Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

GUIDANCE NOTE

on **prevention and preparedness** measures proposed for West African countries/areas not affected by the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak

EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE OUTBREAK WEST AFRICA

Preparedness and prevention at a glance

For FAO, preparedness consists of setting up effective measures to anticipate, respond to and recover from the impact of disasters for the different analysis units such as: individuals, households, organizations, communities and societies.

Prevention refers to all activities that enable the negative impact of hazards to be avoided and the associated environmental, technological and biological disasters to be minimized.

Prevention and preparedness measures also consist of ensuring that human and financial resources are available to respond to crises correctly.

FAO's main activities with regard to preparedness are: early warning systems, drawing up contingency and preparedness plans to ensure adequate responsiveness, simulations, storing food and supplies, coordination, communication and capacity building - please refer to the specific data sheets (animal health, cash transfer and nutrition) that complete this advisory note.

Most EVD prevention and preparedness actions are led by health professionals and give priority to health issues such as: awareness-raising campaigns, contingency plans, healthcare worker capacity building, identifying isolation and treatment centres, prepositioning medical and sanitation equipment, setting up mobile medical laboratories, etc.

However, EVD has an impact on agriculture and thus on the food security of individuals and rural communities. This is why FAO plays an important role and contributes to setting up prevention and preparedness measures focusing on food security, which is also a parameter linked to health. These measures are discussed later in this document.

Why do we need to prepare ourselves?

The outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) has already had an unprecedented impact in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. According to experts' prognoses, it is probable that the effects will be even more devastating as other countries are added to the list of those affected. It is currently difficult to predict with certainty how the Ebola virus will develop in affected countries and in the subregion, but is it likely that this will greatly depend on the prevention and preparedness measures taken (non-exhaustive list):

1. Strengthen and maintain an effective response to prevent the virus from spreading more widely in affected countries/areas.
2. Set up effective levels of preparedness to prevent the virus from spreading across the borders of affected countries/areas, especially in neighbouring countries.
3. Raise populations' awareness of the dangers of the virus and persuade them to adopt preventative behaviours regarding the manipulation and consumption of wild animals and bush meat, and to avoid risky practices.
4. Mobilize sufficient financial and human resources needed to accomplish the above-mentioned tasks.
5. Find new drugs and treatments and administer them to those affected or at risk.
6. Reduce risks by improving information, monitoring, early warning and surveillance systems.

FAO is active in the execution of measures 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 cited above, but has no control over Measure 5.

With the support of the international community, the governments of affected countries have set up EVD response measures. Some preparedness actions are also being carried out in non-affected countries but these remain insufficient. In line with this, FAO is also proposing to help implement preparedness measures to prepare countries/areas not yet affected to react efficiently in the event of an outbreak of EVD, where many households already suffer from food insecurity. These measures are the subject of this preparedness plan and are described below.

What are the main risks when the first case of EVD is detected?

EVD is communicable and is a major cause of death. The risks of contagion are considerable in the event of contact with infected people. However, especially in a hostile environment, it is important not to neglect other risk factors such as:

- Gatherings, population migration, trips to contaminated and suspect sites.
- Insufficient or no access to healthcare designed for EVD (isolation and treatment centres) in urban and/or rural areas.
- Insufficient or no EVD response programmes.
- Collapse of health services.
- Supplies of drugs, food and logistics interrupted.
- Individuals' poor state of health, and malnutrition.
- Lack of minimal hygiene, sanitation and food.
- Risky beliefs and behaviours (funerals, consumption of bush meat and certain forest fruits, etc.).

What is the purpose of this guidance note?

This guidance note brings together several general recommendations designed to guide FAO Country Offices in West Africa to plan EVD prevention and preparedness measures. This planning has two objectives:

- To minimize and prevent EVD infection risks.
- To reduce the disease's impact on populations' food and nutrition security.

This preparedness plan does not claim to be exhaustive in every aspect, but instead brings together the information, guidelines and recommendations necessary to give practical responses to the following questions:

- What is the possible scenario of the impact of EVD on agriculture and individuals' food security?
- What can we do **right now** in terms of prevention, mitigation and preparedness in households, at the office and with partners?
- What measures should be taken in the areas that fall under FAO's mandate (agriculture, food security and nutrition, livestock, forests, fish farming and fishing)?

What might happen?

In order to identify the actions FAO could set up in at-risk countries/areas or those not affected by EVD, we need to formulate a working hypothesis to provide the best possible information about the potential impact and consequences of EVD, particularly in FAO's areas of intervention, i.e. agriculture and food security.

Below is a scenario of the potential impact and consequences of EVD with regard to:

- the structure of rural households
- the economy of rural communities
- rural households' livelihoods
- the food and nutrition security of rural households

Consequences of EVD	Potential impact
	Structure of rural households
Illness and/or death of one or several members of the rural household (farmer, agropastoralist or pastoralist).	- Change to the composition of the household (age and gender of the head of the family). - Increasing number of widows and households headed by women. - Increasing health costs and funeral expenses. - EVD deprives the family of the sufferer's capacity to work but also of those who care for the sufferer. - Increasing burden supported by active people. - Migration of young adults. - Increasing numbers of orphans; schooling is reduced or stopped when children head the household. - Increasing inequality between the sexes, especially for widows because of the accumulated problems of access to land, credit and knowledge. - Increasing trend of exclusion for those infected with EVD, resulting in difficulties maintaining social groups. - Impact on travel for agricultural workers, transhumance.
	Economy of rural communities
Reduced access to and availability of food	- Restricted movement for individuals and transport. - Steep decline in food procurement and closure of markets. - Reduced availability of and access to foodstuffs. - Impossibility for households to sell their agricultural produce, preventing them for obtaining cash. - Rising food prices. - Households request loans and/or sell assets to pay for their needs and then fall into debt.

Consequences of EVD	Potential impact
	Rural households' livelihoods
Fewer men, women and young people to carry out agricultural work and the consequence of eventual travel restrictions.	- Poor management of crops and livestock result in a loss of income. - Insufficient livestock control results in the theft and death of animals, worsening income erosion. - A reduction in cultivated areas and reduction in agricultural activities (weeding, pruning, mulching) resulting in falling yields, less crop diversity and, in the long term, soil infertility. - The impossibility to harvest or sow at the right time. - An increase in areas left fallow and gradually invaded by scrub. - The loss of cultivating methods and a reduction in animal production. - Lack of cash and increased debt will compromise access to production inputs for the coming agricultural season. - Decreased productivity of women occupied with tending the sick. - The disappearance from heritage of the agricultural knowledge and skills specific to each gender. - The reduction of the qualified workforce and the loss of essential agricultural knowledge in households headed by orphans. - Reduced capacity to process and sell agricultural production. - Transport and trading difficulties affecting commercial trade. - Rise/fall in prices of cultivated produce (depending on the scenario). - Fall in agricultural income and fewer sales. - Liquidation of savings, livestock slaughtered to cover health costs and funeral expenses. - Reduced purchases, including foodstuffs. - Increased need of non-agricultural sources of income. - Households sell off machinery, agricultural equipment and assets (livestock, land and others). - Sharp drop in household income. - A decline in women's contribution to household income. - Increased need of cash sometimes leading to prostitution.
	Food and nutrition security of rural households
Change in household's food and nutrition security.	Increased food insecurity and malnutrition in affected families owing to the conjunction of consequences cited above and mainly because of households' growing poverty, which prevents access to food and health services.

Rapid progress in preparedness and prevention of EVD-linked risks

WHO recommendations in the home for FAO members of staff and partners:

Preparedness begins at home with simple reflexes that can reduce the risks of contracting and spreading EVD.

- Good hygiene practices: meticulously wash hands, clothes and homes. It is important to emphasize that the alcohol-based products used to disinfect hands do not always meet health standards as the market is flooded with counterfeits. Moreover, many of these products are bacteriostatic and not antibacterial, so do not guarantee complete disinfection and one needs to be aware of this and read the label carefully, choosing those with antibacterial qualities (even if they are more expensive). The safest bet remains washing with soap and water and washing with bleach.

- Listen to and find out about basic communication and awareness-raising messages on modes of transmission, symptoms, high-risk practices and alternative solutions (e.g. offering condolences without touching the body of the deceased).

- Participate in training on: preparing and using chlorine solutions; on universal precautions: using masks, gloves, disinfecting, etc.

- Equip yourself with hygiene products: soap, bleach and/or other antibacterial products.

- Good food practices: avoid eating bush meat, cook meats thoroughly, avoid eating forest fruits.

Recommendations in the office for FAO and partner organizations:

- Organize EVD awareness-raising actions (infection modes, etc.), discussions and distribution of information leaflets. Given that some members of staff and partners may be part of an eventual humanitarian response (assessments, distribution operations, etc.), it is important to respect all health precaution measures rigorously.

- Ensure that a disinfectant product is available at the entrance to the office so that security and reception officers can dispense some to each member of staff and/or visitor before entering the premises.

What can we do with regard to agriculture and food security?

Obviously, health is the priority in preparedness actions in non-affected countries/areas. However, FAO can complete these interventions with awareness-raising messages via its government partners (agriculture, livestock farming, environment and fishing). It is, then, crucial to prepare in advance in order to reduce risk as far as possible and to be ready to react as soon as the first case of EVD is detected. **The objective we need to set is therefore to "limit the spread of the disease and reduce to a minimum its impact on food and nutrition security".** To achieve this, FAO recommends concentrating preparedness efforts in the following fields:

1. Increasing monitoring and awareness-raising in the community

Given that countries/areas not affected by EVD run the risk of becoming affected, monitoring remains crucial on every level to anticipate any decisions and/or actions. Below is a list of proposals to be set up:

- Monitor and explain EVD development trends (provide a dynamic and historical visualization of EVD illustrated with graphs, maps, etc.).
- Identify at-risk areas and vulnerable populations to target more accurately potential preparedness and possible response actions to be set up (mapping at-risk areas).
- Monitor other risks that might emerge and elicit humanitarian assistance (floods, drought, desert locust invasion, conflict, etc.).
- Monitor population movements (pilgrimages, traders, etc.).
- Set up coordinated and multidisciplinary monitoring combining epidemiological, environmental, demographic and socio-anthropological data.
- If possible, carry out EVD risk modelling: spatial distribution depending on geographical characteristics; expose risks using analyses of time series, interannual and seasonal trends and trends connected to specific events.
- Improve monitoring and early warning mechanisms to activate a possible counterattack to EVD. For plans to combat EVD and target at-risk areas and vulnerable populations more accurately, it is very important to consolidate monitoring and early warning systems, and systematically to analyse in detail the epidemiological, social, anthropological, environmental and climate risk factors. Country Offices can also make use of FAO's resources and tools (see opposite).
- Awareness sessions for EVD prevention. If possible, these should involve recognized and respected local actors in addition to actors from FAO networks in the field. These additional actors can bring added value to prevention messages in terms of impact because of the local legitimacy they embody. They may be district, neighbourhood or village leaders; traditional mediation figures; griots; traditional religious figures: marabouts, imams, pastors; or artists.

FAO Tools and Resources

Early warning:

a) Food Chain Crisis Management Framework (FCC)
www.fao.org/foodchain
The FCC is responsible for coordinating the various components of the food chain crisis management framework, risk and intelligence analysis and long-term risk forecasts.

b) Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS)
http://www.fao.org/giews/english/index.htm
GIEWS comprises individualized tools, including countries' grain balance sheets and software to display and analyse maps and satellite images. This platform is connected to a unique reference database of information on global, regional, national and subnational food security.

c) Emergency Prevention System (EMPRES)
http://www.fao.org/foodchain/empres-prevention-and-early-warning/en/
EMPRES promotes the protection of livestock from diseases/preventing transboundary animal diseases and emerging diseases from spreading by progressively eliminating them, regionally and globally, through international cooperation involving early warning and rapid response to facilitate research and coordination.

d) Global Early Warning System (GLEWS)
www.glews.net
GLEWS is a response system for the main animal diseases including zoonoses.

Vulnerability analysis:

a) Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) – Tool to assess the profile of livelihoods.

b) FIVIMS – Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping System.

c) AQUASTAT – FAO's Global Information System for Water and Agriculture.

Challenges for monitoring:

Weak national systems to monitor animal diseases and little cross-sector cooperation between veterinary, human health and environmental services.

Problems obtaining data in real time.

Irregular and/or questionable quality of data.

Slow and inefficient transmission of information on every level (local – national – regional).

Insufficient means of communication.

Insufficient means for capacity building for staff and partners.

It is important to point out that the measures cited above are in line with and complementary to those proposed in the **FAO Regional Response Programme to the Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak in West Africa**", especially for Output 3:

Output 3.1: Reduce risks of exposure to EVD through contact with wildlife.

Output 3.2: Early warning systems developed to identify Ebola virus in wildlife and trigger response.

Output 3.3: Vulnerabilities assessed for communities relying on bush meat.

Output 3.4: Promotion of best practices.

2. Promoting the implementation of multidisciplinary prevention and preparedness measures

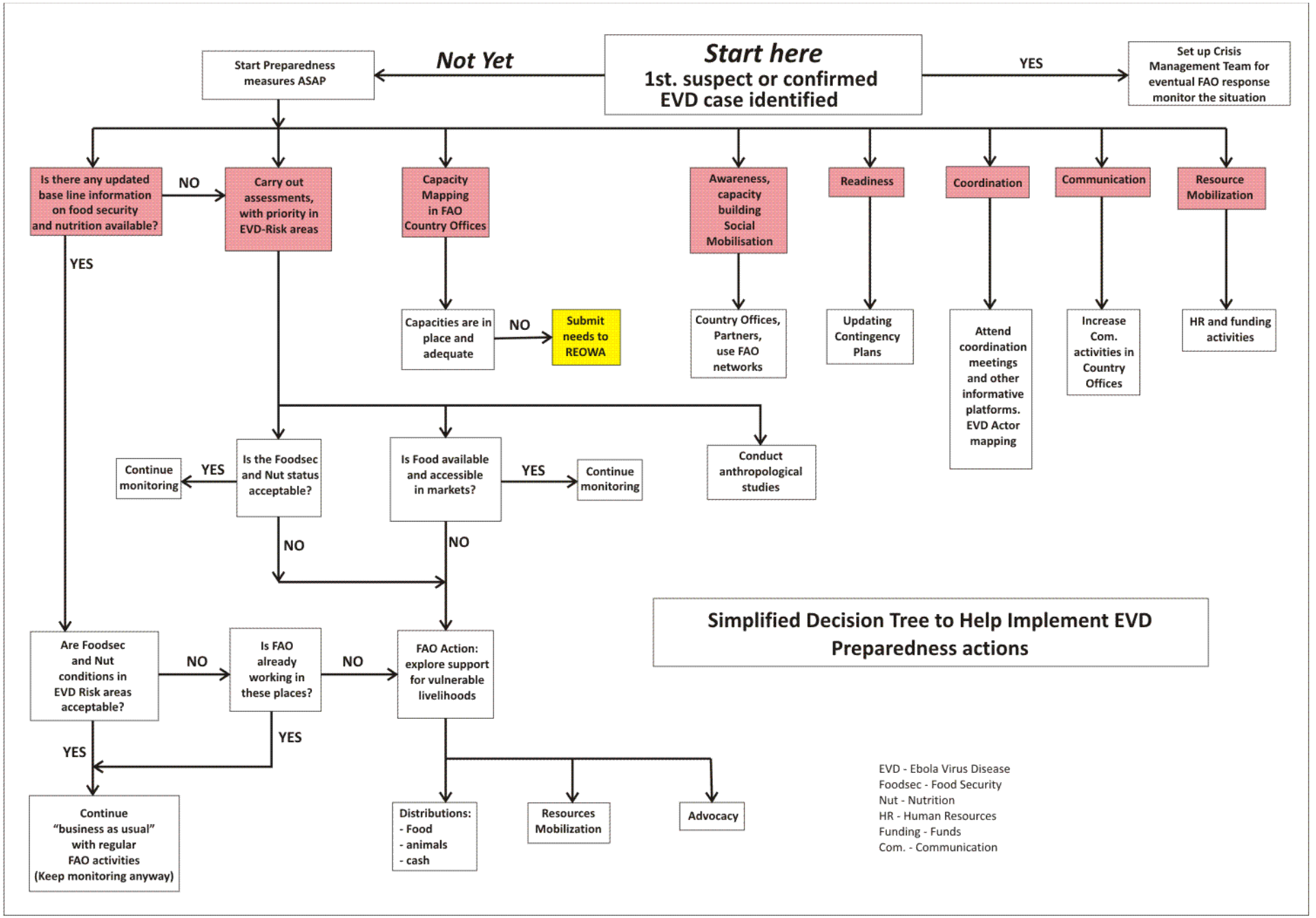
It is important to point out that FAO promotes the implementation of prevention and preparedness actions by taking into consideration the **"One Health"** approach. This approach recognizes that the health of humans, animals and ecosystems are interconnected and it is therefore necessary to act in a coordinated, complementary and multidisciplinary way to address effectively the potential or existent risks at the human-animal-ecosystem interface.

This advisory note covers the general aspects of preparedness planning. For more specific aspects, please consult the data sheets associated with this document detailing the themes of animal health, nutrition and cash transfers (currently being finalized).

Minimum prevention and preparedness measures to implement for countries/areas not affected by EVD

Fields	Activities
Assessments	- Verify the existence of baseline studies and assessments associated with households' food and nutrition security on various levels: local, regional and national. If these studies and/or assessments are obsolete, it will be necessary to conduct them to have an idea of the baseline situation for countries/areas not affected by EVD. - Include anthropological assessments. A better understanding of socio-anthropological determinants enables better targeting of communication strategies and better community mobilization, especially to promote hygiene (particularly hand-washing), food hygiene (consumption of bush meat and food from the forest), water treatment in the home and sanitation in general. - Map the available and unavailable capacities of Country Offices and partners. - Make assessments of the risk of animal-human EVD transmission.
Awareness-Raising **Capacity Building** **Social Mobilization** (it is important to mention that many awareness-raising exercises are carried out in collaboration with WHO and UNICEF)	- Organize awareness-raising and TOT sessions on EVD and social mobilization, making use of FAO's existing networks: Farmer field schools (FFS); farmer, livestock farmer and fisher peasant organizations; professional and technical organizations, in-field partners implementing agricultural programmes and projects; local and regional radio; ministry of agriculture officials, etc. As cited above, include, if possible, other locally-accepted actors. Ensure that there is a participative aspect for a better impact. (Design flyers, posters, technical notices, set up debates on local radio stations, etc.). - Organize awareness-raising sessions about eating bush meat and forest fruit. - Make the most of the occasion to organize reminder sessions on SPHERE and LEGS standards.
Communication/Information	- Increase communication activities, especially during at the moment when EVD is not yet under control in affected countries/areas and could spill over to neighbouring countries/areas at any time. – Communication plays a key role in preparedness and risk prevention. - Widespread dissemination of key messages via every channel (radio, TV, press, conversations, religious leaders, schools, town criers, home visits, etc.) – Local radios play a major role in the adapted broadcasting of messages. Propose local, regional and national mechanisms to establish wider sharing of best practices and better understanding of the fight against EVD. - Briefing/training sessions for journalists and the media in general (as they can be either a good or bad influence).
Improving Responsiveness	- Link monitoring systems to triggers for response - Draw up (or update if they already exist) country Contingency Plans and conduct simulations: table-top, multi-sector and community (a non-tested plan is incomplete). - Do not lose sight of secondary risks that could complicate the situation (floods, drought, desert locust invasion, conflict, etc.).
Coordination	- Create a mapping of actors and coordination mechanisms working in EVD preparedness in order to coordinate with them. - Attend coordination meetings of platforms active in EVD preparedness and reproduce the points discussed for Country Office colleagues.
Resource Mobilization	- Initiate financial resource mobilization; draw up draft proposals and advocacy messages to mobilize funding agencies to implement EVD prevention and preparedness plans in countries/area not yet affected. - Initiate human resource mobilization; identify available capacities, capacity gaps, and potential candidates to fill these gaps.
Complementary Activities	Because they involve setting up comprehensive preparedness plans, as part of these on-going in-field initiatives, FAO could contribute to: - Improving hygiene in rural households by making soap and chlorine products available; controlling and improving funeral practices for people who died of EVD. - Sanitation by means of simple activities such as: Food for Sanitation in collaboration with WFP; controlling and disinfecting markets to improve food safety, waste collection and processing, roadside maintenance, etc.

In addition to the measures cited above, please find below a simplified decision tree to help implement EVD preparedness actions.


Start here
1st. suspect or confirmed EVD case identified
Not Yet
Start Preparedness measures ASAP
YES
Set up Crisis Management Team for eventual FAO response monitor the situation
Is there any updated base line information on food security and nutrition available?
NO
Carry out assessments, with priority in EVD-Risk areas
YES
Capacity Mapping in FAO Country Offices
Capacities are in place and adequate
NO
Submit needs to REOWA
Awareness, capacity building Social Mobilisation
Country Offices, Partners, use FAO networks
Readiness
Updating Contingency Plans
Coordination
Attend coordination meetings and other informative platforms. EVD Actor mapping
Communication
Increase Com. activities in Country Offices
Resource Mobilization
HR and funding activities
Is the Foodsec and Nut status acceptable?
YES
Continue monitoring
Is Food available and accessible in markets?
YES
Continue monitoring
Conduct anthropological studies
NO
NO
Are Foodsec and Nut conditions in EVD Risk areas acceptable?
NO
Is FAO already working in these places?
NO
FAO Action: explore support for vulnerable livelihoods
YES
YES
Continue "business as usual" with regular FAO activities (Keep monitoring anyway)
Distributions:
- Food
- animals
- cash
Resources Mobilization
Advocacy
Simplified Decision Tree to Help Implement EVD Preparedness actions
EVD - Ebola Virus Disease
Foodsec - Food Security
Nut - Nutrition
HR - Human Resources
Funding - Funds
Com. - Communication