



Save the Children



SAVE THE CHILDREN'S EBOLA RESPONSE

Response, Recovery, Rehabilitation

Save the Children works in more than
120 countries. We save children's lives.
We fight for their rights. We help them
fulfill their potential.

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Providing life-saving support to children in West Africa

Over a year since the Ebola epidemic began, the outbreak has now killed more people than all previous known outbreaks of the virus combined. Across the three worst-affected countries, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, almost 25,000 people, including more than 3,600 children, have now been infected, and over 10,300 have died. At least 16,000 children have lost one or more of their parents to the disease, and many of these children now face being stigmatised by communities fearful of being infected.

Striking some of the weakest health systems in the world, this outbreak took hold in one of the most challenging contexts ever encountered by Save the Children. In order to deal with the crisis effectively, we had to build health infrastructure and information systems from scratch that would normally take years to develop. We have had to be extremely agile, constantly monitoring the situation and quickly revising strategies as conditions change.

Today, transmission of the virus remains widespread in Guinea, and concerns are growing about the risk of the virus spreading, now that borders have been reopened and rivers are low and more easily crossed. We remain vigilant and continue to work in partnership with national governments and other charities to increase awareness and limit the devastation caused by the epidemic.

Over 9 million children live in areas affected by Ebola, and the impact on their communities has been enormous. The three most-affected countries are all recovering from long periods of conflict and instability; the challenges these countries and their people faced were huge, even before Ebola hit. In Liberia, 73% of families have suffered a fall in their income, and an estimated 46% of the country's workforce are now unemployed as a result of the epidemic, while 180,000 people have lost their jobs in Sierra Leone. This decline, coupled with a dramatic increase in food prices, has left families struggling to buy enough to eat. The fragile health infrastructure collapsed and schools were closed for more than six months. As a result, immunisation programs have faltered, while child labour, sexual exploitation, and teenage pregnancies have all risen dramatically.

We've worked in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea since the 1990s, and began responding to this emergency in March 2013 conducting community awareness and hygiene promotion to limit the spread. We're doing whatever it takes to support communities left devastated by this epidemic and we're in this for the long haul, committed to helping these countries recover for the next three years and beyond. So far we've directly reached almost 870,000 people across the affected countries with our life-saving work, and significantly, we are approaching zero-transmissions in Liberia. This wouldn't have been possible without your support. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Michael von Bertele

“Striking some of the weakest health systems in the world, this outbreak took hold in one of the most challenging contexts ever encountered by Save the Children. In order to deal with the crisis effectively, we had to build health infrastructure and information systems from scratch that would normally take years to develop”



Jojo* a one year old girl, is cared for by a health worker at the Ebola Treatment Unit in Bong, having tested positive for Ebola. Against all odds, Jojo made a miraculous recover, as did her mother. Yet this isn't the end of their hardship. All of their belongings have been burned as a precaution to limit the spread of Ebola, and their husband, father, and breadwinner has died. Life cannot simply go back to normal.

Their situation is an all too common example of the lasting impact this epidemic will have on those who have been touched by it. The long-term effect of this outbreak will be felt for years to come, and entire communities will need support long after the last Ebola case has been treated.

Gemma Gillie/Save the Children

Saving lives whatever it takes

We're working across all three of the most-affected countries, providing healthcare, protecting children and helping families rebuild their lives. In addition, we're communicating with and educating communities, as we believe that communication is the key to tackling this epidemic once and for all. To truly eradicate this virus, and prevent future epidemics, we need to ensure that people know how to recognise Ebola and what to do when they suspect a case. That's why educating communities is at the heart of every aspect of our response.

In Sierra Leone, with your help, our focus on prevention, treatment, and rebuilding has reached more than 541,000 people, including over 276,000 children, by:

- Managing an 80-bed Ebola Treatment Centre in Kerry Town, a short distance from the capital, Freetown, which has treated over 280 people and discharged 145 survivors. In January a 12-year-old boy was the 100th Ebola survivor to be discharged from Centre; he is now well on the way to a full recovery, eating well, walking by himself and eager to play again.
- Linked with the Centre in Kerry Town, we recently opened an Observation Interim Care Centre for children who've been in direct contact with the virus. In the Centre we're able to monitor and care for at-risk children, particularly those without carers, and isolate and treat children who begin to show symptoms.
- Rehabilitating water and sanitation facilities in 12 community health centres.
- Training community health workers to spread the word about the signs and symptoms of Ebola, and how to prevent transmission. So far we've reached nearly 530,000 people with targeted health messaging.
- Supporting over 1,000 community health workers on a house-to-house campaign educating people about the virus.
- Supporting the reunification of unaccompanied or orphaned children with their families, reunifying 194 children to date.
- Holding counselling sessions with children, their caregivers and relatives, supporting almost 1,300 children so far.
- Carrying out awareness-raising activities within affected communities to help prevent vulnerable women and girls becoming victim to gender-based violence.
- Providing business skills training to young people affected by Ebola, equipping them with the means to start rebuilding their lives.
- More than 8,000 schools are still closed across Sierra Leone, but are due to begin reopening mid-April following a eight-month shutdown that left 1.8 million children out of school. During this time we've been setting up peer learning groups, training teachers to support these groups, and providing children with learning materials. We've also distributed radios to households across the country so that children can access radio learning programmes, and mobilised teachers to raise awareness of the radio programmes in their communities.



Daniel, 18, was the first Ebola survivor discharged from the Save the Children run Ebola Treatment Centre in Kerry Town, Sierra Leone. He lost 27 members of his family to the virus, including his mother, brother, sisters, aunt and cousins. He now works at the Centre's Observational Interim Care Centre, caring for children affected by Ebola.

"I always have this strong, strong, strong belief that whatever thing you are doing, just believe that you are going to make it," says Daniel. "Coming here to work, I appreciate it and I'm happy, because it will take out some sad moments. It will make me have somewhere that I can start to prepare myself, and it will give me some courage to move on with life, to forget what has happened and focus on what the future will tell."

Rebecca Stewart/Save the Children



The Community Care Centre is a community-based approach that aims to provide a rapid way of isolating and treating patients suspected of having Ebola, while offering families and communities the opportunity to remain close to them, and reducing the trauma of family separation. The Centre, located in Margibi County, consists of 30 beds, with separate sections for suspected and confirmed Ebola cases.

Aubrey Wade/Save the Children

WHAT IS CONTACT TRACING?

Ebola is an infectious disease, passed on when a person comes into direct contact with the bodily fluid of someone who is sick with the virus. Contact tracing means finding everyone who has come into direct contact with a sick Ebola patient, in order to try and prevent the spread of the disease.

When we identify someone who's had such contact, we're able to monitor them for signs of illness for 21 days – Ebola's incubation period. If the person develops a fever or any other Ebola symptoms, we immediately isolate them, test them, and provide them with the necessary care. We then start the cycle again – everyone who's been in contact with the new patient is found and monitored for 21 days.

We're training thousands of community health workers across all three affected countries in how to carry out contact tracing, providing a vital battle front against the spread of Ebola.

In Liberia, thanks to your support, we've directly reached over 159,000 people, including nearly 78,000 children, by:

- Building two Ebola Treatment Units, which are now being run by the International Medical Corps (IMC) and have cared for hundreds of patients.
- Setting up two Community Care Centres which allow for the rapid isolation and testing of people who are suspected of having contracted the virus.
- Providing health facilities with safe water supply and waste management systems, infection prevention equipment, drugs and other medical supplies.
- Playing a key role in helping schools re-open, including training teachers at 932 schools how they can ensure the learning environment remains safe. To date, we have completed training at 532 schools and 783 schools have received a range of infection prevention and control items such as buckets, chlorine, soap, mops, brooms, thermometers, rubber gloves and boots. During the six months that schools were closed, we developed innovative approaches to learning, including teacher training, radio-based lessons, and the distribution of learning materials to children in their homes.
- Providing health promotion and contact tracing training to Community Health Volunteers and traditional midwives, helping us track the virus and monitor where it's spreading.
- Supporting children who've been directly affected by Ebola, including reunifying 63 children with their parents or families, supporting and providing more than 5,200 children to date with psychosocial support.
- Providing survival kits containing food, household items and hygiene materials to families directly affected by Ebola, reaching nearly 370 households so far, as well as holding counselling sessions with families who are stigmatised and in quarantine. We're also making home visits to those affected to see how well they're reintegrating with their communities.
- Reaching 283,000 people to date with Ebola awareness messaging on the radio. We've also distributed 70,000 Ebola factsheets and reached 34,000 people with our community-based Ebola awareness-raising activities.

In Guinea you've helped us reach nearly 167,000 people, including over 56,000 children, by:

- Identifying children who've lost their parents or caregivers to Ebola. As well as working to trace their extended families, we're providing them with psychosocial support and counselling.
- Working together with the Ministry of Health to support health workers carry out contact tracing.
- Distributing over 6,500 bottles of chlorine to Ebola-affected communities.
- Schools started to reopen in January, having been closed since March last year. We've been working in local communities to raise awareness of the reopening, training teachers in how to give psychosocial care, and distributing water and sanitation kits to schools. We've also been providing unaccompanied and orphaned children with school kits.
- Reaching over 69,000 people with targeted health messaging.
- Providing interim care for children who've lost their parents or caregivers to Ebola, and helping make sure these children are cared for within their communities. To date we've helped communities rehome and accommodate more than 770 orphaned children with extended family. When unable to reunite children with their families, we're helping find community-based alternatives such as foster families.
- Coordinating efforts to ensure that children receive psychosocial support where necessary, referring over 300 children to date.

FAMILY TRACING AND REUNIFICATION

Save the Children is committed to supporting children who have lost their parents or caregivers to this epidemic. Our teams are working to identify children who have lost one or both parents to Ebola, and making every effort to reunite them with family members. In the rare instances where no extended family member can be found, we are helping to place these children in appropriate care settings such as foster homes, providing support and training to these families.

Once children have been placed with family or in foster homes, Save the Children continues to work on case management, and identifying the vulnerabilities that children are facing in each. This crisis has unfortunately heightened vulnerabilities that children in West Africa are facing, putting them at greater risk of abuse, exploitation, neglect, and dropping out of school. After documenting each case with interviews and a careful case history, we will provide the tools that extended family and other caregivers need to ensure that the new child in their family has the psychosocial, emotional, and material support that he or she needs. As needed, Save the Children is also providing medical and nutritional support, and socio-recreational and socio-educational activities for vulnerable children.

The goal is always to assist the children within their new environment, to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the children and the households, and to help them through what can be a very difficult adjustment period for a traumatized child and devastated family. In keeping with this focus on the child's familiar environment, our teams in West Africa are working to strengthen and empower the local child protection networks (through trainings and material assistance) so that they be active along with case management.



In Guinea, where schools were closed due to Ebola, children prepare messaging in their local dialects for a television broadcast to spread the message about the importance of washing hands regularly with soap.
Kate Aykroyd/Save the Children

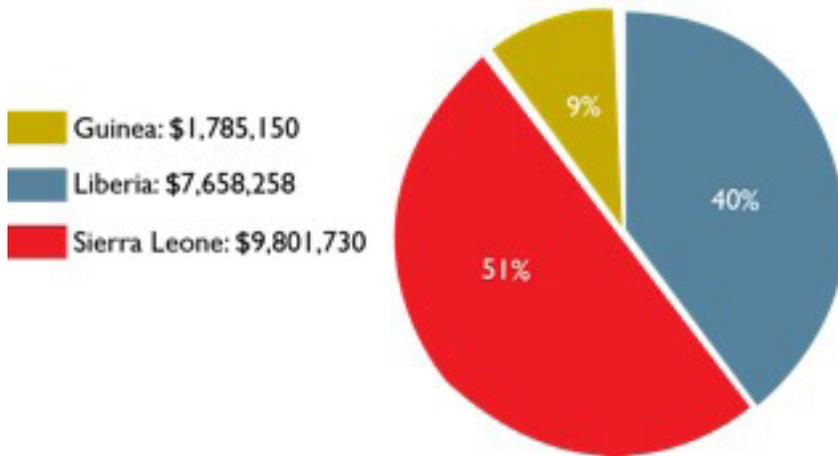


JT*, aged 9, was admitted into the ETU on October 28 and released on November 13 after she recovered. The rest of her family needed to stay in the holding centre a full 21 days to ensure they did not have Ebola. They have all returned home. Save the Children is providing psychosocial support to JT and other children who have survived or have been orphaned by Ebola, along with reintegration kits and referral to other service providers.

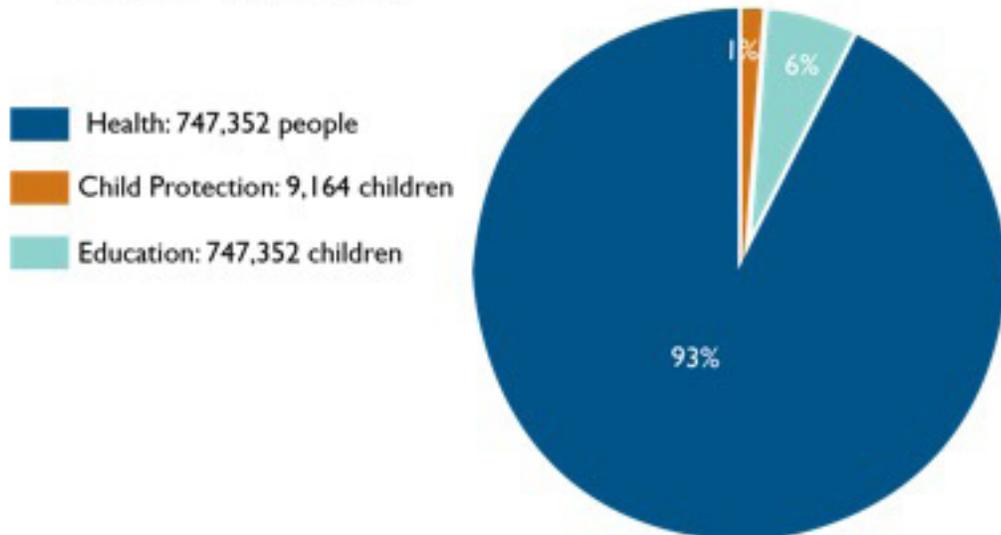
JT says, *"I started school last Monday, I'm in the K-2 class. The other children still tease me because I had Ebola. Everyday after school I have a study course underneath a tree outside my house. When I grow up I want to be a doctor. When people get sick doctors make them well. I want to help people. When I was at the ETU they gave me medication and food, so that made it ok. They would braid my hair and that made me feel less scared. I feel much better now since I've been out."*

Dave Hartman/Save the Children

YOUR \$ AT WORK



TOTAL REACH



What's next?

The crisis in West Africa is not over yet, and the affected countries face a long road to recovery. But slowly, communities are building their strength and resources to overcome the devastation they've experienced, and are looking to a brighter future. We'll be there for as long as it takes to help these communities recover.

In the next six months, our response will be focused on recovery across all sectors in Sierra Leone and Liberia. As more schools re-open across the region, we'll support with supplies, training, and water, health, and sanitation kits. A major priority going forward is to work with the government to increase school enrolment overall, a major challenge even before the outbreak.

In Sierra Leone and Liberia, we will provide unconditional cash transfers to over 11,000 vulnerable households, along with two cash grants to 400 small-scale, predominantly female, traders through existing mobile money transfer systems. Monthly cash transfers to households that rely on markets for access to food will spur demand for staple commodities, while cash grants to small-scale female traders will encourage increased supply and reduce inflationary pressures.

Working closely with Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Save the Children will deliver computer tablets to 54 schools, 215 teachers and 8 ministry officers. The schools are in urban and rural settings within four areas of Sierra Leone where we will plan and organise the necessary training, monitor, and evaluate the project.

In addition to the delivery of tablets within schools, a small number of tablets will be made available to children in the four Interim Care Centres operated by Save the Children in Sierra Leone. These are children who have been orphaned or separated from their families, and providing access to educational opportunities, as well as a fun diversion will ensure children have access to interactive and effective learning materials and will help them begin to recover.

In Guinea, we still have work to do in order to contain the outbreak. Additionally, it is crucial to continue identifying children orphaned by Ebola, referring them to psychosocial support, and reunifying them with extended families wherever possible.

Across the region the situation is improving, thanks to your ongoing support allowing us to continue working in these challenging conditions. We can, must, and will reach zero-Ebola transmissions. And when that happens, our work must continue to ensure systems are strengthened so future outbreaks are readily contained. Once again, we wish to sincerely thank you for your support - you are helping us reach thousands of vulnerable children and their families.



The survivor wall at Bong Ebola Treatment Unit, constructed by Save the Children.

Gemma Gillie/Save the Children



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