

Liberia's third wave Ebola-free Declaration: A proof of resilience

Statement By Dr. Alex Gassasira of the World Health Organization



Dr. Gassasira of the WHO Presents Declaration to Dr. Kate of MOH

Today, Liberia has once again interrupted transmission of Ebola Virus. This marks the second time in a four month period that the World Health Organization has declared Liberia free of Ebola Virus transmission.

But as the past few months have shown, the Ebola fight is not over. Fifty days after WHO declared Liberia free of Ebola, on June 29 an Ebola case was identified through a dead body swab collected from a patient from Margibi County. Thanks to Ebola surveillance and incident System, rapid response plans, and experienced field teams, the Ministry of Health and its partners quickly identified and isolated five additional cases and 143 contacts in Margibi and Montserrado counties. Four patients got early treatment in an ETU, recovered from Ebola, and are back with their families and communities. Hence, this confirms that Liberia has completed two incubation cycles according to WHO standards.

Today is a day to celebrate, but we must not forget what we have

MOH and media strengthen Partnership In Improving Health Sector


Thomas Nagbe makes a presentation on behalf of MOH at the Media training

The Ministry of Health in collaboration with partners held a one-day training Workshop for 50 media Personnel. It was aimed at acknowledging the immense contribution of the media during the EVD outbreak, to forge a partnership with the media as the health sector restores basic health services and to orientate the fourth estate of Liberia on the Integrated Disease Surveillance response (IDSR) Risk Communication, Health Emergencies/crisis reporting and other current health interventions which are trending.

Friday, October 2, was the date and the City of Kakata was the venue of the workshop which graced and facilitated by the acting chairman for the Incident Management System (IMS), Thomas Nagbe. Mr. Nagbe keen to point out the role of the media in the development of Liberia's health sector. He considered the link between the media and the community as cardinal and described them as important stakeholders in the sector to in the Health service delivery activities.

He noted that lessons learned from the Ebola crisis enabled the system

learned. As long as there is one person with Ebola in our region Ebola is still a threat. The Ministry of Health and its partners will continue monitoring Liberia's borders and rebuilding and the Health care system to assure that Liberians remain safe. Measures also have been taken to improve surveillance and monitoring in the 15 counties for Ebola and diseases.

Other jobs not over. The Ministry of Health will maintain heightened surveillance for Ebola through community based surveillance initiatives developed during the course of the outbreak, and a policy of swabbing all dead bodies before burial. The Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Health has mandated all Health facilities and funeral homes to swab all dead bodies, while communities are encouraged to call 4455 or alert local health officials so the body can be swabbed before burial.

While WHO is confident that Liberia has interrupted transmission, outbreaks persist in neighboring Guinea and Sierra Leone, creating a high risk that infected people may cross into Liberia. Therefore, WHO is for Liberia to continue 90 days of heightened surveillance for potential Ebola cases.

Keeping Ebola out of Liberia is not just the government's business, or partners' business; it is everyone's business! Every citizen has been vital in stopping the worst disease outbreak in our country's history. Now that Liberia is again declared Ebola free, let us remember to:

- Maintain good hand washing practices,
- Report all sick people with signs and symptoms of Ebola
- Make sure you are well if you are travelling and have your temperature checked at every check point
- Keep all sick people away from others
- Allow all dead bodies to be swabbed before burial (Taking saliva from the mouth of the dead body with cotton ball for checking)

Today we take a moment to acknowledge that we have again stopped the transmission of Ebola in Liberia. We have reached this milestone thanks to the sacrifices and unbreakable strength of the response team. We commit to do everything in our power to stop Ebola. The systems in place will not only help against Ebola but also against other disease as we move forward to restore health services and protect the people of Liberia.

to clearly showed the Health sector weaknesses and provide opportunities in mitigating the potential health threats and socio-economical devastation. He intimated that, it was through the media the people were informed on what they could do to prevent the EVD. He realized the need for Stakeholders to strengthen their relationship with the Liberian media to get the necessary messages and services far and wide to the people.

Welcome and introductory statements were made by the County Health Officer of Margibi County, Dr. Adolphus Yeiah, ushering in the journalists as guests of the county and went on to realize the need to design and sustain a stronger relationship between the health sector and the media, which the Ministry of Health and partners consider as key in delivering needed health services.

Key Presentations were delivered by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Media Consultant, Professor James Wolo in Risk Communication.

Group Discussions were facilitated by the President of the PUL, Abdullai Kamara to stimulate a dialogue aimed at assessing the quality of role play of the media during the EVD. Group presentations were made their respective findings.

The exercise culminated into the journalists drawing up a ten count resolution to strengthen and sustain Media-Health Sector engagement and collaboration. They are as follows:

1. Strengthen HPNL to serve Focal Point, Decentralize and incorporate rural based reporters
2. Sustain engagement through MOH & Media (HPNL)
3. Organize follow-up sessions
4. Capacity Building through HPN
5. Develop key messages/Guide
6. MOH Should empower CHO to utilize Community Radio Stations
7. Formalize relationship b/w PUL/MOH
8. HPN should encourage collaboration with existing reporters (Local Voices)
9. CHTs should organize briefings with Media
10. MOH should Address media quarterly

Liberia Government dedicates US Government Funded emergency operations Center


Dr. Bernice Dahn and US Ambassador Deborah Malac Cut ribbon to dedicate EOC

As part of the rebuilding of Liberia's health system following the Ebola outbreak, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has turned over a newly erected Emergency Operating Center to the Ministry of Health (MOH). The center is located opposite the MOH and adjacent to the TB Annex at 72nd Junction. It is meant to enhance collection of data and information about Ebola and other life threatening diseases.

The CDC Country Director, Desmond Williams, indicated that the center will be a place to train health workers to be adequately prepared for outbreaks and surveillance. He said 30 health workers were trained there in Epidemiology. Mr. Williams said at a press briefing that CDC spent US\$6 million to erect the structure. He also indicated that US\$75.7 million has been invested in the counties for operation of emergency centers to address any outbreaks.

In separate remarks, US Ambassador Deborah Malac and officials at

Rural Women Groups agree to form listening groups


Participants at the Women's Training workshop

Women groups from Margibi County have agreed to form Radio listen groups as a way of supporting a component of the general communication strategy put in place for the Ministry of Health to increase awareness in the public. The activity will include monitoring of Health media messages on national and community radio stations by community members, that participate in large community meetings and reporting to County Health communication team for analysis.

the Centers for Disease Control said the Paul G. Allen Ebola Program provided US\$100 million toward the fight against Ebola in West Africa.

Ambassador Malac said the newly dedicated center is now the final home of the Emergency Operating Center having operated in a temporary facility in Sinkor for a year and a half. A representative of CDC, Jeffrey Bryant, in his remarks expressed delight over the construction of the center and attributed the success to the Paul G. Allen Ebola Program. He said the Paul G. Allen Ebola Program was very timely in responding to their request for help to West Africans affected by Ebola when they at CDC expressed the need for a quick emergency response and intervention to the outbreak.

Also making remarks, Brennan Banks, Deputy Director for Programs at the Paul G. Allen Ebola Program said the center has several pieces of equipment, including computers which will help Liberian medical personnel to quickly respond to data gathering and training of local staff to address disease outbreaks. He hoped that the center will be an establishment of excellence for all Liberians to benefit.

In her words of gratitude to the US Government, Health Minister Dr. Bernice Dahn said the erection of the center is in compliance with the consensus reached with partners to revitalize the health sector. Dr. Dahn said the Ministry has developed nine pillars, among which are the erection of the Emergency Operating Center, training of competent health workers, establishment of public health facilities and information gathering and data collection. She underscored that the US Government has been working along with the Ministry of Health in implementing the plan to rebuild the collapsed health system.

The support is evidenced by the establishment of Emergency Operating Centers in all of Liberia's 15 counties, said Dr. Dahn. She further indicated that the dedication of the center put government under obligation to make budgetary allotment for its operations.

Meanwhile, the CDC also pledged to support government through the Ministry of Health to ensure that technical equipment and training are provided to get Liberia prepared for any emergencies.

Several pieces of Solar rechargeable radio sets were donated by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) as initial support to the strategy. The radio sets were distributed by the National Health promotion Division (NHPD) of the Ministry of Health during the closing ceremonies at The Carter Center Access to justice training for women.

Several women group leaders and female traditional and local leaders participated in the three-day training held in Kakata City, Margibi County from August 19-21 2015. The training also included topics on Ebola prevention and control and was presented by a master trainer from the National Health promotion Division of the Ministry of

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