

Information Saves Lives

Media Newsletter
Issue # 4



Welcome to the Internews Newsletter for media in Liberia. This newsletter is created with the intent to support the work of local media in reporting about Ebola and Ebola-related issues in Liberia. Internews welcomes feedback, comments and suggestions from all media receiving this newsletter and invites them to forward, share and re-post this newsletter as widely as possible.



Liberia poised to be declared Ebola-free amid calm and serenity

Monrovia, Liberia – Liberians are anxiously waiting though in calm and serenity for a day in April 2014 when the government would officially declare the country Ebola-free, only if the country continues to observe zero Ebola cases.. There has been an effective nation-wide monitoring since the West African nation's last Ebola patient was cured of the disease on 28 February 2015, according to government sources.

Ebola Treatment Units are still stationed here and there, and health personnel have reduced tasks unlike in the past when their services was most sought. Social mobilization workers have been crisscrossing popular locations across the nation blasting mega microphones and calling on volunteers to participate in the Ebola vaccine trials that were recently rolled out by the government.

Although the trials have received some positive feedback in certain parts of the country, Internews gathered widespread rumors from a lot of people who have been casting doubts on the efficacy of the vaccine. Others are predicting a resurgence of the Ebola virus if the trials continue.

Against this backdrop, our team has been sourcing accurate and reliable information with regards to worries and rumors from Liberians. These are only rumors and all ongoing trails strictly respect World Health Organization (WHO) protocols and are very safe. The local media must provide to their targets and communities, accurate and well-sourced information made available by Internews.

Liberia's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and WHO recently rolled out the Periodic Routine Immunization for children and pregnant women. The routine immunization is in no way linked to the Ebola Vaccine vaccine trials. It targets five childhood diseases including measles and tuberculosis. Journalists are also encouraged to build trust around this immunization campaign as well and allay the

fears of parents who withdrew their children from schools and discouraged their pregnant wives from stepping out of their homes..

The country's economy is steadily recovering since restrictions on markets and some borders were lifted following a nation-wide improvement in the Ebola fight. Some Liberian borders with Ebola-stricken countries like Sierra Leone and Guinea remain closed. Economic recovery in those border communities remains weak and vigilance is high.

Nearly 3,900 persons have died of the disease and female Ebola survivors are at risk of suffering from all forms of discrimination and Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV). It is important for the local media to avoid victim-blaming statements in their reports or radio talk shows. They must protect the identities of SGBV survivors and must expose perpetrators instead. Female survivor's weak economic empowerment, especially those living in closed border locations, makes them vulnerable to SGBV. We need to give them a voice, help them speak out and take action in their communities. Communities are encouraged to collaborate with humanitarian responders in promoting gender equality by providing female survivors with economically sustainable activities.

While Liberians continue to enjoy the lifting of the curfew, this does not mean we should celebrate the absence of Ebola. Treatment Units are still existing. They could also serve in future as treatment facilities for other contagious diseases that need isolation. All Personnel Protection Equipment (PPE) have been completely incarcerated and there should be no fear of the virus in the soils as rumored in some localities.

Internews therefore makes available this resourceful Newsletter to the media. It conveys the right responses and actions from the humanitarian responders to the communities. This is also a working tool kit for the media that contains contact information for further investigation.

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Liberia's economy improves despite staggering performance

Information gathered by Internews from 15 counties in Liberia reveals that the country's economy is steadily recovering following significant progress made in the fight against Ebola. Several cross-border trade restrictions have been lifted and most closed markets reopened since progress getting to zero cases was noticed in the West African nation.

According to Rev. John Sumo, Director for Health Promotion at the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the last Ebola patient in an Ebola Treatment Unit was declared Ebola free and sent back home on 28 February 2015. **"This does not mean the fight is over and should not call for celebration yet,"** Rev. Summo warned.

"We must strengthen our nation-wide monitoring and continue with our best practices in eliminating Ebola."

Liberians are anxiously looking forward to the date when the government will officially declare an Ebola-free Liberia – which, if there are no more new cases confirmed, could be as early as 16 April.

Borders have been opened in some parts of the country. However, commercial activities including cross-border trade remain weak. In communities that share a common border with Ebola-stricken countries (Sierra Leone and Guinea), humanitarian responders are strictly controlling the borders and sharing lessons and best practices with their colleagues across the borders on how to roll back the disease.

The disease has claimed nearly 3,900 lives, many of whom were breadwinners in their homes.

The World Bank [reports](#) that nearly 20 percent of the Liberians who had stopped working since the Ebola crisis returned to work the last month. Projected 2014

growth in Liberia is now 2.2 percent (versus 5.9 percent before the crisis and 2.5 percent in October) according to another [World Bank report](#).

Fears about going to commercial areas are rife, and the economic empowerment capacity of women has dropped. Both the public and private sectors have been negatively affected by the crisis. One major nation-wide concern has been food security. Despite significant drops in food security levels, citizens fear receiving food aid from the World Food Program (WFP) amid widespread rumor of the virus in food.

While fear for another Ebola outbreak is understandable it is important to remember that Ebola cannot, survive in food and WFP is the only aid agency that has been mandated by the Liberian government to distribute food in all 15 counties. **"Our food is heavily accepted by everyone in every country,"** says WFP National Programme Office Amos Ballayan.

Humanitarian responders have been suggesting ways of bolstering Liberia's economy. One of such organization is [Mercy Corps](#) which released a report on Liberia that proposes: increase in households' access to food via cash transfer programming; increase income-generating activities for the most vulnerable households; improve the transportation market, including, but not limited to, infrastructure and quantity of trucks and ability to travel; open some land borders, with limitations and tight monitoring to prevent the spread of Ebola, to allow food staples and other essential goods into Liberia between counties and from neighboring countries; and assist farmers in accessing agricultural inputs for the upcoming planting seasons.

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Sources:

- **Update on the economic impact of the 2014 Ebola epidemic on Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea:**
<http://bit.ly/1AjUqrZ>
- **Socio-economic impact of the Ebola Virus Disease in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone:**
<http://bit.ly/1ziTfex>
- **Economic impact of the Ebola crisis on select Liberian markets**
<http://bit.ly/1GMRn2C>
- **The Socio-Economic Impacts of Ebola in Liberia**
<http://bit.ly/1EZWZkX>

WFP dispels wide-spread rumors of Ebola in food

The Senior Emergency Coordinator at the World Food Program (WFP) in Liberia Rick Corsino has confirmed that the organization's national food distribution conforms to Liberia's Public Health regulations and it is totally safe for consumption.

Corsino dismissed rumors from River Gee County that food distributed by WFP may have been infected with the Ebola virus. **"The United Nations World Food Program in Liberia is supporting the Government Ebola response through the provision of food assistance to individuals and households that have experienced Ebola cases or have been isolated because of contact with Ebola cases, as well as to communities with widespread and intense transmission of the Ebola Virus Disease."**

Since July 2014, over 600,000 persons in all 15 counties of Liberia were assisted with approximately 18,000 metric tons of food, says Corsino, adding that their program covers River Gee County where approximately 8,300 persons have so far been assisted with over 300 metric tons of food.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), the transmission of Ebola through eating or handling food other than bushmeat has never been documented. CDC says there is no evidence that foods produced commercially have ever transmitted Ebola virus anywhere in the world, and that there has been no evidence in previous Ebola outbreak investigations of the virus spreading through food contaminated with the blood or body fluids of an infected food worker.

Internews encourages all journalists and communicators in River Gee County to dispel rumors of Ebola in food and encourages the relentless collaboration of the communities working with humanitarian responders in rolling back the disease.

Sources:

- Q&As for Consumers
<http://1.usa.gov/1F8WwjD>
- Facts about Bushmeat and Ebola
<http://1.usa.gov/1txA768>
- WFP's Response to Ebola Emergency
<http://bit.ly/ZCrKhT>

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*NB: *Also call Superintendent whose county you are covering to get information.*

RESOURCES FOR THE MEDIA:

UNDP to help cut cross border Ebola infections in West Africa

<http://bit.ly/1tkOko4>

Impact of West Africa Ebola Outbreak on Food Security and Staple Food Prices

<http://bit.ly/1syl5vW>

IOM Builds Public Health, Border Management Capacity in Ebola-Impacted Region

<http://bit.ly/1Be6DO1>

Ebola Threatens Millions with Food Insecurity (Voice of America):

<http://bit.ly/1MydMPM>

Three key reasons why Ebola is also a food security crisis

<http://bit.ly/1AkbrlQ>

Liberia: Burning Ebola waste safely

<http://bit.ly/1wEobaB>

Ebola crisis: First major vaccine trials in Liberia

<http://bbc.in/1K2W2MY>

Ebola Vaccine Trial Opens in Liberia

<http://1.usa.gov/1zNcT5a>

How Do You Catch Ebola: By Air, Sweat Or Water?

<http://n.pr/1v4crun>

Ebola virus disease

<http://bit.ly/1g3T7Cr>

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Journalist reporting Rumors Update
For March 13, 2015 Weekly Report



Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs)

Rumors from local people	Well-sourced and accurate responses
<p><u>River Gee County</u></p> <p>The local people believe that the food distributed to Ebola survivors by the World Food Program (WFP) has been poisoned with the Ebola virus.</p> <p>They also believe that the ETU health personnel are intentionally keeping the units functional because they want to benefit from Ebola funding.</p>	<p>According to the <u>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)</u>, the transmission of Ebola through eating or handling food other than bushmeat has never been documented. CDC says there is no evidence that foods produced commercially have ever transmitted Ebola virus anywhere in the world, and that there has been no evidence in previous Ebola outbreak investigations of the virus spreading through food contaminated with the blood or body fluids of an infected food worker.</p> <p><i>*For more information / interviews, Internews strongly recommends journalists/communicators to contact:</i></p> <p>World Food Programme Amos M. Ballayan, National Programme Officer Phone: 0776500222/0886521795</p> <p>World Food Programme Scott Higgins, Information Management Officer-Food Security Phone: 0886914915 scott.higgins@wfp.org</p> <p>Ministry of Agriculture Henry Goffa, Public Relation Officer Phone: 0777026242 henrygoffa@yahoo.com Website: http://www.moaliberia.org/</p>

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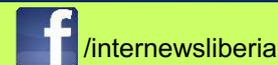
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<p><u>Grand Bassa County</u></p> <p>The locals are concerned about the existence of ETUs in their county whereas there has not been any Ebola case. Rumors are rife about the preparation of Ebola in treatment units.</p>	<p>The fact that the ETUs are empty is a good thing. The ETUs are not being dismantled yet because Liberia is in a monitoring phase although no case of Ebola has been reported in the last few days in the country.</p> <p>Some will be used for other purposes, other kinds of health screening, potentially to do vaccination or repurposed, but only after all contaminated areas have been destroyed. They ETUs are not hospitals – they are relatively inexpensive facilities to isolate and provide treatment to people.</p>
<p><u>Gbapolu County</u></p> <p>In this County, locals rumor about the existence of large pots in treatment units that are used to incinerate Ebola patients.</p>	<p>There are no pots in treatment units. All ETUs are strictly to save lives and are hospitals like in any other part of the world. Several patients have been cured of the virus and none of them have been killed or incinerated. All dead bodies have been properly buried.</p> <p>Internews suggests journalists talk to Ebola survivors, to share their experiences from what actually happened in the ETUs. Journalists could contact Ebola survivors at:</p> <p>Isurvivedebola Joko Koogba, Isurvivedebola Country Campaign Manager Phone: 0886523475 / 0775274993</p> <p>PCI Media Impact Carolyn Kindelan, Isurvivedebola Communications Manager Phone: +1-757-675-2110 ckindelan@mediainpact.org</p> <p>UCLA School of Medicine John Fankhauser, MD. Assistant Clinical Professor Phone: 0770262626 fankmd@gmail.com</p>

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Lofa County

It is believed that ETUs were constructed because the Liberian government and its international partners want to infect a lot more people with the Ebola disease.

There are questions about the disposal of the Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE). Many are of the opinion that the Ebola virus will be left to grow in the soil once the PPE are burnt by burial teams, and eventually infect more people in future.

The Liberian government cannot save lives by taking away lives. The ETUs are strictly to treat Ebola patients and not to kill them.

World Health Organization (WHO):

Special incinerators were purchased with funding from the World Bank. These burn the personal protective equipment and other contaminated materials at a very high temperature safely. WHO worked with partners to ensure this waste was effectively decontaminated and no longer possessed a threat to health.

**For more information / interviews, Internews strongly recommends journalists/communicators to contact:*

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Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Hansen Donda, CDC Communications Officer
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A. International Funding

Maryland County

Locals in this County believe that the Ebola disease was ushered into Liberia by its government in a bid to extort money from the international community in form of foreign assistance or aid.

This information is coming from mistrust towards the local government. Journalists are invited to have local government representatives as hosts in the radio shows to directly respond to the questions that the local population has about the use of the money provided by international organizations in the fight against Ebola.

**For more information / interviews, Internews strongly recommends journalists/communicators to contact:*

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A. Ebola Vaccine Trial

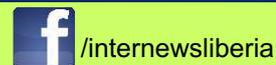
<p><u>Grand Cape Mount County</u></p> <p>Locals here believe the Ebola vaccine will further infect people and not save lives as claimed by the government.</p>	<p>The senior Liberian scientist involved in the vaccine trials, Stephen Kennedy says there is no danger because the piece of the Zaire strain that has been put into the vaccine is very little and also a weak strain that it cannot and will not cause Ebola, so it is impossible that any one of the volunteers will contract Ebola from the vaccine.</p> <p>The scientists are well aware of how important the support of local people will be if this trial is to work.</p> <p>According to the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) Anthony S. Fauci, M.D., it is imperative that any potential countermeasures, including vaccines, be tested in a manner that conforms to the highest ethical and safety standards in clinical trials designed to provide a clear answer to the question of whether a candidate vaccine is safe and can prevent infection. This trial is designed to provide such answers.</p> <p><i>*For more information / interviews, Internews strongly recommends journalists/communicators to contact:</i></p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>The Liberia-US Joint Research Partnership Stephen B. Kennedy, MD, MPH, FLCP Phone: 0886645830 kennedys@lpgmc.org</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>UNICEF Liberia Rukshan Ratnam, Phone: 0770267110 rratnam@unicef.org</p> </td> </tr> </table> <p>For FAQs, see link to Internews Liberia Media Newsletter 1</p>	<p>The Liberia-US Joint Research Partnership Stephen B. Kennedy, MD, MPH, FLCP Phone: 0886645830 kennedys@lpgmc.org</p>	<p>UNICEF Liberia Rukshan Ratnam, Phone: 0770267110 rratnam@unicef.org</p>
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A. Origin of Ebola

<p><u>Grand Geedeh County</u></p> <p>The locals hold back on drinking bottled water for fear of Ebola poisoning. They claim the government has paid people to poison bottled water which are in high demand.</p>	<p>In response to such inquiries here is some information that journalists can use to support the fact that Ebola cannot spread through the drinking water supply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ebola is not a foodborne, waterborne, or airborne illness (<u>WHO</u>). • Ebola spreads in human populations through human-to-human transmission, through direct contact with infected bodily fluids including blood, vomit, or feces (<u>WHO</u>). • Ebola can't survive in drinking water because Ebola infected cells don't live long inside a liquid that doesn't have the same salt concentration as bodily fluids (<u>NPR</u>). <p><i>*For more information / interviews, Internews strongly recommends journalists/communicators to contact:</i></p> <p>World Food Programme Scott Higgins, Information Management Officer-Food Security Phone: 0886914915 scott.higgins@wfp.org</p>
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Montserrado County

It is generally believed that Ebola is a curse from God because of the high sexuality rates and immoral activities in Montserrado County.

Others say it is a biological weapon made in the West and tested in Africa.

Ebola virus disease (EVD), formerly known as Ebola hemorrhagic fever, is a severe, often fatal illness in humans. The virus is transmitted to people from wild animals and spreads in the human population through human-to-human transmission. The average EVD case fatality rate is around 50%. Case fatality rates have varied from 25% to 90% in past outbreaks.

The first EVD outbreaks occurred in remote villages in Central Africa, near tropical rainforests, but the most recent outbreak in West Africa has involved major urban as well as rural areas.

Community engagement is key to successfully controlling outbreaks. Good outbreak control relies on applying a package of interventions, namely case management, surveillance and contact tracing, a good laboratory service, safe burials and social mobilization.

Early supportive care with rehydration, symptomatic treatment improves survival. There is as yet no licensed treatment proven to neutralize the virus but a range of blood, immunological and drug therapies are under development.

**For more information / interviews, Internews strongly recommends journalists/communicators to contact:*

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DSCPC

Bishop Torgbor Dixon (Pastor)
New Kru Town, Montserrado
Phone: 0886556879

Montserrado County

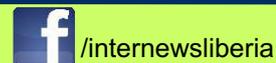
Rev. Fr. James Sallee
Phone: 0886535908

Brown Memorial AMEZ

Rev. Pator Emmanuel F. Johnson
Montserrado
Phone: 0886518776

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Margibi County

Traditional leaders in Margibi believe that Ebola is a devil sent from God to punish the Liberian people for transforming the country from a Christian to a Secular state.

Ebola has no religious cause. The virus is transmitted to people from wild animals and spreads in the human population through human-to-human transmission.

**For more information / interviews, Internews strongly recommends journalists/communicators to contact:*

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Rev. Pator Emmanuel F. Johnson

Brown Memorial AMEZ
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Nimba County

There is a rumor that a pastor was infected with the Ebola virus when he laid his hands on a demonic woman during prayers. Community dwellers claim he was infected because he was a well-known pastor.

Ebola can only be transmitted from through human-to-human transmission or from wild animals and spreads in the human population. If the pastor was praying for an ill woman by laying his hands on her, it is possible he was infected from direct human-to-human contact with her (if she had Ebola). If he did this, he was ignoring the Ebola preventative safety measures, and put himself in direct contact with the virus – which is why he fell ill.

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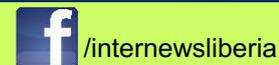
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<p><u>Lofa County</u></p> <p>People believe that Ebola is a man-made disease brought to Liberia by whites.</p>	<p>The first EVD outbreaks in 1979 occurred in remote villages in Central Africa, near tropical rainforests, but the most recent outbreak in West Africa has involved major urban as well as rural areas.</p> <p><i>*For more information / interviews, Internews strongly recommends journalists/communicators to contact:</i></p> <p>World Health Organization Liberia Communications Office Phone: 0886516803</p> <p>OFDA Miles Price, Information Officer eboladart_io@ofda.gov</p>						
<p>Another rumor is that of Queen Sheba, a popular Liberian demon, whom many believe departed from Liberia and left behind the Ebola virus with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Queen Sheba is also said to have given firm instructions to Sirleaf on how to downsize Montserrado County's population in particular and Liberia in general.</p>	<p>These are unfounded rumors.</p> <p><i>*For more information / interviews, Internews strongly recommends journalists/communicators to contact:</i></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="608 1249 1082 1395"> <p>MICAT Abel Plackie, Director of Public Affairs Phone: 0886844531/0775889393 abelplackie@yahoo.com</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1082 1249 1493 1361"> <p>Montserrado County Rev. Fr. James Sallee Phone: 0886535908</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="608 1429 1082 1574"> <p>72nd Community Mosque Sheikh Omaru Kamara (Imam) Paynesville, Montserrado Phone: 0886525608</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1082 1395 1493 1541"> <p>Brown Memorial AMEZ Rev. Pator Emmanuel F. Johnson Montserrado Phone: 0886518776</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="608 1608 1082 1749"> <p>DSCPC Bishop Torgbor Dixon (Pastor) New Kru Town, Montserrado Phone: 0886556879</p> </td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	<p>MICAT Abel Plackie, Director of Public Affairs Phone: 0886844531/0775889393 abelplackie@yahoo.com</p>	<p>Montserrado County Rev. Fr. James Sallee Phone: 0886535908</p>	<p>72nd Community Mosque Sheikh Omaru Kamara (Imam) Paynesville, Montserrado Phone: 0886525608</p>	<p>Brown Memorial AMEZ Rev. Pator Emmanuel F. Johnson Montserrado Phone: 0886518776</p>	<p>DSCPC Bishop Torgbor Dixon (Pastor) New Kru Town, Montserrado Phone: 0886556879</p>	
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A. Routine Immunizations

Lofa County

Parents are taking their children off schools because routine vaccinations County Health Team is believed to be Ebola Vaccine Trials and not a routine vaccination campaigns.

Routine vaccines are given to children and big belly at all clinics and hospitals. These are the same vaccines the Ministry of Health has given to our children for many years. These vaccines are given to protect children against many diseases including measles and tuberculosis. These vaccines target children under one and big-belly children, but sometimes they are given to all children under five. It provided more protection from some sicknesses. These vaccines are free and safe. The Ebola trial vaccine is not for children. No children will receive the trial Ebola vaccine. Right now it is only given in Monrovia at JFK Hospital to 18-year-old adults 18 or and older. It is not given to pregnant women and girls who do agree to take the trial vaccine.

**For more information / interviews, Internews strongly recommends journalists/communicators to contact:*

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RESOURCES:

Research materials

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