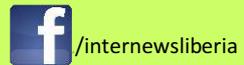


Information Saves Lives

Media Newsletter
Issue #1



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 all of them to forward, share and re-post this newsletter as widely as possible.

Highlights

- There has been an increase in the number of cases in Zuman Town, St. Paul Bridge Community, Montserrado County with 5 confirmed cases on 30 January.
- Ebola Vaccine trial has started on 31 January at Redemption hospital, with priority being given to health staff in Monrovia.
- Deadline for the reopening of schools has been postponed by two weeks from February 2 to February 16 in order for authorities to prepare for students to return.
- Hand-washing and other Infection Prevention and Control equipment are being dispatched to Montserrado schools then to the rest of the country with support from UNICEF and partners.
- Until 4 February, only two counties (Montserrado, and Margibi,) have reported confirmed Ebola cases in the past 21 days.



Routine Vaccines

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in conjunction with the World Health Organization launched the Periodic Routine Immunization for children and pregnant women. The routine immunizations HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE EBOLA VACCINE TRIAL and it will be focusing on five childhood diseases including measles, tuberculosis, etc.

The Periodic Intensification of Routine Immunization (PIRI) began on 2 February 2015 for children five and under, with the measles vaccine and Vitamin A. Children under one year of age will receive all routine EPI (Expanded Program on Immunization) vaccines. Children aged between 12-23 months will receive the remaining doses missed during the EVD outbreak.

UNICEF trained the field monitoring team from the MoH and partners to ensure effective monitoring of PIRI activities in all 15 counties. Vaccines and vaccination equipment have been prepositioned in all 15 counties. All those providing the vaccinations should have and use: hand washing stations, a new pair of gloves for each child, a gown, and a thermometer to check for fever.

It is very important for media outlets and journalists covering this topic to draw a distinction between these routine vaccinations and the Ebola vaccine trial, and to make sure that mothers and families are informed about the difference.

For more information about this issue contact the Ministry of Health & Social Welfare at info@mohsw.gov.lr
Or UNICEF Liberia: Aanchal Khurana - Cell: +231770267956 - Email: akhurana@unicef.ork

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First Large-Scale Trials Launched in Liberia for Vaccines to Prevent Ebola

On Monday, February 2nd, the Liberia-U.S. Joint Partnership for Clinical Research announced the start of the first large-scale trials for two experimental vaccines against Ebola. The vaccine study, called PREVAIL, is a large clinical study led by US and Liberian researchers. It is being supported and paid for by the Liberian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW) and the US National Institutes of Health.

The way the study works is that there are two test Ebola vaccines and one saltwater injection, or 'placebo'. Each volunteer who participates in the study will receive one of these three injections – but they will not know which one. The results from the volunteers receiving the experimental vaccines will then be compared with the results from those who only received the saltwater injection. The purpose of the study is to determine if giving a single dose of one of these test vaccines will prevent a person from getting sick with the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD).

According to the organizers of the PREVAIL study, it is hoped that approximately 27,000 healthy adult volunteers will participate in the vaccines trial in Liberia – which is expected to take place at 10 or more clinics in and around Monrovia. To start, the first 600 vaccinations will be given at the newly renovated research unit of Redemption Hospital in New Kru Town.

What is a vaccine?

A vaccine DOES NOT treat or heal sick people already infected with a disease. A vaccine is a substance which trains the body of healthy people to fight off a disease or infection in future. It prevents them from getting sick later on.

Do these vaccines work?

It is unknown if the vaccines currently being tested in Liberia will prevent Ebola. That is the purpose of this study.

Can someone get Ebola from taking one of the study vaccines?

No. It is NOT POSSIBLE to get Ebola from the vaccines in this study because these vaccines do not contain the whole Ebola virus. Only the whole Ebola virus can cause Ebola.

Do the test Ebola vaccines have side effects?

The test Ebola vaccines can cause side effects in some people. Some people who receive the vaccine have pain, redness, or swelling in the arm of the injection. Other side effects include 1 to 2 days of fever, headaches, mouth sores, fatigue, and not feeling hungry. Some people have joint pain for a few weeks.

What happens if someone gets sick from the vaccine?

If a person in the study gets sick from the vaccine, they will receive care at the clinics and hospitals taking part in the study. This care will be free of charge.

Who can join the study?

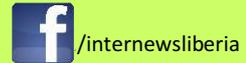
People can join the study if they are 18 years or older, plan to be in Monrovia for at least a year, and have a normal temperature. People at high risk for Ebola – including health workers and ambulance workers – are especially being encouraged to join this study.

Will the people in the study be paid?

People in the study will be given money to cover their transportation and missed work.

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Why join the study? What is the benefit?

It is possible that there may not be any benefit from participation in the vaccine study. But as Liberia's Information Minister, Lewis Brown stated earlier this week; by participating in this study, by volunteering as a country, Liberians can help prevent the virus from recurring in the future.

According to findings from the World Health Organization, the Ebola Virus Disease in most cases re-occurred in countries like Uganda, Congo and Sudan after they were declared Ebola free.

“Even though your fears of the trial vaccination may be genuine,” Minister Brown said, “we cannot be faulted for not trying to end an epidemic that has the potential of re-occurrence if we do not try our best to fight it totally.”

It is very important for media outlets and journalists covering this topic to help communities understand what a vaccine is, etc.

For more information about this issue, or to schedule an interview regarding the vaccine study, you can contact:

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NIAID Office of Communications at +1-301-402-1663

Sources:

http://www.mohsw.gov.lr/documents/Ebola%20Response%20Update_30%20January%20vers%20202015.pdf

<http://www.micatliberia.com/index.php/blog/line-bulletin/2503-ebola-vaccine-trial-opportunity-for-liberia-brown.html>

Frequently Asked Questions
<http://bit.ly/1Dmmsgc>
[Http://bit.ly/1ujz3tx](http://bit.ly/1ujz3tx)

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Re-opening of Schools Delayed Nation-wide

Last week, the Government of Liberia announced that the re-opening of schools across the country would be pushed back by two weeks – from February 2nd, when they were initially scheduled to be re-opened, to February 16th.

According to an official statement from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW), this extra time will allow for more in-depth preparations to take place, in order to ensure that schools are safe for returning students. These preparations include specialized trainings, as well as the distribution of safety supplies and protocols – which are currently being sent to all 5,181 schools in Liberia.

What are these “protocols”?

The [‘Protocols for Safe School Environments in the Ebola Outbreak in Liberia’](#) are a set of guidelines. They state what needs to be done to make schools safe.

Some of these protocols are:

- Make sure that every child who has registered for school has had no contact with a suspected Ebola patient in the last 21 days before the school reopens.
- If students are sick, they should stay at home. Any child who has fever, vomiting, or running stomach should *not* go to school.
- There should be a temperature check in place at the entry point to every school. When students go to school every day, they will be checked for fever and other symptoms.

- There should also be hand-washing stations located at the entry point of every school, and outside the school bathroom(s).
- If a student becomes sick during school, they will be moved to a safe place away from other students, and wait there while the school calls for help. This safe place should be identified before the school re-opens on the 16th.

Meanwhile, parents are also being encouraged to continue to remind their children not to share personal items (including cups, spoons, food and clothes) with others, and not to touch anybody who gets sick.

Local media are encouraged to monitor the application of the protocols in their local areas and to contact their district representatives to have more information about what is the status of the local schools.

On another note, Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Lydia-Mai Sherman announced that the government will pay the tuition for children who lost their parents to the Ebola virus and were sent to foster homes. The foster parents were each given US\$150 as government’s initial contribution for their welfare and they will now receive a monthly stipend of US\$15 as allowance for each of the children.

[‘Protocols for Safe School Environments in the Ebola Outbreak in Liberia’](#)

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Citizens' feedback

The Feedback contained in this page has been collected by media outlets¹ during their daily programs in the past week.

Re-opening of schools

In Bong County there is a mix reaction to the re-opening of schools. Some communities welcome the reopening, some are scared that the schools may not be ready for welcoming students again and to implement the necessary protocols.

In the communities in Grand Bassa County parents of children are also complaining that it will be difficult for them to send their children back to school as they have been out of jobs due to the Ebola crisis.

Even if the number of Ebola cases in Grand Cape Mount County is slowing down, and preparations are being made by the government and UNICEF, parents are still not sure if it is adequate for kids to go back to school.

Citizens in Lofa County highlight how misinformation and lack of information are currently a serious problem. According to reports, two weeks ago parents welcomed the reopening of schools and begun registration, but when the news of the vaccine trial came out, rumors spread that the kids will be quarantined at schools and taken to the ETU to get the vaccine. Parents began requesting for refunds from school saying that they do not want to register their children anymore.

In Montserrado citizens complained that the proposed February 16 reopening date still falls short for parents to adequately prepare as they are struggling with financial challenges.

Ebola Vaccine Trail

In Bong County, the local population seem to have very limited information about the vaccine trial.

In Grand Bassa County, most citizens lament a lack of detailed information about the vaccine trial and also about the routine vaccinations. Most of the people don't know about the trial.

In Grand Cape Mount County there seems to be a lack of awareness about the Ebola Vaccine Trial at the community level.

In Montserrado County the majority of the listeners expressed negative sentiments about the vaccine trial. According to some journalists, nine out of every ten calls to the radio shows were expressing negative opinions about the trial. The callers maintained that there was no adequate information from authorities and that sensitization had been ineffective. Citizens in the community of Montserrado think that information from health authorities is not being provided in a proper way, and that there seems to still be confusion about the vaccine trial.

¹ Media outlets that have collected this feedback are:
Radio Gbarga, Radio LACSA, Radio Cape Mount FM,
Radio Harleygne, LIB 24 FM, Hot FM, UNMIL Radio.

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RESOURCES FOR MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS COVERING EBOLA IN LIBERIA

Ministry of Health Website: <http://www.mohsw.gov.lr>

Ebola Updates from the Ministry of Health:
http://www.mohsw.gov.lr/content_display.php?sub=report2

Press Releases from the Ministry of Health:
http://www.mohsw.gov.lr/content_display.php?sub=press_release2

Ministry of Information Page:
<http://www.micatliberia.com/>

Ebola Updates from the Ministry of Information:
<http://www.micatliberia.com/index.php/ebola-update.html>

WHO Ebola Updates: <http://apps.who.int/ebola/>

WHO Situation Reports:
<http://apps.who.int/ebola/en/current-situation>

UNICEF Liberia: <http://www.unicef.org/liberia>

UNICEF Liberia Press Releases:
<http://www.unicef.org/liberia/media.html>

Ebola Response Contact List by Organization:
http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/Contacts_Liberia%20per%20Organization_18012015.pdf

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

[Ebola Message Guidance Package](#)

This is the latest Version of the Ebola Message Guidance Package developed for Communication and Social Mobilization in Liberia. The purpose of this guidance package is to provide government agencies, response committees and teams, media outlets, partners, and community leaders with accurate and consistent information to use when communicating about Ebola in Liberia. All are encouraged to share this document widely as a guide for all communicating about Ebola. Please note that the messages should be adapted to the audiences and into Liberia's local languages and vernaculars as they are shared. Media outlets that are using the guide are encouraged to provide feedback to increase the effectiveness of this guide. Please direct all feedback to the Social Mobilization Sub-Committee chaired by Rev. Sumo: jsumo2013@gmail.com; gebleezeon@yahoo.com; and sclayton@unicef.org