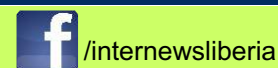


Information Saves Lives

**Media Newsletter
Issue #8 - April 13-17**



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.



Communities' collaboration needed to support measles vaccination campaign

The rainy season has started in Liberia amid growing concerns that the country could experience hurdles in fighting other epidemics like measles and polio, according to UNICEF and the Medical aid agency Doctors Without Borders - known by its French initials MSF. The country's fragile healthcare system broke down when the deadly Ebola epidemic began sweeping across the country in March 2014, and claiming up to 3,900 lives so far, according to government figures.

UNICEF in Liberia says routine immunization is among the damaged healthcare services, adding that communities depend on it to prevent other epidemics. The agency fears that thousands of children risk contracting the deadly virus. "There is a measles outbreak in the country and a surge in cases," according to an official working document by UNICEF.

The local media report that fear and mistrust is rife among communities who still cannot distinguish between the routine immunization and the Ebola vaccine.

"Reduced services due to health care workers' fear of contracting the virus during service delivery, closure of health facilities and the interruption of outreach activities during the Ebola crisis," are also cited in the UNICEF document as the frequent concerns from community members who fear turning up for their children to receive the vaccine.

Between 8 – 14 May 2015, an integrated polio, measles, and de-worming campaign will roll out for all children below five.

A comprehensive social mobilization and community engagement plan has been developed by the health ministry to ensure that parents and community leaders understand the importance, and trust routine immunization for children. This plan is based on the social mobilization strategy used for EVD response, as well as lessons learned from previous immunization campaigns.

Key messages for local communities:

- Carry all children less than five years to the nearest clinic, hospital, or community vaccine site to get measles vaccine, polio vaccine, and worm medicine on May 8-14, 2015.
- The vaccines are safe. They are the same vaccines for children that the MOH has been giving our children for many, many years.
- These vaccines protect our children against serious sicknesses like measles and polio.
- Measles vaccine will be given to all children from 6 months old to under 5 years old to protect them from measles.
- Two drops of Polio vaccine will be given to all children from 1 day old to under 5 years old to protect them from polio.
- Worm medicine will be given to all children 1 year old to under 5 years old to get rid of any worms so the child can be strong and healthy.
- The vaccines and worm medicine are free and safe.
- The vaccine people at the clinics, hospitals, and community vaccine sites will wear a new pair of gloves for each child to protect our children.
- Hand washing and temperature checks will be done at each clinic, hospital, or vaccine site to protect everybody.

On 8 May 2015, a National Press Conference with MOH officials will be held in Monrovia to highlight the importance of the routine immunization, encourage participation and address misinformation.



Information Saves Lives

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More information can be found here:

Frequently Asked Questions

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

Flyer – Measles Campaign

<http://bit.ly/1Pj1jTs>



News hopes for the Ebola vaccine trial in Liberia

Dr Stephen Kennedy of the Liberia-US Joint Research Partnership also known as PREVAIL says 600 volunteers have taken part to the Ebola vaccine trial that was rolled out in the capital Monrovia in February 2015. The trial is currently in its phase two.

There are three phases in total.

This targeted number was reached during the first week of March 2015. Dr Kennedy and his team conducted an initial analysis of the data and results they had collected.

“We can say the vaccine is safe for human use,” Dr Kennedy explained.

According to him people who received the vaccines demonstrated some immunity to the deadly virus but a couple of challenges were faced by the team within the first phase of the trial. He added that there was only a small number of females volunteered who to take part in the trial. The female population made up only 15 percent of the 600 volunteers. The inability to determine the durability and time frame of their immunity was another challenge, he said, noting that the gaps will be bridged in phases two and three of the trial.

In addition to PREVAIL’s own analysis of its phase one findings, representatives from the Data Safety Monitoring Board – an international, independent monitoring board – have also been reviewing the data PREVAIL has been collecting. They have also been providing feedback and approval for the team to move on to subsequent phases.

As of now, Dr. Kennedy explains, the PREVAIL trial is currently in its second phase – which involves a new sample size of 1,500 volunteers. Currently, around 1,200 people have taken

National Advocacy Presentation March 31, 2015

<http://bit.ly/1DBIPX3>

KEY MESSAGES on Measles, Polio, and De Worming Campaign May 8-14, 2015

<http://bit.ly/1JcsJd3>

part in this second round (around 25 percent of whom are female), leaving space for about 300 more volunteers before the phase is completed.

Upon completion, Dr. Kennedy adds, that follow-ups will be made for all participants after six-month and 12-month period simultaneously, in order to measure the durability and longevity of their immunity.

At present, the institution still administering the PREVAIL vaccine trials as part of the study is the Redemption Hospital in Monrovia’s New Kru town, according to Dr Kennedy.

Three doctors including two Liberian men and one American woman, took part in the Monrovia-based PREVAIL study. They received a dose of one of the trial vaccines. “I am one of them,” Dr Kennedy declared proudly, revealing that he took it on 3 February 2015.

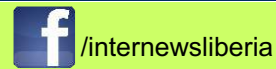
According to Dr. Kennedy, documented side effects from those receiving the experimental vaccines have been relatively mild, with only some of the volunteers complaining of small headaches, fever, or joint pain within 24 hours of taking the vaccine. With the help of a basic painkiller such as Paracetamol, Dr. Kennedy said the side effects disappeared within few hours.

To date, Dr. Kennedy affirmed, there have been absolutely “no deaths” and “no vaccine-related hospitalizations” among the volunteers participating in the study.

Phase three of the trial is still under development. Liberia is currently nearing the point of zero-Ebola cases. However, considerations are being made to include into the study, people in the border areas with Sierra Leone and Guinea that still suffer from the pandemic.

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Note for the media

PREVAIL will be happy to put journalists in touch with hospital staff / “vaccinators” (i.e. those who have been administering the trial vaccines to volunteers) for further interviews, but PREVAIL is not able to provide journalists with any names and/or contacts of individuals participating in the trial, due to confidentiality and privacy reasons. If journalists would like to try to find or contact these individuals on their own, they can do it – as it is completely the participants’ own decisions if they would like to speak

to the press or not. They also need to make sure that the decision to talk to media is an informed and conscious decision.

The Liberia-US Joint Research Partnership

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kennedy@pire.org

Liberia’s Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

<http://www.mohsw.gov.lr/>

STATISTICS FOR THE MEDIA

Table 1: Confirmed, probable, and suspected EVD cases Liberia

Country	Case definition	Cumulative cases	Cases in past 21 days	Cumulative deaths
Liberia**	Confirmed	3151	1	‡
	Probable	1879	*	‡
	Suspected	5012	*	‡
	Total	10 042	0	4486

Data are based on official information reported by ministries of health. These numbers are subject to change due to on-going reclassification, retrospective investigation and availability of laboratory results. *Not reported due to the high proportion of probable and suspected cases that are reclassified. ‡Data not available. **Data is until 11 April.

Table 2: Cumulative number of confirmed and probable cases by sex and age group in Liberia.

Country	Cumulative cases				
	By sex*		By age group‡		
	(per 100 000 population)	(per 100 000 population)	(per 100 000 population)	(per 100 000 population)	(per 100 000 population)
	Male	Female	0-14 years	15-44 years	45+ years
Liberia	2958	2891	993	3170	1208
	(149)	(147)	(58)	(186)	(226)

SOURCE: <http://apps.who.int/ebola/current-situation/ebola-situation-report-22-april-2015-0>

Internews “Information Saves Lives” is a six-month project implemented under the Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (Hc3) project and funded by USAID. The project aims at building the capacity of Liberian journalists to report accurately on the Ebola disease and on the impact of the crisis on the local population.

For more information contact: Tapang Ivo Tanku, Health Communication Liaison Officer – 0770461348

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Citizens' Feedback



/internewsliberia

PREVENTION MEASURES

Locals do not practice Ebola prevention measures because they are complacent of the zero Ebola case in Liberia.

Lofa

Margibi residents claim that Ebola prevention measures are widely respected in their County.

Margibi

Citizens are not observing the Ebola preventive measures anymore.

Montserrado

Residents report that Ebola prevention measures are being strictly followed within their County.

Grand Gedeh

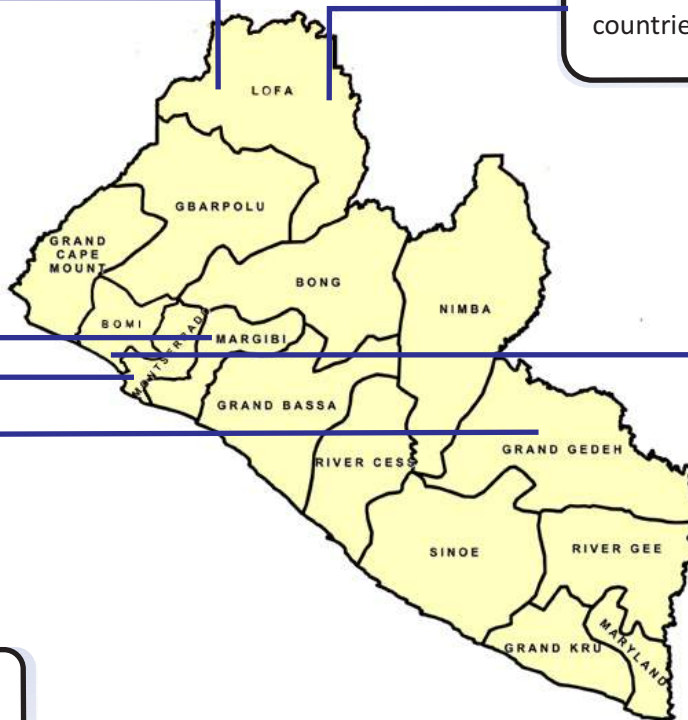
RAINY SEASON

The Lofa and Margibi County residents suggest that the border with Ebola-stricken countries should be closed until all three countries have been officially declared Ebola-free.

Lofa & Margibi

Bomi residents say they are happy about the decision to reopen borders, but still fear that the virus could come into Liberia through the Guinea and Sierra Leone borders.

Bomi



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Citizens' Feedback



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RAINY SEASONAL

Citizens rumor that the virus will resurface during the raining season.

Bong

EBOLA VACCINE / FUNDS

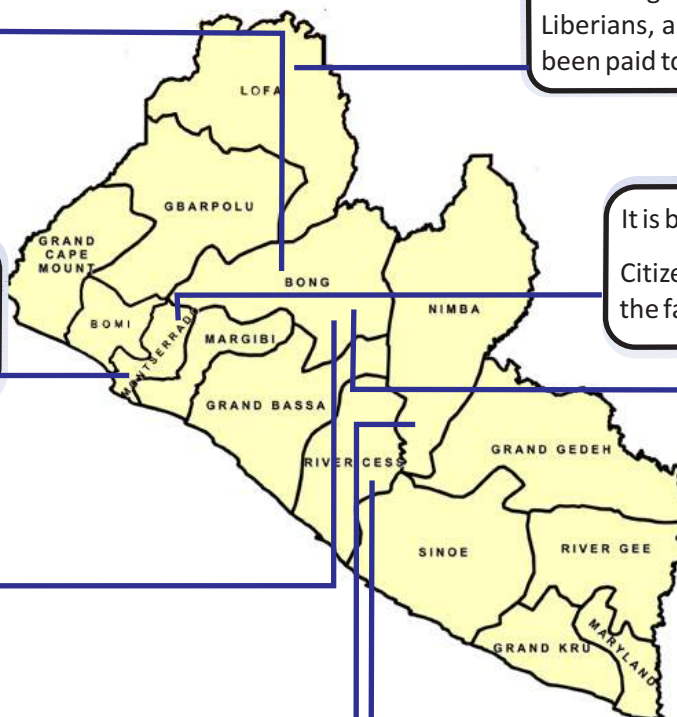
It is being rumored among citizens that the Ebola vaccine will infect Liberians, and that nurses at clinics and hospitals in Lofa County have been paid to infect patients with the harmful Ebola vaccine.

Lofa

EBOLA TREATMENT UNITS (ETUs)

Citizens rumor that the Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs) in Bomi County will be closed on 17 April because for several months now, there has been no reported Ebola case within their County.

Montserrado



It is being rumored that the Ebola virus is a man-made disease.

Citizens rumor that the government has a budget to compensate the families of healed Ebola patients and dead victims.

Montserrado

SCHOOLS

Citizens rumor that parents fear sending their children to schools because Ebola prevention kits contain the virus that will infect children.

Bong

It is being rumored that any potential outbreak of the Ebola virus will target mainly children.

Nimba

People rumor that the Ebola vaccine is intended to infect many more Liberians.

Bong

Citizens rumor that the government is now faking reports of new Ebola cases in Monrovia in a bid to spread a nation-wide fear and panic, and also to seek more Ebola funds.

River Cess

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Citizens' Feedback



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ROUTINE IMMUNIZATION

Residents rumor that the routine immunization is fake. They claim that it is the Ebola vaccine that has been disguised. They are advising the locals not to receive it.

Lofa

People still rumor that the routine immunization is intended to infect people with Ebola and not to prevent the spread of measles and polio.

Rivercess

River Gee County residents rumor that the Ebola vaccine has been disguised as the routine immunization. They add that doctors want more Ebola patients and do not intend to prevent measles or polio.

River Gee

PREVENTION MEASURES

Grand Bassa citizens rumor that the US military will exploit the petroleum resources in Liberia for their selfish interests, as they pretend to fight Ebola.

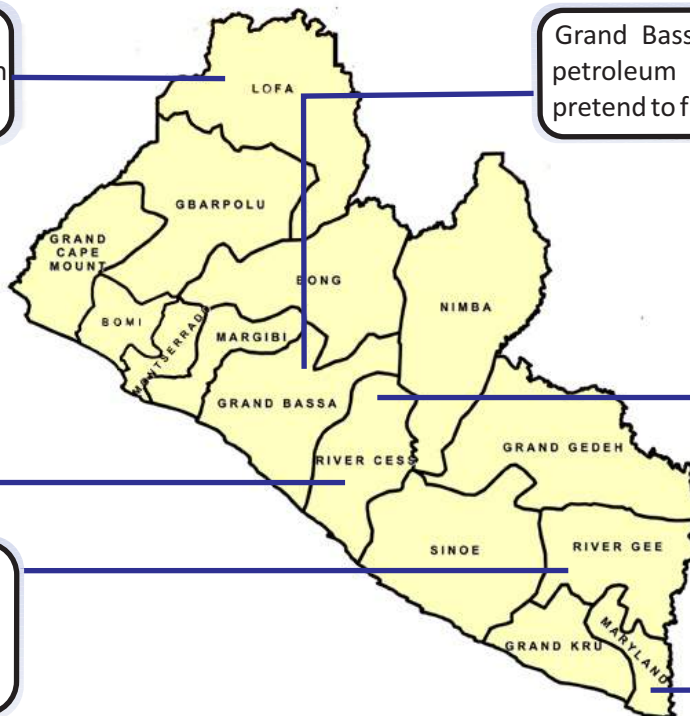
Grand Bassa

The locals in Rivercess County rumor that Liberia is now Ebola-free.

River Cess

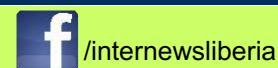
In Maryland, residents rumor that among the seven Ebola suspects who were quarantined in their County, one died last week. They add that they are still awaiting the results of his specimen that was collected and sent to a lab in Monrovia shortly after he died.

Maryland



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Rumors Reporting

Schools

Rumors from local people	Well-sourced and accurate responses
Bong County Citizens rumor that parents fear sending their children to schools because Ebola prevention kits contain the virus that will infect children.	According to UNICEF Liberia, 3,974 out of the 4,038 targeted schools (that's 98 percent) have received back-to-school kits containing infection prevention and control (IPC) supplies through Education Cluster partners in March. 3,460 of 4,038 target schools (or 86%) have had a teacher, administrator and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) members trained in the Safe School Reopening protocols through Education Cluster partners.
Nimba County It is being rumored that any potential outbreak of the Ebola virus will target mainly children.	While stringent prevention measures have been put in place across schools in Liberia, community engagement activities and feedback, more radio talk shows and informal group discussions are encouraged as a strategy to drive out fear and mistrust among parents and students. The Ministry of Education also recommends community to avoid bodily contact as well as unnecessary public gatherings. The local media should encourage communities in trusting the government and the international community to bring the crisis to an end. <i>*For more information and/or interviews, Internews strongly recommends journalists/communicators to contact:</i> Ministry of Education Albert Coleman, Senior policy advisor Phone: 088 075 7312 acoleman@moe.gov.lr UNICEF Liberia Rukshan Ratnam Phone: 0770267110 rratnam@unicef.org

Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs)

Bomi County Citizens rumor that the Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs) in Bomi County will be closed on 17 April because for several months now, there have been no reported Ebola cases within their county.	The International Organization for Migration (IOM) did not close the Bomi ETU on 17 April. The process of closing the ETUs falls within clear priorities and guidelines. One of the guidelines requires that the Liberian government should formally approve the demonization exercise. <i>*For more information interviews, journalists/communicators can contact:</i> International Organization for Migration (IOM) Salvatore Sortino, Chief of Missions Phone: 0880183882 ssortino@iom.int
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Ebola vaccine / Funds

Montserrado County

It is being rumored that the Ebola virus is a man-made disease.

Lofa County

It is being rumored among citizens that the Ebola vaccine will infect Liberians, and that nurses at clinics and hospitals in Lofa County have been paid to infect patients with the harmful Ebola vaccine.

Bong County

People rumor that the Ebola vaccine is intended to infect many more Liberians.

River Cess County

Citizens rumor that the government is now faking reports of new Ebola cases in Monrovia in a bid to spread nation-wide fear and panic, and also to seek more Ebola funds.

The Partnership for Research on Ebola vaccines in Liberia (Organizers of the PREVAIL) vaccine trial says that the vaccine trial involves injecting volunteers aged 18 and above with the aim of tricking the body into producing an immune response which has been proven, and experts encourage more volunteers to come forth for the vaccine.

The disease that first appeared in 1976 in simultaneous outbreaks in Nzara, Sudan, and in Yambuku, Democratic Republic of Congo has caused the Liberian government and its humanitarian partners to seek funding to end the epidemic in the country.

Community members are advised to set up discussions within popular gatherings to share accurate information about how the disease is transmitted from both humans and animals – with a special focus on avoiding **close contacts with the blood, secretions, or other bodily fluids of an Ebola-infected person. Also, journalists are advised continue relaying the right information to the population with regards to EVD origin and prevention measures.**

**For more information or interviews, journalists/communicators can contact:*

The Liberia-US Joint Research Partnership

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Rainy Season

Bong County

Citizens rumor that the virus will resurface during the rainy season.

Global health officials and officials in Liberia have made overall progress in the Ebola battle, especially ahead of the country's rainy season, which could make it difficult for responders to reach any new hot spots in rural areas. The United Nations sees rain as a complicating factor that could lead to increases in other diseases and potentially flood roads for responders. Also, the current countdown to zero Ebola cases in Liberia is a reminder that nation-wide prevention and response efforts are proving effective, and the community members should continue to remain vigilant, even in unaffected areas.

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

Environmental Inspection (MoHSW)

Baiyezenah W. Brown, Head-Bong County
Phone: 886536831

Social and Mobilisation Team (MoHSW)

Kao J. Davies, Supervisor Bong County
Phone: 0886566011/0775157232

Sustainable Community Development and Environmental and Sanitation

Trokon C Yeabah, Administrator
Phone: 880035251 scodes_environment@yahoo.com

Financial Benefits

Montserrado County

Citizens rumor that the government has a budget to compensate the families of healed Ebola patients and dead victims.

In March, Liberia's government began making payments to the families of health workers who died of Ebola. As of 19 March, 11 families have received \$5,000 each according to Tolbert Nyenswah, who leads the government's Ebola response. Dozens more payments are in the works. Ebola has killed 180 health workers in the country, according to the World Health Organization. The World Bank is also providing the funding for the stipends.

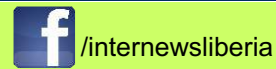
**For more information interviews, Internews strongly recommends journalists/communicators to contact:*

Deputy Minister of Incident Manager at the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW)

Tolbert G. Nyenswah
Phone: 0886558612
tgnyenswah@jhsph.edu

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Routine Immunizations

River Cess County

People still rumor that the routine immunizations are intended to infect people with Ebola and not to prevent the spread of other diseases, including measles and polio.

Lofa County

Residents rumor that the routine immunization is fake. They claim that it is the Ebola vaccine that has been disguised.

River Gee County

There is a rumor going around in River Gee County that the Ebola vaccine has been disguised as the routine immunization. They add that doctors want more Ebola patients and do not intend to prevent measles or polio.

The Social Mobilization Committee on Ebola under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) in Liberia heading four separate committees (messages and materials team, field operations team, media support team, and research, monitoring and evaluation team) will carry out key activities within communities in response to citizens' concerns. These teams are particularly focusing on encouraging a wider acceptance of the routine immunizations.

As a strategy to combat mistrust and misinformation surrounding the routine immunization, it is recommended that the local media collaborate with the social mobilization teams in their various counties in identifying and supporting systems to share accurate and reliable information. They should also support increased public awareness of accurate information in stopping the epidemic, and share information about how the routine immunizations actually work to prevent measles and polio.

**For more information or interviews, journalists/communicators can contact:*

Social Mobilization Team (MoHSW)

Flourish Z. Karnue, Supervisor River Gee County
Phone: 0886560485

Social Mobilization Team (MoHSW)

Jammie Kekula, Supervisor Lofa County
Phone: 0777856835

Social Mobilization Team (MoHSW)

Bill Kaloweh, Supervisor Rivercess County
Phone: 0886525000; 0777525000

US Military Presence

Grand Bassa County

Grand Bassa citizens rumor that the US military will exploit the petroleum resources in Liberia for their selfish interests, as they pretend to fight Ebola.

Pointing to a clear statement from the White House, the United States is relying on the unique capabilities of the U.S. military to help bring Ebola under control in Liberia. Their efforts entail logistics expertise, training, and engineering support. Basically, there is a joint Force Command headquartered in Monrovia, Liberia, that provides regional command and control support to U.S. military activities and facilitates coordination with U.S. government and international relief efforts. Command engineers have in the past built additional Ebola Treatment Units in affected areas and the U.S. Government helped to recruit and organize medical personnel to staff them.



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Prevention Measures

Maryland County

In Maryland, residents rumor that among the seven Ebola suspects who were quarantined in their County, one died last week. They add that they are still awaiting the results of his tests, which were collected and sent to a lab in Monrovia shortly after he died.

River Cess County

The locals in Rivercess County rumor that Liberia is now Ebola-free.

Below is a summary of WHO's situation report on 16 April 2015:

No. of days without a new confirmed case: 27

No. of days since last confirmed Ebola patient died : 20

No. of days since last case was buried: 19

Confirmed cases over last 21 days: 0

Contacts under follow up: 0

Live confirmed cases in ETUs: 0

From the above report, it could be recommended that community members continue to practice acceptable hygiene and prevention measures that could successfully lead Liberia to its much awaited 42 days since its last confirmed Ebola case. The local media could collaborate with responders in quickly dismissing these rumors through well-sourced information.

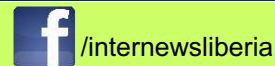
**For more information or interviews, Internews suggests journalists/communicators to contact:*

World Health Organization (WHO)

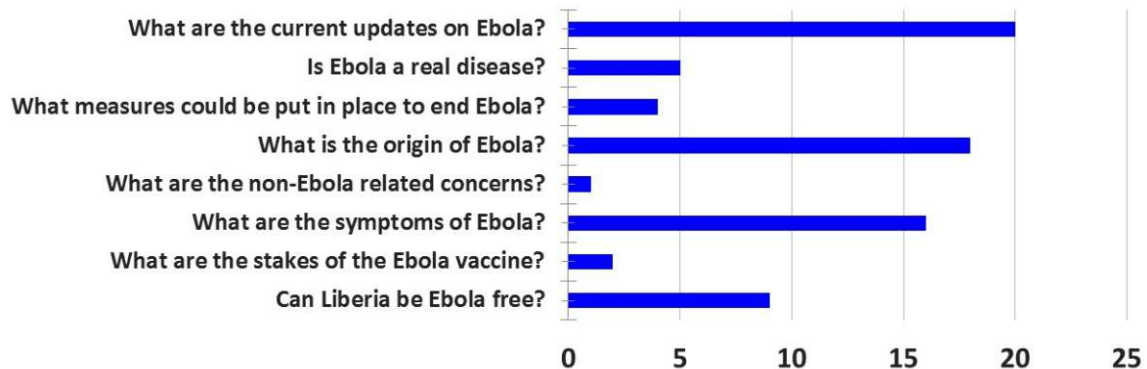
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The most frequently asked questions in the Geopoll survey (April 2015) Information Needs Analysis



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM COUNTIES

Sinoe County:

1. What is Ebola?
2. Is Ebola is a man-made disease?

Nimba County:

3. What is Ebola?
4. What are the effects of Ebola?
5. Is Liberia Ebola-free?
6. Who discovered the Ebola virus?
7. Is Ebola still in Liberia?

Montserrado County:

8. What are the most recommended Ebola prevention measures?
9. Is it possible for relatives of a healed Ebola patient to contract the virus through interactions?
10. How long does the virus survive outside its host?
11. How long should healed Ebola patients abstain from sex?
12. How many Ebola cases are present in Liberia?

Maryland County:

13. When is it recommended for a healed Ebola patient to start having sex?
14. Is Ebola transmitted through body contacts with an infected person?
15. Is Ebola still present in Liberia?

Margibi County:

16. How did Ebola come into Liberia?
17. Should a healed Ebola patient have sex after 90 days?
18. When will Liberia be officially declared Ebola-free?
19. Can someone who has been infected with Ebola but showing neither sign nor symptom, still infect others?

Lofa County:

20. Is it advisable to interact with healed Ebola patients?
21. How did Ebola enter into Liberia?
22. Where did Ebola come from?
23. How many persons have been killed by Ebola in Liberia?

Grand Gedeh County:

24. Is Ebola a natural or man-made disease?
25. How can we make Liberia Ebola-free?
26. Who invented Ebola and how did it enter into Liberia?

Grand Bassa County:

27. What is Ebola?
28. When will Liberia be Ebola-free?
29. How did Ebola enter into Liberia?
30. Can Ebola spread?

Bong County:

31. How can a person be infected with Ebola?
32. What is the known cure for Ebola?
33. Is Liberia Ebola-free or not, and why?
34. What is the exact date when the first Ebola case was discovered in Liberia?

Bomi County:

35. How long does it take for a country to be officially declared Ebola-free?
36. Where did Ebola originate?

Rivercess County:

37. When will Liberia be declared Ebola-free?
38. How does Ebola spread?



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World Health Organization (WHO)

Olivia Pratt Dennis, Social Mobilization Officer
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Resources for the media

Frequently Asked Questions

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

Flyer – Measles Campaign

<http://bit.ly/1Pj1jTs>

National Advocacy Presentation March 31, 2015

<http://bit.ly/1DBIPX3>

KEY MESSAGES on Measles, Polio, and De Worming Campaign May 8-14, 2015

<http://bit.ly/1JcsJd3>

Secretary-General's remarks to the general assembly meeting on Ebola

<http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=8406>

Ebola Situation report

<http://apps.who.int/gho/data/view.ebola-sitrep.ebola-summary-20150416?lang=en>

Ebola situation, Report no. 77

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Liberia's Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

<http://www.mohsw.gov.lr/>

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