

Overview of the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone

The ongoing epidemic of the Ebola virus disease broke out in Guinea in December 2013 and has spread throughout and beyond the nation's borders to Liberia and Sierra Leone. The first case of Ebola in Sierra Leone was reported in May 2014 in the Eastern Region of Kailahun. Since then, the Ebola outbreak has spread to all districts in the country. The disease has infected some 6,599 people and claimed 1,398 lives in Sierra Leone (total of 15,935 reported cases of Ebola virus disease and 5,698 deaths; see Ebola report of the WHO (*World Health Organization*)¹ from 26th of November 2014). This Ebola outbreak is the most severe in recorded history both in the number of cases and fatalities. The Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Health and Sanitation is working tirelessly to contain the spread of the disease. Government institutions have rolled sensitization programs to facilitate the sensitization of people with respect to the prevention, causes and possible treatment procedures of the Ebola virus disease (which included a nationwide three days stay-home). These efforts have also been complemented by several organizations also engaging in sensitization drives using various methods.



Effects of the outbreak

The Ebola outbreak has had tremendous effects on various sectors in Sierra Leone by decelerating their programs and activities. This includes the operations of MECH which have been affected in the following ways.

Getting food supplies

Most markets that hosted trade fairs have been closed and the trade fairs banned until further notice. Madina is no exception as it used to run its popular every Friday trade fair where people used to come from all over the country to trade. It was from this market that the orphanage used to buy all items needed to keep it running at better price. Now we have to travel miles to purchase the items needed. Getting most of the food supplies needed for the orphanage has become expensive and tedious due to inflation and because most of it has to be purchased in Freetown.

Education

After schools closed in July, the Government ordered that all schools including Government and private operated must remain closed until after the outbreak will

¹ <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/situation-reports/en/?m=20141126> (02.12.2014)

have been contained. The order of the Government led to the indefinite closure of the orphanage school and children have not benefitted from any form of education to date.

Since there is no clear indication of when schools will be reopened, Management of the orphanage has been thinking about other learning methods that could be utilized to ensure that the children at the orphanage continue receiving some form of education while they wait for schools to reopen. This could include e-learning systems.

Health

Because of the Ebola outbreak, the Government also ordered the closure of all small private health facilities. People are scared of going to hospitals for fear of getting infected with Ebola or because they receive little or no care at these facilities. In that regard, Management has also been considering the possibility of getting a clinic, resident nurse and medical supplies on the premises of the orphanage that will provide medical care for orphans and staff if and when they fall ill.