Informal Briefing on the Operational Response of UN-Women at Country Level

UN-Women Response to the Ebola Crisis in Liberia and Sierra Leone

UN Women Executive Board – 1st Regular Session 2015
February 9th, 2015

Overview and Background

• **Current Ebola outbreak deadliest on record** – 22,500 confirmed, probable, and suspected cases of EVD in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone; more than 9,000 deaths recorded (WHO Ebola Situation Report – 2 Feb 2015)

• Unprecedented **magnitude** and **scale** with extraordinary **public health challenges**

• **The tide appears to be turning** – In the three most-affected countries (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone) as of late-January, World Health Organization (WHO) was reporting case incidence was declining due to **nationally-led response efforts**

• At present, **verified data** on Ebola that has been **disaggregated by sex** is limited: exact impact of the outbreak on women and girls is still being determined
## Impact of the Ebola Outbreak on Women

### Economy
- Growing inflation and decreased food security due to rising cost of food and essential goods

### Livelihoods
- Livelihoods disrupted in informal (i.e. cross border trade) and agricultural sectors where women are disproportionately represented
- Micro credit and loan services severely depleted

### Health Services
- As caregivers and health workers, women are at the frontlines and face a heightened risk of infection
- Access to already fragile health systems severely limited (with increase in mortality rates for pregnant women, limited/no access to basic healthcare, etc.)

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## Impact of the Ebola Outbreak on Women

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<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Education</td>
<td>• Schools are closed since the outbreak; potential loss of a full academic year for students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender Based Violence (GBV)</td>
<td>• Generalized and widespread insecurity places women and girls particularly at risk of sexual and gender based violence and abuse</td>
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<td>Stigmatization</td>
<td>• Adolescent girls and young women are among the most marginalized and at-risk populations in an outbreak</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Women and girls' vulnerability to stigma, exclusion and abandonment is reinforced by lack of access to information, high rates of illiteracy, and widespread misconceptions about the disease which often spread faster than the EVD response mechanisms can contain</td>
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Elements of a gender-sensitive response

Based on UN Women's experience, a gender sensitive response to the Ebola outbreak should include:

- Collection of sex disaggregated data and analysis
- Participation and leadership of women and girls
- A focus on healthcare (gender-sensitive prevention and treatment efforts and access to essential services, including psychosocial support) and education
- Strengthened food security and livelihoods (to mitigate impact of economic losses for women and their families)
- Protection and freedom from violence

UN Women Response: Focus on Partnerships

UN Women is working closely with governments, UN and civil society partners to ensure that prevention and treatment efforts address the needs and roles of women and girls by:

- Supporting nationally and regionally led efforts to address the epidemic (e.g. partnerships with Ministries of Gender and Health, Mano River Union, African Development Bank)
- Strengthening capacity, knowledge and confidence of women's groups and networks to engage in Ebola awareness raising and management within affected and non-affected communities
- Leading coordination efforts within the UN System to leverage existing resources in support of gender-sensitive responses to EVD (i.e. through UN Country Teams and joint programming)
Ebola Response: Liberia

UN Women’s response to the EVD (Ebola Virus Disease) outbreak in Liberia followed a three pronged approach:

- Humanitarian and emergency response
- Early recovery
- Coordination and gender mainstreaming

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Early Recovery Efforts: Liberia

Early recovery efforts in Liberia focused on:

- Community based programmes

- Impact of urbanization on transmission

- Resilience (through education; Technical, educational and vocational training; literacy/girls education; employment)

- Prevention (through productive safety nets; training of community-based healthcare/health care workers; community-policing/border control; enhanced social cohesion; and women's empowerment)

- Early Warning/Detection (though surveillance; community-based healthcare workers; and community-policing/border control)
Lessons Learned: Liberia

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<th>Assessment</th>
<th>UN Women Response</th>
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<td>The Ebola outbreak has further increased the vulnerability of women and girls in Liberia</td>
<td>Scaling up support to address the underlying drivers of the gender-differentiated impact of the epidemic</td>
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<td>Differentiated impact of the outbreak on women as compared to men due to traditional gender-based roles, behaviours and power structures</td>
<td>Supporting civil society organizations (CSOs) and governments to engage traditional structures and leadership as well as men and boys as partners</td>
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<td>Women continue to face profound health, livelihood and security concerns</td>
<td>Supporting economic recovery programmes (with a specific focus on rural women, and women engaged in cross – border trade)</td>
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<td>Medium and long term impacts of the outbreak on women’s reproductive and productive opportunities must be mitigated</td>
<td>Promoting initiatives for women’s to access justice Focusing on UN System coordination and partnerships</td>
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Ebola Response: Sierra Leone

UN Women’s response to the EVD outbreak in Sierra Leone followed a three-pronged approach:

- Advocacy and sensitization
- Building national institutional capacities
- Strengthening targeted gender response to the outbreak in all EVD response pillars

Photo courtesy of UN Women Sierra Leone
Early Recovery Efforts: Sierra Leone

Recovery efforts in Sierra Leone are focusing on:

• Participating and contributing to Sierra Leone Ebola Early Recovery Planning and Interventions

• Supporting the implementation of Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) interventions (with a specific focus on working with teenage girls)

• Supporting women’s economic empowerment in the post-EVD period (particularly for women-headed households)

• Supporting systems development for transition from early Ebola recovery period to sustainable development – by partnering with the national gender machinery to work on normative and development frameworks and initiatives

Lessons Learned: Sierra Leone

The following elements have been integral to the success of UN Women’s response to the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone:

* Coordinated response

* Sustained surveillance

* Gender sensitive analysis of outbreak’s impact

* Equitable and efficient capacity building

* Support to economic recovery

* Scaled up support to Ebola survivors (including psychosocial support to orphans)
Financing the Response to EVD

Through generous support from bilateral donors (Governments of Japan and Germany), UN Women is actively implementing its Regional Strategy for the Response to EVD in West and Central Africa – with a total budget of US $4,000,000

Funding UN Women’s Ebola Response

- Government of Japan (US $500,000)
- Government of Germany (US $10,000)
- UN Women (core allocation) (US $480,000)
- Funding Gap (US $2,610,000)

Thank you