Ebola outbreak

Plan International’s Response and Recommendations
About the Ebola outbreak

A humanitarian and developmental crisis

The Republic of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone are currently grappling with the worst Ebola outbreak ever. To date, 17,145 confirmed, probable and suspected cases of Ebola have been reported in these three countries, resulting in 6,070 deaths.¹

Four other countries - Nigeria, Senegal, Spain, and the United States of America - have reported a case or cases imported from one of the three countries with widespread and intense transmission. Nigeria and Senegal have now been declared Ebola free.

This is both a humanitarian and developmental crisis. The worst affected countries are at the bottom of the human development index and governments are struggling to cope with the crisis.

The speed and scale of new infections and the rapidly rising death rate has overwhelmed fragile health systems and government capacity.

The disease has also dealt a severe blow to the local economy, education, availability of food and the overall protective environment for children in affected communities and beyond.

There is an urgent need for the international community to support affected governments to develop comprehensive National Ebola Outbreak Response Plans and provide the resources required to implement them.

¹ Source: UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response. These numbers are correct as of 4 December 2014, but are subject to increase as the crisis continues.
Ellen Surrendered Finally To EBOLA After Declaring War
-Says Gov’t Is Unable To Fight
-As Citizens, NGOs, Others Call on Int’l. Community

Gov’t 2 vs. EBOLA 10

Total Death Since March 2014-1015

Photo: Plan / Neil Brandvold
Plan International’s Response

Focusing on unmet needs

Plan is responding to the Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, targeting 2,538,071 people directly.

The response focuses on specific areas where there are unmet needs.

These include child protection, food assistance, water and sanitation, health social mobilisation, and enhanced behaviour change through awareness raising activities.

We are coordinating efforts with international, national and local authorities.

Collaborating with International Medical Corps to implement a joint nine-point response plan to address immediate short and long-term needs.

The response plan covers prevention, case management, psychological first aid, child protection and other life-saving measures.

plan-international.org/ebola
Supporting immediate life-saving services and care by providing technical support to governments on education, protection, health and nutrition.

Launching a food and nutrition assistance programme in Guinea, with the United Nations World Food Programme.

Mobilising young people and communities in support of public campaigns and social mobilisation for prevention, case management and re-integration of treated people.

Leading advocacy and communications efforts to bring about global attention and action.

plan-international.org/ebola
The impact on children

Family separation, neglect and abandonment
Children are becoming separated from their caregivers, either due to the death of one or both of their parents or because they are sent to extended family outside affected areas. In the affected countries communal ownership of children has weakened or disappeared.

Social stigma and discrimination
Community cohesion has collapsed, giving way to social stigma and discrimination. Treated children and adults who return to their communities are often feared, discriminated against and threatened, leaving them excluded and socially isolated.

Psychosocial distress
Children and families in affected communities live in fear: they have witnessed extreme suffering of family members, and are confronted with daily news about the outbreak. Children in health facilities and those in interim care centres do not receive any form of social or psychological support. They are left alone at a time when they most need to be comforted.

Lack of education and development opportunities
Opportunities that normally promote children’s psychosocial well-being and healthy development have been reduced. Schools are closed, parents refuse to send their children to activities for fear of contamination and prevent them from gathering in playgrounds.

Impact on livelihoods and exploitation of children
The closure of markets and travel restrictions have disrupted economic activities, which has direct impact on family incomes. More children are therefore being forced to earn income by engaging in activities such as selling palm oil or undertaking hazardous work.
Urgent actions and recommendations

Prioritising containment, prevention, protection and education

In National Ebola Outbreak Response Plans, donor discussions and decisions and humanitarian responses, a number of issues must be prioritised to contain and prevent the outbreak from spreading further, provide life-saving services and to maintain the protection and education of children. These include:

**Contain:**
- The provision of new or additional resources by Western donors and the BRIC countries to fund the Ebola response.
- International support to strengthen government capacity to manage the crisis.

**Prevent:**
- The use of common sensitisation messages to be used by all humanitarian actors and media agencies to avoid contradictory messages and mis-information.
- Investment by the international community in action-oriented research in order to inform the Ebola response, as well as to inform future responses to similar health crises.
- Strengthening community health systems by reactivating the integrated management of childhood illnesses. This must be a long-term engagement of minimum two years.
- The continued scale-up of sensitisation activities focusing on issues such as safe hygiene practices. Young people can and should play an active role in tackling the epidemic through social mobilisation.
Protect:
• The protection of children against violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect must be addressed in National Ebola Outbreak Response Plans.
• Laws, policies and procedures on adoption and alternative care must be present and implemented to protect children who have lost or been separated from their parents due to Ebola.
• Donors must ensure funding and specialised human resources are provided to identify, refer and assist survivors of violence, including neglect and abandonment, sexual, physical and emotional abuse and exploitation. This should be considered life-saving.
• Gender and sex disaggregated information about child casualties, infection rate and children otherwise affected by Ebola must be collected.

Educate:
• Education for all children must be continued through alternative methods such as radio, mobile technology and Internet.
• Education partners must support local and national education authorities to develop and budget for contingency plans at the school, local and national level.
Plan in West Africa

Plan has been working in Sierra Leone since 1976, helping children to access their rights to education, health, livelihood, sanitation and protection. Plan’s programmes benefit about 700,000 children in 1126 communities across the country.

Plan has been working in Liberia since 1982. The organisation works in partnership with the communities and the government to ensure children have access to quality education, good health and adequate sanitation, and that they are well protected. The organisation has 12,250 sponsored children spread over 176 communities in its programme areas.

Plan has been working in Guinea since 1989, helping children to access their rights to education, health, sanitation and protection. The organisation has 34,000 sponsored children spread over 65 communities across the country.

Contact:
Louise Hagendijk
Plan EU Office
E: louise.hagendijk@plan-international.org
T: 0032 2504 6056

plan-international.org/ebola