), quickly (in July 2014) responded with an emergency technical cooperation assistance project worth US\$387,000 to support the government in addressing factors of the disease affecting the agriculture/food security .

Cases

	National	Bomi County	Bong County	Gbarpolu County	Grand Bassa	Grand Cape Mount	Grand Gedeh	Lofa County	Margibi County	Montserrado County	Nimba County	River Gee County	RiverCess County	Sinoe County
New Case/s (Suspected)	35	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	7	22	0	1	0	0
New Case/s (Probable)	38	0	4	0	1	0	0	10	7	13	0	3	0	0
New case/s (confirmed)	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total suspected cases	366	1	83	1	21	2	3	63	126	42	17	6	0	1
Total probable cases	883	31	40	0	12	4	0	345	89	309	50	3	0	0
Total confirmed cases	590	31	24	0	13	4	0	220	30	225	41	0	1	1
Total Number of Confirmed Cases of Sierra Leonean Nationality	13	0	0	0	0	2	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Number of Confirmed Cases of Guinean Nationality	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Cumulative (confirmed, probable, suspected) cases	1839	63	147	1	46	10	3	628	245	576	108	9	1	2

Source: MoH, Sitrep #110, Sept. 2, 2014

Government and Partners' Emergency Response

The Government of Liberia has established the National Task Force chaired by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Co-Chaired by Internal Affairs Minister Morris Dukuly with Mr. James Dorbor Jallah heading the day-to-day operations of the team. At first the Task Force was reported to be slow in responding to emergency calls to collect bodies and sick people,

but now, there has been some improvements with response units reportedly responding to calls faster than before.

In response to the fight against the Ebola disease, the Ministry of Health (MoH) established the Incident Management Task Force (IMF) comprising national and international partners that reports to the National Task Force on the Ebola. In this regard, the IMF has set up burial, contact tracing, EPI/surveillance, social mobilization, psychosocial and case management units to adequately respond to the crisis.



**An ebola patient died on arrival outside the gates of the ELWA treatment center in July (left).
The body was wrapped up and taken away by burial crew (right)**

The IMF has also reportedly dispatched technical teams to the affected counties to provide training and technical support to the MoH County Health Teams. Together with the American Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United States Aid for International Development (USAID), the Government of Liberia established a National Reference Lab and a Database Center in Monrovia to effectively respond to cases.

Importantly, the government and partners are conducting training sessions for both health workers and community health volunteers to help with social mobilization, contact tracing, burial and psychosocial counseling. Currently, around 500 volunteers are said to have been trained and deployed to the counties for social mobilization and awareness-raising campaigns. It was recently reported that the MoH has also selected Antoinette Tubman Stadium, Island Clinic and Unity Conference Center in Virginia (all within Monrovia) as additional sites to be created as holding centers due to the influx of new cases.

International Assistance to the Outbreak (Summary)

Various international partners are buttressing the Government of Liberia's effort against the Ebola Virus Disease.

FAO provided an emergency TCP input of US\$387,000 to the effort and is actively involved in coordination and stakeholder meetings and discussions with the MoH, Ministry of Internal Affairs, MoA, UN partners, FAO RAF and Rome, and farmers.

Heads of United Nations agencies including FAO in August 2014 developed a UN Joint draft Strategic Response Plan as part of consolidated efforts to assist the Government.

In late August, Senior UN Systems Coordinator for Ebola, Dr. David Nabarro, visited Liberia on a two-day technical mission and expressed the need for urgent measures to be put in place to address “serious food security concerns” in Liberia.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has established an additional lab, training technicians and assisting with case management; the World Health Organization (WHO) among other things is also assisting in training and expansion of burial teams in Montserrado and other counties. In early September 2014, WHO conducted training for Staff of the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) burial team and has established standard procedures for managing dead bodies. USAID also reportedly provided 4,000 body bags to the burial team. World Food Programme (WFP) is supplying food aid to quarantined centers. MSF is supporting key Ebola Treatment Units in Montserrado and Lofa Counties and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), UNFPA, Unicef and other agencies are collaborating in many areas including logistics, awareness-raising, provision of prevention kits among others.

A delegation from the African Union recently visited Liberia to meet with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to provide technical support to the fight against the Ebola disease and is expected to send in experts. The Government of the People’s Republic of China, African Development Bank, and the US Government have all provided enormous support to Liberia and the sub-region. Also, the Catholic Church in Liberia said this week it was scaling up efforts to mobilize more human, medical and logistical resources to help stop any further spread of the virus by ensuring the re-opening of all Catholic health facilities and undertaking a rapid awareness and sensitization campaign in collaboration with partners and the Ministry of Health.

The Ebola Treatment Unit in Foya, Lofa County according to MSF has over 122 patients with over 106 confirmed cases. The virus entered Liberia through Foya Town, a major hotspot hub, where the epidemic started in March 2014 from Guéckédou in Guinea.

FAO’s Emergency Response

Based on a request from the Government of Liberia through Agriculture Minister Dr. Florence Chenoweth, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) In July 2014 provided US\$387,000 in Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) emergency assistance to help fight the Ebola virus disease mainly in the agriculture and forestry sectors.

The Emergency TCP project, titled, “Emergency assistance to strengthen Ebola virus disease response capacities at the human-wildlife ecosystem interface”, was first aimed at addressing the risk of transmission from animal to human. The project is now under review to meet local/current realities of human-to-human transmission factors of the disease, because curbing human-to-human transmission is the most important focus for governments and international health agencies.



FAO donates Toyota pickup truck to poultry farmers to continue work despite Ebola



FAO-donated Ebola prevention kits for poultry farmers in hard-hit Lofa County

FAO's Current Achievements

1. FAO's contact and collaboration with sector partners has been fruitful, and we are meeting regularly with MoA, Internal Affairs Ministry, Forestry Development Authority (FDA), Farmers Union Network (FUN), MoH and other food sector actors to create massive awareness and sensitization to farmers, livestock officers and forest users.
2. FAO and partners will next week conduct a training of trainers (ToT) seminar for sensitization and awareness creation for hunters, forest users, and farmers. The training will involve Wildlife officers of the Forestry Development Authority, MOA livestock

officers, Farmers Union Network, and lead farmers. The training is organized in three regions- Eastern, Central, and Western regions of Liberia.

3. In July 2014, FAO Monitoring and Evaluation Unit conducted two days training in EpiCollect technology application for the MoH. FAO also presented IT equipment including 18 tablet PCs and one computer with accessories to enable the MoH maintain an effective monitoring and tracking (surveillance) system of Ebola cases nationwide.
4. Mr. Snotee Sorboh has been recruited as Mobilization/Awareness-Raising Consultant/Ebola TCP and is working on sensitization and communication activities on Ebola TCP in Liberia
5. Dr. Etagegnehu Belayneh has been recruited as Vet on emergency TCP Ebola project
6. Mr. Jeremiah Soka has been appointed by the government to serve as National Project Coordinator, TCP.
7. FAO has presented one Toyota Pickup truck and anti-Ebola hand-washing kits and detergents to women beneficiaries of three poultry facilities in Lofa County, (under TCP 3303 poultry project). The support is essential to ensure uninterrupted poultry production at the three sites for nearly 300 beneficiaries despite ebola outbreak.

Food Security Situation and Rising Prices

FAO is currently working with partners including WFP for an urgent assessment of the food security situation in the country. According to a straw poll/quick market assessments carried out recently, prices of major commodities like the staple rice and cassava are rising, up to 25% or more in urban and rural areas. In the wake of the Ebola outbreak affecting Liberia's main food producing belts of Lofa, Bong, and Nimba Counties, FAO in Liberia has said that unless emergency production kits and interventions are made, there might be serious food shortages in the new year 2015. This is because, just ahead of the harvest season, the Ebola has affected many farmers: some have died, fled, traumatized, were quarantined, and are either not working in groups or have abandoned farms.

On Wednesday night (Sept 3rd), Assistant Agriculture Ministry Paul Jallah spoke on national radio saying that farmers in Lofa, Bong, Nimba Counties – Liberia's main crop producing hubs - were finding it hard working in groups, farming outputs would drop, and the general trend would affect harvest results this year. He also said that in the Southeast and other parts where ebola had not had impact, farmers were working as usual and government was working to make sure ebola did not spread to these areas. Saclepea (Nimba County) District Agriculture Officer, Mr Ben Saye, recently said ebola was hurting farmers and they needed some support.

Background Contacts/Info

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