

Executive Board of UN-Women – 1st Regular Session 2015
Informal Briefing on the Operational Response of UN-Women at Country Level
UN-Women Response to the Ebola Crisis

Venue: CR 1 of the CB
Date & Time: February 9, 1:30-2:30

Current Situation

- The current Ebola outbreak is the deadliest on record. As of 14 January, 2014 a total of 21,000 confirmed, probable, and suspected cases of EVD have been reported in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone with more than 8,300 deaths recorded
- Nevertheless, in the three most-affected countries (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone), recent progress has been observed. As of mid-January, the World Health Organization (WHO) is reporting that case incidence is declining in all three nations as nationally-led response efforts are turning the tide on terms of incidence and impact
- According to recent WHO reports, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone all reported their lowest weekly number of cases in months. Guinea reported its lowest weekly total of new cases since 17th of August 2014; Liberia has had no confirmed cases nationally for the final two days of the week ending the 11th of January 2015; and Sierra Leone has recorded its lowest weekly total of new cases since 31 August 2014.

The Gender dimension of the Ebola crisis

- UN Women is working closely with UN, government and civil society partners to ensure a gender-sensitive response and integrate gender equality dimensions into all policies and programming.
- An efficient and effective response to the outbreak must specifically address the virus' impact on women and girls, in order to stem the tide of the epidemic, and to protect women's health, livelihoods and security.
- Although women and girls in their roles as caregivers and frontline health workers are at a heightened risk of infection, they are, at the same time, tremendous assets to the emergency response, and their participation and leadership is crucial to its effectiveness.
- At present, verified data on Ebola that has been disaggregated by sex is very limited. In addition, underreporting is likely due to overwhelmed responders, particularly in Liberia. Thus, the exact impact of the outbreak on women and girls remains unknown, and data is often conflicting. In this context, UN Women is working with government partners to ensure sex-disaggregated data collection and the design of gender-sensitive data collection tools.

UN Women's Response

- Drawing on its expertise, UN Women is supporting nationally-led efforts to address the epidemic, including strengthening government capacity to deal with the outbreak's gender-dimensions and mobilizing gender-sensitive advocacy campaigns.
- Parallel to these efforts and in alignment with its goal of women's empowerment, UN Women is working across the affected countries in West Africa to ensure that existing women's networks have increased knowledge, confidence, and the capacity to effectively engage in Ebola awareness,

prevention and management within affected and non-affected communities. UN Women's response is specifically focused in the following four areas:

Advocacy and sensitization on Ebola and its gender dimensions:

- In Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, UN Women is supporting sensitization and advocacy efforts on Ebola and its gender dimensions, by creating and distributing educational materials on the outbreak. In order to maximize accessibility and impact, these materials are made available in local languages
- UN Women is also mobilising women's networks and organizations to contribute to Ebola infection prevention and control educational campaigns, and continue to support community radio dialogues for women, men and youth focused on facts and the eradication of stigma
- At the regional level, UN Women is engaging closely with the Mano River Union and countries within the Union (Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire) to harness women's leadership and social mobilization to contain the epidemic.

Economic Empowerment and restoration of livelihoods:

- In Liberia, in partnership with the African Development Bank, the World Bank and the Mano River Union First Ladies Initiative, UN Women is supporting the creation of rural-based support networks for Ebola affected families, with a view to offering psycho-social support and to facilitating the eventual 're-integration' of affected families.
- UN Women is also expanding its support for women whose livelihoods have been affected by the outbreak by increasing access to renewable energy sources
- In Sierra Leone, UN Women is targeting women in their key role as care-providers and as traditional healers, and advocating for household food and needs-assessments with a gender lens.

Building national institutional capacities to address the gender dimensions of the outbreak:

- In Sierra Leone UN Women has temporarily seconded a staff member to UNMEER in order to support the systematic mainstreaming of gender into the National Ebola Response Mechanism, through the provision of targeted, quality technical support
- In addition, UN Women is collaborating with the national statistics bureau (Statistics Sierra Leone) to deploy 15 Statistical Officers to WHO in order strengthen health systems in all 14 Districts and at National Emergency Response Centre (NERC) in Freetown
- Furthermore, UN Women is conducting Training of Trainers on Ebola awareness, prevention and management for relevant government ministries and women leaders in multiple countries throughout the sub-region.
- UN Women is also committed to collaborating with Ministries of Gender and of Health for sex-disaggregated data collection, including the design of gender-sensitive data collection tools

Strengthening community capacity for contact tracking, monitoring and reporting on Ebola, and in particular the gendered aspects of the outbreak:

- UN Women will strengthen the capacity of existing women's networks to track, monitor and report on cases of infection in affected communities, with a focus on the gendered aspects of the outbreak and disaggregated data by sex.