



National Social Mobilisation Pillar, in collaboration with



# Consolidated Message Guide for Ebola Communication in Sierra Leone

**Social Mobilisation Pillar,  
Messaging and Dissemination Sub-Committee**

March 13, 2015

**New messaging added since last version is in red.**

Includes recent messaging on:

- Safe and Dignified Burials
- Breastfeeding
- Safe Schools

SMAC partners include:

- BBC Media Action
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Focus 1000
- Goal
- Restless Development

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## Purpose

The purpose of this guidance package is to provide a reference of accurate, standardised information in simple language and key message format.

- The information in this guide is intended for Ministries, response committees, and any organizations developing awareness raising activities for the Ebola response in Sierra Leone.
- This document compiles current information and key messages about the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone to inform activities designed to raise awareness, mobilise communities, and promote safe behaviours to stop the spread of Ebola in Sierra Leone.
- Information is organized by topic.

These messages have been approved by the Messaging and Dissemination Subcommittee of the Social Mobilisation Pillar under the National Ebola Response Center (NERC). These messages have been incorporated into national campaigns such as “Act Against Ebola” and the “Ebola Big Idea of the Week.”

## How to Use This Document

All informational and educational materials developed for Ebola awareness in Sierra Leone should be

- aligned to the information in this document,
- can be used to inform more extensive talking points and frequently asked questions,
- adapted to target audiences and local vernaculars, as possible.

**This document will be reviewed regularly, updated, and distributed as new information becomes available.** Please direct all feedback to the Messaging and Dissemination Sub-committee of the Social Mobilization pillar under the NERC:

Mr. Lansana Conteh (Health Education Division, Ministry of Health and Sanitation): lans592@yahoo.co.uk

Krystle Lai (SMAC): klai@sl.goal.ie

## Requests for Messages

Requests for new messages should be submitted in writing and include:

- a point of contact,
- desired key behaviours, and
- justification of the need for new messages.

Development of new messages is driven by priorities of the response.

## Approval of Communication Materials

To ensure that all messages and materials are consistent with on-going response efforts and minimize conflicting information, all organisations are requested to submit materials to the messaging subcommittee for review.

**Submit the materials along with the Communication Review Form at the end of this document to:** Abubakarr Swaray, Social Mobilisation Pillar Liaison: [swarray12@gmail.com](mailto:swarray12@gmail.com)

Anticipated return time is within a 1-week period. Only approved materials will be marked with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation logo. All approved materials are documented on a tracking list, held by the Health Education Division.

## Access to Library of Developed Materials

Soft copies of developed materials can be accessed at the links provided below. These materials are available for duplication. Logos can be added. If content is adapted, please submit for approval as indicated above.

NERC website: <http://nerc.sl/?q=nercpillartexo/socialmobilization>

Ebola Communications Network: <http://ebolacommunicationnetwork.org/>

SMAC Website: (forthcoming)

## Safe, Dignified, Medical Burials

- Contact with a person who is dying or a dead body is a common way people are infected with Ebola.
- As a person becomes more and more sick, and then dies of Ebola, the amount of virus in the body increases. That is why it is very dangerous to touch the body of someone who is very sick or has died of Ebola—before, during, and after burial.
- Calling 117 for safe, dignified medical burials is a way to show respect for the person who has died while keeping yourself and your family safe.
- Not touching the sick and calling 117 quickly will help protect Mama Salone.
- During this crisis, all deaths should be handled as if they could be Ebola.
- Treat any death as if it could be Ebola. Call 117 or district call centers to report all deaths.
- When someone dies of Ebola, the virus remains in the body and spreads easily.
- The dead body should only be handled by people who are trained in safe medical burial practices and are wearing protective equipment.
- Protect yourself
  - Do not touch, wash, or clean a person who is dying or has died.
  - Do not touch body fluids of a dead person or anything a person who has died from Ebola touched while they were sick.
  - Keep people away from the home.
- Washing the body and changing the clothes of a loved one who has died can spread the Ebola virus.
- We all have a role in ensuring that members of the community practice safe burials.
- We all have a role in stopping the spread of Ebola and ensuring that our communities practice safe burials.
- Practicing safe, dignified medical burials is a way to show respect for the person who has died while keeping yourself, your family, and your community safe.
- It is time to take action, it is time to work with all members of your community to practice safe burials.
- Safe burials are a way to show respect and honor those who have died. Until we get to zero, we have to stop practices that spread Ebola.
- Protect yourself, your family, and the future of Mama Salone - stop the chain of Ebola.
- One Ebola death is a tragedy. Prevent more deaths by practicing safe burials.
- Giving a safe medical burial to a loved one who has died can protect the lives of the rest of the family.
- Ebola does not change our respect and love for those who have died. However, for now we must stop practices that transmit Ebola.
- Touching a dead body is one of the most common ways people are infected with Ebola in Sierra Leone. For now, we have to stop these practices or we can't stop Ebola.
- **Family and community members can pray for their loved one from a safe distance, and still make some decisions about the funeral while the body is being removed.**
- Take a pledge for your own safe, dignified, medical burial and share your wish with your family. Tell your family that you want them to honor your pledge to keep future generations healthy and safe. Tell them that honoring this pledge will be an act of care and love.
- "I pledge that if I die from Ebola, I want a safe, dignified medical burial to protect my family and friends."

## Burial Teams

- The burial teams can help make sure Ebola does not spread and can protect you, your family, and your community.
- After you call 117 or district alert line, someone will come investigate about a reported death.
- A burial team of trained individuals arrive and a member of the burial team will talk to you about the death.

- The other burial team members will put on protective equipment to safely remove the body of the person who has died.
- Burial teams will help families understand the need for a safe, dignified, medical burial.
- Burial teams will treat the body with respect.
- The burial team will determine if a sample to test for Ebola should be collected from the body.
- If they need to test for Ebola, they will collect a swab sample from the mouth of the person who has died and send it to the laboratory to test for Ebola.
- Test results for Ebola may take 2-3 days.
- To keep you, your family, and your community safe, the burial team must remove the body quickly and can't wait for test results.
- The person who died will be placed in a protective body bag by the burial team.
- The burial team will remove the body from the house in a protective body bag, and take the body to a cemetery or burial space to safely bury the body.
- To protect you and your family the burial team will disinfect the house with a safe chlorine solution.
- All items that the person who died touched such as a mattress and clothing should be taken from the house and not used by anyone else. Mattresses that have been burned will be replaced.
- If a swab was taken and sent to the laboratory, a health official will follow-up with the family to share the results of the Ebola test.

## Contact Tracing

- Health workers will visit the house every day to check if anyone becomes sick.
- Please cooperate with local health teams in their contact tracing efforts.
- Contact Tracers are working hard to try to stop Ebola from spreading.
- Contact tracing helps people who may have been exposed to Ebola get care quickly if they show symptoms of Ebola.
- They will find and interview every person who came in contact with the person who died from Ebola.
- A person is a contact if they:
  1. Slept in the same house with an Ebola patient
  2. Touched the body or body fluids of an Ebola patient
  3. Touched items from an Ebola patient
- Contacts will be monitored for 21 days to see if they develop Ebola symptoms.
- Contact tracing helps people who may have been exposed to Ebola get care quickly if they show symptoms of Ebola.
- Cooperate with local health officials doing contact tracing.
- Everyone in the house will be quarantined, have to stay at home for 21 days without leaving the house or letting anyone else in the house.
- Contact tracers will visit the house every day to make sure no one in the house becomes sick.

## Get Early Treatment

- Get help; call 117 at the first sign of Ebola symptoms.
- Early medical care saves lives.
- Drinking lots of Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) or water gives patients a better chance to survive.
- Patients who go to an Ebola Treatment Unit (ETU) or Community Care Center (CCC) are protecting their families and loved ones by helping to prevent infections in more family members.
- Call 117 to get help at the first symptom of Ebola to protect yourself, your family, and your community.
- Show love by keeping a safe distance from your family.
- Drinking ORS can increase the chance for survival.
- Patients who go to an Ebola Treatment Unit or a Community Care Center help protect families and loved ones, by preventing more infections in the community.

## Stay Safe and Protect Your Family While You Wait

- Protect yourself and stay safe while you wait.
- Do not touch the sick person, their body fluids, or anything they touched.
- Support the sick person by giving them as much liquids as they can drink and oral rehydration solution (ORS).
- Show love by keeping a safe distance. Stop Ebola from hurting your family and future.
- Early care helps the sick person and can help protect others in the family.
- Encourage the sick person to drink plenty of Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS), water or other liquids.

## Celebrate Survivors

- Accept survivors and welcome them as heroes back into your family and your community.
- It is safe to be around someone who has survived Ebola.
- If a person has survived and recovered from Ebola, they can no longer spread Ebola to others through casual contact.
- Ebola survivors should not have sex for at least 3 months after recovery. If that is not possible, survivors should use a condom every time they have sex. It is otherwise safe to be around this person.
- People who survive Ebola need hope and social support from family, friends and the community.
- Ebola survivors should not have sex for at least 3 months after recovery. If that is not possible, survivors should use a condom every time they have sex; it is otherwise safe to be around this person.
- We must honor those who have survived Ebola! We are all Ebola fighters!

## The Fight is Not Over: Ebola Stops with Me (Complacency)

- The Ebola outbreak is not over. We cannot relax our guard just because we are seeing signs of progress.
- Communities have the power to stop Ebola, but we can't stop the fight until we reach zero new cases for 42 days.
- The fight will not be over until we have had zero cases for 42 days here in Salone, and our neighbours in Guinea and Liberia have had zero cases for 42 days.
- People continue to become infected with Ebola. This is hurting our communities and our country.
- We can win this fight, but it will take action from everyone to stop Ebola together.
- We must continue to work together to defeat this disease until we get to zero.
- We should celebrate as a community and country when people go for medical care and practice safe, dignified, medical burials. For now, we must stop unsafe practices so we can stop Ebola in Sierra Leone.
- Many communities have identified new ways to keep Ebola from taking more lives.
- Changing some cultural practices for now will help to end Ebola.
- By sharing solutions and working together we will break the chain of Ebola.
- Let Ebola stop with one – stop it from harming everyone. STOP THE CHAIN OF EBOLA!
- Ebola is real. The Ebola outbreak is not over. We all need to work together to stop Ebola.
- Prayer is very important and meaningful, but it is also important take action to prevent Ebola and get care if you become sick.
- We need hope and action to stop Ebola together.
- Move beyond knowledge and awareness and “Act Against Ebola”.
- We all have a role to work together to defeat this disease.

## Addressing Stigma

- People CAN and DO survive Ebola every day! They have a future to live and lessons to share!
- Our health care workers, ambulance workers, contact tracers, and burial teams are heroes taking care of people sick with Ebola.
  - They are risking their lives to save yours.
  - Cooperate with them and treat them with respect and dignity.
  - Speak out against negative comments or negative behaviours.
- There are over 2,000 Ebola survivors in Sierra Leone. Survivors are heroes. People who survive Ebola need hope and support from family, friends and the community, not to be isolated or stigmatized.
- Do not stigmatize survivors, isolate them from their communities, or arrest them because they had the disease.
- Stigma and social isolation of survivors will not help efforts to stop the spread of Ebola in Sierra Leone. In fact, it may discourage people with Ebola symptoms from seeking care and put themselves and their community at risk.
- Survivors and families affected by Ebola or stigma can get help by calling 117 or district hotlines. District Command Centres are operational to support the response in all districts.

## Possible Sexual Transmission of Ebola

- Ebola survivors cannot spread the virus to others through casual contact. Although the virus is gone from blood and most other body fluids, the virus can stay in semen and in vaginal fluids for 3 months or longer.
- Scientists continue to study Ebola and whether or not it can be spread through sex, and if so, for how long.
- As a safety measure, Ebola survivors (both men and women) should not have any sex (oral, vaginal, or anal) for at least three months. If they do have sex, they should use a condom every time. Condoms may help prevent the spread of disease to sexual partners.

## Breastfeeding

- Ebola can stay in breast milk even after you feel better. If you have survived Ebola, it is best not to breastfeed IF you have other safe ways to feed your baby. But if there is no other way to feed your baby safely, breastfeeding will still provide the nutrition your baby needs.

## Safe Schools are Everyone's Business

- School is where children should be as long as it is clean and safe. The schools, your parents/caregivers, and communities are working together to make sure your school is clean and safe.
- Schools have been working hard to disinfect classrooms and school compound if school was used as Ebola care facility.
- Thousands of schools are being decontaminated, and will not be reopened until they are completely safe.
- Many teachers, students, and staff may have family, friends, and co-workers who have died of Ebola, and may need help and support.
- Teachers, students and staff may be Ebola survivors. Someone who has survived Ebola cannot spread the virus to people in the community. Welcome them back into the schools and community.



- Students, teachers, and staff have been out of school for many months. Reopening schools is an important step in getting back to normal!
- Schools are taking steps to protect the health and safety of students, teachers, and staff.
  - No one will be allowed to come to school if they are sick, or have symptoms of Ebola. If anyone gets sick at school, the school will have a separate room available for the person until a health worker can help.
  - Everyone is encouraged to wash their hands often with soap and water.
  - Students are discouraged from touching one another and from sharing cups, eating utensils and food.
- **When schools open, they will have Fever Monitoring Committees, handwashing stations and Safe Bays for sick children or adults. This is to keep children healthy while at school.**
- If Ebola comes back in a community, schools will respond quickly, and may close again.

## The Ebola Prevention Marklate Study in Sierra Leone

- Marklates (vaccines) teach your body to prevent or fight an infection.
- Before a marklate can be used in everyone, it needs to be studied to make sure it is safe and works well.
- An Ebola prevention marklate study is starting soon in Sierra Leone.
- The study will see if a marklate helps protect people from getting Ebola, and if it safe, as early studies have shown.
- Health workers in selected chiefdoms in Western, Port Loko, Bombali, and Tonkolili districts are eligible to participate.
- The marklate being studied does not cure people with Ebola and it does not cause Ebola.
- Participation in the Ebola prevention marklate study is voluntary. Health workers may ask their family, friends, and community to help them think about participating in the study. You may be able to help health workers by learning the facts about the study.
- The Ebola prevention marklate study is a collaborative effort of the Sierra Leone College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (COMAHS), the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS), and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- A marklate helps your body to fight off a particular germ if you come in contact with it. We already use marklates for diseases like measles, polio, and yellow fever.
- To find out if a marklate prevents Ebola, it needs to be studied in places where Ebola outbreaks are happening, like Sierra Leone.
- Since health workers are at higher risk for getting Ebola because of their jobs, the study will give some health workers the opportunity to take the marklate being studied.
- The marklate being studied cannot give Ebola to anyone who takes it. Health workers can safely return to their work and communities after taking the marklate.
- Because it is not yet known how well the marklate works to prevent Ebola, health workers who take the marklate still need to use personal protective equipment (PPE) and take other precautions to protect themselves.
- An effective Ebola prevention marklate can be important for protecting health workers and controlling this and future outbreaks.
- The study team cannot predict how soon an effective marklate could be available to everyone.

## MATERIALS REVIEW SUBMISSION FORM

Communications tools and products are reviewed on a weekly basis, at the Messaging and Dissemination Sub-committee meeting held weekly on Wednesdays, at 3pm at the Health Education Division, Medical Stores Compound. Partners who are submitting materials are encouraged to attend and present their materials.

To request **review** for clearance of a communications tool or product please fill out and submit it with a copy of the material to: Abubakarr Swaray, Social Mobilisation Pillar Liaison: [swarray12@gmail.com](mailto:swarray12@gmail.com) Materials submitted by email will be compiled and presented at the Messaging and Dissemination Sub-Committee for approval.

Estimated timeframe for review is 1 week.

### Point of Contact

- Name:
- Organization or group:
- E-mail address:
- Phone:
- Date of Submission:

### Material Type

- Intended audience:
- Title:
- Type of material (poster, radio jingle, video, ect):
- Distribution Method:

### Field Testing

- Has this document been field- tested?
- No
- Yes. Please provide a summary here of the results (include date and location of field test).

### Additional Comments or Information

## Appendix II: List of available Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

1. Standard Operating Procedures On The Decontamination Of Ebola Care Centres (March 2015)
2. Sierra Leone Emergency Management Program Standard Operating Procedure for Contact Tracing (17 Sept 2014)
3. Sierra Leone Emergency Management Program Standard Operating Procedure for Management of Quarantine (Version 1; Oct 2014)
4. Ebola Virus Disease Exit and Entry Health Screening Standard Operating Procedures (20 Sept 2014)
5. Sierra Leone Emergency Management Program Standard Operating Procedure for Reintegrating Ebola Survivors in Communities (Version 1; Oct 2014)
6. Sierra Leone Emergency Management Program Standard Operating Procedure for Management of Joint Checkpoints (Version 1; Oct 2014)
7. Sierra Leone Emergency Management Program Standard Operating Procedure for interim Home Protection and Support (Version 1; Oct 2014)
8. Sierra Leone Emergency Management Program Standard Operating Procedures for Screening and Infection Control of Ebola Virus at PHUs and other Non-Ebola Healthcare Facilities (Version 1; Nov 2014)
9. Sierra Leone Emergency Management Program Standard Operating Procedure for Safe, Dignified Medical Burials (13 February 2015)
10. Sierra Leone Emergency Management Program Standard Operating Procedure for Food Distribution to Quarantined Households, Holding and Treatment Centres (nd; version 1)
11. Sierra Leone Emergency Management Program Standard Operating Procedure for Home Decontamination after Collection of Corpses or Transfer of Suspect/Probable Ebola Cases (nd; version 3.1)