

Social Mobilization: Key Messages

Ebola Guidance Package

August 2014



Community messaging for areas of intense transmission of Ebola virus disease

Why these messages

The exponential rise of Ebola cases and deaths in West Africa makes clear the urgent need for practical community messaging. These messages should inform individuals, families and communities, in clear practical terms, of the ways in which they can minimize their risk of catching the disease.

The messages are a resource that national and local communication and social mobilization teams can work with and adapt, to respond to different aspects of the Ebola outbreak.

Messaging approach

The messages are driven by the need to be: *sympathetic, action oriented (prompting specific preventive behaviours), and community-centred*. They are designed to help people understand Ebola virus disease and make them less likely to become ill, enhancing trust throughout the community.

The messages are deliberately generic and will require adaptations to local contexts/languages, particularly as they are shared through local community networks and organizations.

Type of messages

There are four different sets of messages:

- Overarching and supportive messaging – key facts about severity, transmission and importance of early prevention;
- Treatment – information for those seeking treatment for a person with symptoms of Ebola; information for those treating sick family members in their home; and information for those who have fully recovered from Ebola;
- Contacts – information for those who have had close contact with a person with Ebola; and,
- Safe burial practices – information for those handling a person with Ebola who has died.

The messages are designed to align with the key interventions identified to rapidly stop Ebola transmission in areas of intense transmission.

Users

The messages should be used to inform, educate and engage different audience groups depending on their level of risk, vulnerability, presence in contact areas, care of patients with Ebola, or engagement or attendance of burials. Communication teams, local organizations, and media (broadcast, mobile and social) should select key messages based on their understanding of relevant audiences, adapt them accordingly and monitor audience response for further refinement and effectiveness.

A final word on updating and adapting

As the Ebola outbreak evolves and the epidemiology changes, these messages should be revised to better reflect, reinforce, or change their focus accordingly.

Ebola Outbreak Response:

Community Messaging for Areas of Intense Transmission

Overarching Messages

- Ebola is real and can kill. But you can protect yourself, your family, and your community.
- Be vigilant – help stop the spread of Ebola. Speak with your local community leader if you suspect Ebola in your community or call the Ebola Hotline XXXX for advice.
- Do not touch a sick person with Ebola or someone who has died from Ebola.
- Ebola causes sudden high fever, extreme tiredness, headache, body pain and loss of appetite. If you fall sick with these symptoms after contact with a person with Ebola or after attending a funeral, go to the nearest health facility.
- Early treatment of Ebola increases your chance of survival and may prevent spread to your family and your community.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.

Supporting Messages

- To catch Ebola, you must come in close physical contact with a person with Ebola or their bodily fluids. Bodily fluids include stools, vomit, urine, breast milk, semen and blood.
- A person who has died of Ebola is still infectious and should not be touched.
- Ebola is a disease that is found in some animals like bats and monkeys. People can contract the disease touching or eating a sick or dead animal. You should never eat animals that are found sick or dead.
- Ebola can also be caught by getting a tattoo or receiving an injection with a needle that has already been used or has not been disinfected, or if you are cut in a ceremony with a knife that has been used on someone who is infected.
- Ebola can be transmitted between a baby and their mother (or wet nurse) if one of them is infected. However, babies should continue to be exclusively breastfeed until 6 months and with complimentary feeding up to two years or beyond.
- Breastfeeding should only be stopped if a trained health worker determines there is a risk to continue nursing or if either mother or child shows symptoms of Ebola.
- You cannot get Ebola by talking to people, walking in the street or shopping in the market.
- If you or someone you know falls sick with sudden high fever, extreme tiredness, headache, body pain and loss of appetite, consult your local community leader and immediately call the Ebola Hotline at XXXX for advice.
- If someone you know dies with symptoms of Ebola immediately consult your local community leader and call the Ebola Hotline at XXXX for advice. Pay your respects without touching, kissing or cleaning the body, the person's clothes or bed clothes.
- The body of a person with Ebola should only be handled by people who are trained in safe burial practices.

Treatment – Information for those seeking treatment for a person with symptoms of Ebola

- It is always best to seek treatment at your nearest health facility. Isolation and early treatment increase your chance of survival and may prevent spread of the disease to your family and your community.
- If you or someone in your family or community is sick, immediately contact your local community leader and call the Ebola Hotline for advice at XXXX. You will be advised on what is the best treatment available to you in the area where you live.
- Ebola treatment centres have been established in major hospitals and field centres to provide the safest possible care to persons with symptoms of Ebola.
- In areas where these services are full or not yet established, Ebola care centres are being established so basic care and psycho-social support can be provided safely and effectively to more people.
- Ebola care centres can also help communities track and monitor contacts of patients who may have also caught the disease.
It is important that you follow guidance from your local community leader, health facility or the Ebola Hotline on what is the best care available to you.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.

Information for those waiting for assistance or treating sick family members in their home

- It is always best to seek treatment at your nearest health facility. Isolation and early treatment increase your chance of survival and may prevent spread to your family and community.
- If you or someone in your family is sick, immediately contact your local community leader and call the Ebola Hotline for advice at XXXX.
- If a person with Ebola remains at home, provide them with their own space. Provide them with their own plate, cup, spoon and towel. Wash these items with water and detergent or with disinfectant separately from the rest of the household.
- Provide the sick person with plenty of drinks, such as water, soup, tea and locally available beverages. Alcohol should be avoided.
- Assign one person to take care of the individual affected. Family or community members who have fully recovered from Ebola can never catch it again and can safely provide care to others who are sick.
- If you provide care, you need protective equipment. Ask your local health facility to provide this. Don't touch the person with Ebola or their bodily fluids without protective equipment. Bodily fluids include stool, vomit, breast milk, semen and blood.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.

Information for those who have recovered from Ebola

- If you have recovered from Ebola you cannot catch it again during this outbreak.
- You can help the community by taking care of other sick people with Ebola. Follow hygiene rules so you do not carry the fluids of a sick person to other family or community members.

- You can no longer infect others. However, men who recover from Ebola should wear a condom during sexual contact for at least 3 months after recovery – Ebola is present in the semen up to this time.

Contacts - Information for those who have had close contact with a person with Ebola

- If you have touched or been in close contact with someone with Ebola or attended a funeral of someone who has died of Ebola you may have been exposed to the disease.
- Contacts of people with Ebola are those who have:
 - Slept in the same household with a person with Ebola
 - Touched a person with Ebola (alive or dead)
 - Had sexual contact with a person with Ebola
 - Touched the blood or bodily fluids of a person with Ebola (alive or dead)
 - Touched the personal belongings of a person with Ebola, including their clothes, towels and bed linen
 - Breastfed by a woman with Ebola
 - Breastfed or wet nursed a baby with Ebola
- If you think you have come in close contact with someone with Ebola you should closely monitor you and your family's health and stay close to your home.
- Health workers may ask you to report the status of your health or visit you every day until they are sure you will not fall sick.
- Minimize close contact with other family members. Symptoms for Ebola can appear 2 - 21 days after being exposed to the disease.
- You cannot spread Ebola disease until symptoms like sudden high fever and headache appear. A person who does not have physical symptoms cannot infect others.
- If you or a family member falls sick with sudden high fever, immediately contact your local community leader and call the Ebola Hotline at XXXX for advice. Go to your nearest health facility for treatment.

Safe Burial Practices - Information for those handling a person with Ebola who has died

- If somebody in your family dies with Ebola symptoms, immediately call the Ebola Hotline at XXXX for advice.
- Pay your respects without touching, kissing or cleaning the body before burial or cremation. Ebola is very infectious even after death.
- The body of a person with Ebola should only be handled by trained personnel using appropriate protection.
- Bodies should be buried or cremated by teams trained in safe burial procedures. Under no circumstances should a body be touched or moved after burial.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.