

NEWS IN BRIEF**A Global Health Crisis Unfolds**

NOVEMBER 2014

In December 2013, in the West African country of Guinea, two-year-old Emile Ouamouno came down with a mysterious illness. He died after just four days of fever and vomiting. The sickness spread quickly in Guinea and then to neighboring Liberia and Sierra Leone. In March 2014, the World Health Organization reported that this was an outbreak of Ebola. In less than seven months, over 13,000 cases have been reported in West Africa. Nearly 5,000 people have died.

Ebola is a virus that is transmitted by direct contact with bodily fluids of infected people or animals. With no known cure or vaccine, it is extremely deadly.

Though Ebola outbreaks were well known in other parts of Africa, the disease has rarely been seen in West Africa. This made it hard for health workers to recognize and treat the disease at first. As the virus traveled to crowded cities with people living close together, it spread quickly. Fear, lack of knowledge, and rumors made things worse. People were afraid to listen to health advice from governments they did not trust. Weak health systems without enough doctors and hospitals became overwhelmed and could not keep up with the growing number of cases. An international effort was needed to stop Ebola.

Today humanitarian organizations and governments are working hard to provide lifesaving information and needed supplies to affected communities. Helping to stop Ebola in West Africa will help prevent the spread of Ebola worldwide.



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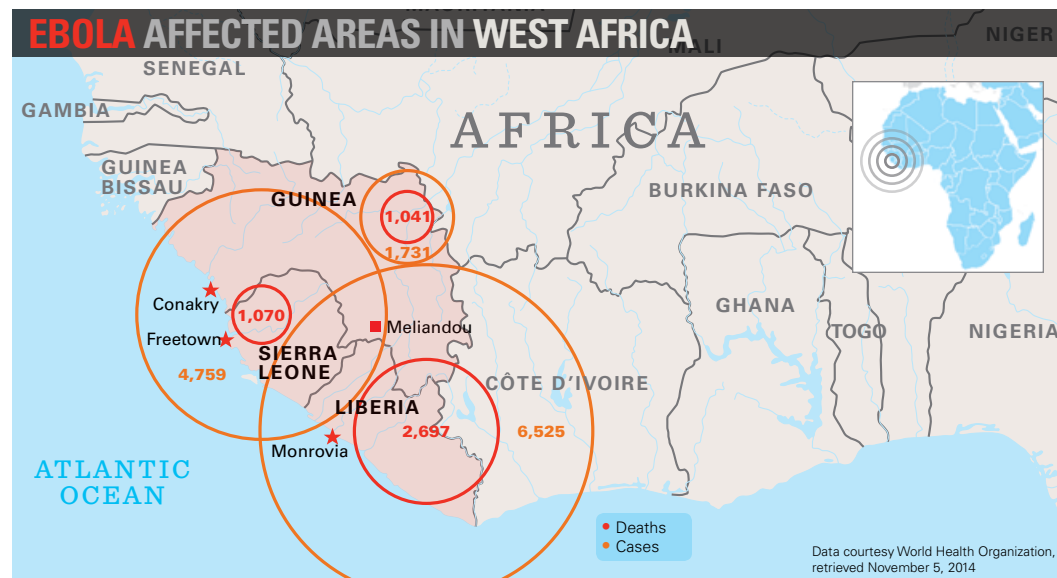
Liberian girls look at a poster distributed by UNICEF with information on how to prevent the spread of Ebola.

What Are the Odds?

- **1 in 662,000** odds of winning an Olympic medal
- **1 in 10,000,000** odds of being elected President of the United States
- **1 in 13,300,000** odds of catching Ebola in the United States this year

“The bottom line is we know how Ebola spreads. We know how to stop it from spreading.”

—Thomas Frieden
Director, Centers for Disease Control
Atlanta, Georgia



Hawa's Story: Survivors Join the Fight Against Ebola

In the communities affected by Ebola, there's a feeling that the virus has settled in with no plans to move on. Chlorine buckets sit outside restaurants for handwashing. Crackly radios broadcast conversations about Ebola. Handshaking has been replaced by a brush of elbows.

Fourteen-year-old Hawa Kamokai from Sierra Leone knows this feeling well. She became sick with Ebola after losing family to the disease. "I was in the hospital when my aunt died," explains Hawa. "Just after they buried her, my younger brother died. Since then, we have all been infected. At first I felt a pain in my chest. It was so painful. I used to cry."

Hawa is not alone. Children make up almost one-fourth of Ebola cases in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. And at least 3,700 children have lost one or both parents to Ebola. In addition to coping with the loss of family, some children are also dealing with rejection by relatives who fear infection. These children face discrimination, and many are left to fend for themselves.

Thankfully, through the help of health workers and groups like UNICEF, Hawa and hundreds of other children are surviving Ebola. "It feels good because now I can see my friends," says Hawa. "I can be happy again."

After a full recovery, Hawa is immune to Ebola. She now spends her days caring for other children with the disease. She feeds them, distracts them with stories and games, and helps to fill their sadness. "It's the older ones I think about most," says Hawa. "They know exactly what's happening. I try to encourage them by getting them to explain their feelings."

Survivors like Hawa play a special role in the fight against Ebola. They are understanding caretakers who are educating others to put an end to myths about the disease and discrimination against its victims. Through their brave stories, young people like Hawa are bringing their communities together in the fight against a killer disease.



© UNICEF VIDEO

Watch a video of Hawa talking about her experiences at bit.ly/hawastory.

Think, Write, Discuss...

- What do you think has been the biggest challenge for Hawa in dealing with the Ebola outbreak? What do you think would be hardest for you in that situation?
- How do outbreaks of diseases like Ebola affect a whole community, even the people who don't become infected?
- How has Hawa's supporting other children helped her with her own healing? What important role do survivors play in their communities?

Compose Your Thoughts:

What would you say to Hawa if you met her? How would you help her and others affected by Ebola if you could? Develop a brief letter or video in which you share your thoughts.



Five-year-old Ebola survivor Abu Bangura stands with another child outside a treatment facility in Sierra Leone.

Ebola Strikes, UNICEF Responds

Ebola is causing extreme distress in the lives of children, and UNICEF is there to help. Below read about some of the problems the outbreak has caused, and how UNICEF and its partners are protecting, supporting, and educating millions of children in response.

NEED: Weak health systems in West Africa have left many communities without medical care for common illnesses and routine immunizations. In addition, more children are experiencing hunger and malnutrition because their families have been unable to plant or harvest crops.

NEED: Many children have witnessed the suffering and death of family members. Some have been pushed away by communities who fear the children will pass the disease to others. These orphans and other troubled children need physical and emotional assistance.

NEED: With schools closed due to the Ebola outbreak, almost 5 million children ages 3 to 17 are missing out on their education. We know from experience that the longer children stay away from school, the less likely they are to return to it.

RESPONSE: In airlift after airlift, UNICEF has been delivering essential supplies to children in Ebola-affected regions. These lifesaving shipments include health kits and food packets called RUTF (ready-to-use therapeutic food).

RESPONSE: UNICEF is training people who have survived Ebola to assist children since they are immune to the disease. Over the next six months, more than 2,500 survivors will be trained to provide care and support to children in treatment centers. (See *Hawa's Story* on page 2.)

RESPONSE: A radio education program was recently launched in the country of Sierra Leone. Lessons in core subjects are being broadcast to nearly 1.7 million students in their homes. It's a good way to learn until schools can be reopened.


HOW YOU CAN #StopEbola

Stay connected and current with these news websites for children: [CBBC Newsround](#), [KidsPost](#), and [Nick News](#).

Throw a #StopEbola fundraising event. Raise funds and awareness in your community. Visit bit.ly/ebolafundraising to learn how.

Obtain accurate information. Distinguish between Ebola fact and fiction.

Pitch in. Text Ebola to 864233 to donate \$10 or visit U.S. Fund for UNICEF's Ebola donation page at bit.ly/eboladonation.

unicef  works in more than 190 countries to help kids survive and grow. UNICEF supplies medicines and vaccinations, clean water, nutrition, shelter, and education. UNICEF also responds when emergencies occur, such as earthquakes, floods, and war.



BACKGROUND

The spread of Ebola in West Africa has been fueled by limited health infrastructure, poor hygiene practices, and the inability to control and screen population movements across borders.

Fears, rumors, and lack of understanding about the disease within local communities; lack of experience among health care workers; and limited capacities for rapid response have further aggravated the situation.

The outbreak has placed an extreme burden on already weak health systems. As of early September, some 301 health care workers have themselves become infected during routine contact with patients in health

facilities, leading some staff to flee out of fear.

In the meantime, public mistrust of health care systems and of government authorities in affected countries is mounting. Some treatment centers and clinics have closed, while the numbers of those still in operation are not enough to meet the growing needs, with many turning patients away.

The families who keep sick patients at home risk the further spread of the virus. The high level of community exposure is further exacerbated by resistance to proposed response measures as well as by traditional burial practices.



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Key Stats (as of November 5, 2014)

- There are 13,042 confirmed, probable, and suspected cases in six affected countries, with 4,818 reported deaths.
- Some 8.5 million children and youth live in Ebola-affected areas.
- Without additional help and precautions taken, approximately 1.4 million people in Liberia and Sierra Leone could become infected by January 20, 2015.

SOURCES: WHO, U.S. Fund for UNICEF, CDC

TEACHING IDEAS**"A Global Health Crisis Unfolds" (page 1)**

- Address the concepts in the third paragraph with students. For instance, how might rumors have made the epidemic worse? Why is an international effort needed to stop Ebola?
- Highlight the "What Are the Odds?" data box. Facilitate a discussion about how rare Ebola is in the United States, myths versus facts, media sensationalism, etc.
- Ask the following questions about the map:
 - From Meliandou, Guinea, in which direction did Ebola spread to Sierra Leone? To Liberia?
 - Which country has the greatest number of Ebola deaths? (*Liberia*) In which country do the greatest proportion of Ebola cases result in deaths?

(*Guinea*) Which do you think is the bigger problem, and why?

- For research: What might explain why Ebola has spread minimally to countries that neighbor these three?

"Hawa's Story: Survivors Join the Fight Against Ebola" (page 2)

- Engage students with the "Think, Write, Discuss" questions.
- Show the poignant UNICEF video of Hawa at bit.ly/hawastory (1:33). Discuss the emotional and psychological impact of the epidemic on children, responding with care to your own students' strong reactions.
- Assign the narrative task "Compose Your Thoughts" using well-structured event sequences (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3).

"Ebola Strikes, UNICEF Responds" / "How You Can #StopEbola" (page 3)

- Explore students' feelings about the idea of their school being closed for months on end. Ask what the negative consequences might be, and to compare with the consequences for West African children. Debate the solution of schooling by radio, and discuss what might be an appropriate solution in your community.
- Discuss how your students can help children in Ebola-affected countries. Note the hashtag #StopEbola for students on social media.
- Emphasize the need for funds, and encourage students to organize a school fundraiser. Employ the suggestions and poster at bit.ly/ebolafundraising.