

EBOLA OUTBREAK

November 2014



THE CRISIS

Ebola is an unprecedented public health emergency. The outbreak began in Guinea in early 2014 and, in contrast to previous Ebola outbreaks, the virus quickly transmitted to urban centres and to Sierra Leone and Liberia. As of early November 2014, there have also been reported cases in Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Spain and the United States.

The Ebola virus causes a severe, often fatal illness. As of 12 November 2014, the total number of probable, confirmed and suspected cases was 14,068, including 5,147 deaths.

The outbreak has ravaged the lives of children, families, and entire communities. The disease is severely undermining social and economic infrastructures in the three most affected countries. With few trained healthcare staff, frail facilities, and inadequate supplies, existing health systems were rapidly overwhelmed by the outbreak and are now under tremendous strain.

Resources to respond to health needs other than Ebola are limited, including pregnant women delivering their babies

without medical care and hindering access to life-saving services such as immunization, HIV treatment and clean water and sanitation.

Health facilities have shut down, trade is hampered, prices have skyrocketed, livelihoods are lost, and schools are closed. These are just some of the countless disruptions being faced by communities, and the threat extends beyond the most affected countries. It is a truly global crisis.

There are signs of hope. Nigeria and Senegal have both extinguished their outbreaks and the rate of new infections in Liberia may be stabilizing. This strengthens our conviction that changing behaviours, and offering care to the sick at community level will stop Ebola. We must remain vigilant and continue to strengthen our response until the outbreak is stopped in all three countries.

UNIQUE CHALLENGES FOR CHILDREN

An estimated 8.5 million children and youth under 20 years old live in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. 2.5 million are under the age of five. For children, the impact spreads far beyond contracting the virus:

- 7,000 children have lost one or both parents to Ebola and are left orphaned, sometimes having to fend for themselves and are facing stigma and rejection from their communities.
- Children who are sick themselves have to be isolated from their families and cannot be held or consoled through direct physical contact.
- The breakdown of services – such as immunization, provision of clean water and sanitation and bed nets – increases the risk of diseases such as measles, cholera and malaria, which could seriously damage the response efforts against Ebola and lead to a significant number of deaths amongst children.
- Children are at a higher risk of severe acute malnutrition as local food markets are likely to stop functioning, causing food shortages and diminished household income.

- Over 3.5 million children are out of school until further notice. If schools remain closed, or teachers are lost to the virus, progress in education will be undone with long-term implications for growth and development.



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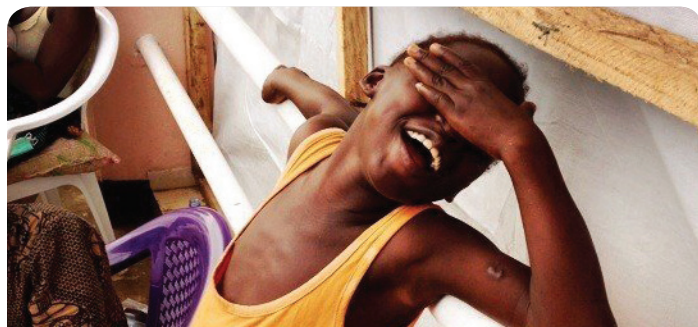
UNICEF is one of the largest agencies providing essential supplies for use in treatment and care centres and we have already delivered more than 3000 metric tonnes of supplies, including protective gloves, safety goggles, medicines, bars of soap and concentrated chlorine.

UNICEF'S RESPONSE

UNICEF works in the heart of some of the most vulnerable communities. We work with partners to halt the spread of the virus and protect and support children and families. Our response efforts include:

- Supporting the operation of Ebola treatment centres by providing critical medical and protective supplies and training personnel.
- Providing 'whole package' support to community care centres, including water supply, sanitation and nutritional support.
- Leading awareness raising efforts in communities to dispel misconceptions and provide critical information about available services.
- Re-establishing general health and nutrition services, including making sure children receive vaccinations, medicines, mosquito nets, nutritional screening and treatment of severe acute malnutrition.
- Providing psychosocial care and support for children and families, and working with partners to reunite separated children with their families.

- Helping to establish continuity of education through innovative approaches to learning, including the use of radio broadcasts as schools will be closed for a prolonged time.



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"Happy! I'm so happy, if I could I would run everywhere to announce the good news to each of them. Some are very weak, some died. Like my Grandma. My mother is waiting for me, my friends too. I hope you'll visit us one day."

Adamsay, 11, just declared Ebola free, bursts out laughing. After spending weeks at the UNICEF-supported Ebola Treatment Unit in Freetown, Sierra Leone, she is able to go back home.