

THIS ISSUE

1. Ebola Response Update
2. Operation Northern Push
3. Stories from Communities
4. VPE Programme—Debrief and Report
5. Monitoring Our Work.
6. Community Mobiliser Profiles



EBOLA RESPONSE UPDATE

Across rivers and roads swollen with seasonal rain, in villages and towns remote and near, Ebola hot spots and Ebola-free communities, during 49,000 community visits and within the coordinating District Ebola Response Centres nationally, the incredible Restless Development team continues to support communities, the government and SMAC partners in combating Ebola. It is the most Restless we have ever been.

Still Work To Do.

Despite considerable successes in reducing transmission, the Ebola outbreak has continued in Sierra Leone and neighbouring Guinea, with new cases recorded in Liberia.

Several districts of Sierra Leone have gone months without a reported case. However, transmission has continued in Freetown and its surrounds, along with the districts of Port Loko and Kambia. As we celebrate a week of no cases up to the 18th August, the recent case in Tonkolili, after 150 days of being Ebola-free, has highlighted that there remains no time for complacency.

Maintaining Support to Communities Nationally.

Restless Development maintains large-scale social mobilisation activities in 13 of the 14 Districts in the country. 1,104 SMAC Community Mobilisers continue to work with communities to maintain action plans developed as part of the [Community-led Ebola Action Approach](#), ensuring they have the latest information and are linked to central authorities, by-laws are maintained, and burial and sick alerts continue to be reported.

Even in areas of no transmission, staff and Mobilisers continue to work tirelessly in schools, communities and district operational centres to encourage against complacency and ensure coordination and collaboration amongst communities, government and responders.

'Operation Northern Push'.

Operation Northern Push was launched by the National Ebola Response Centre (NERC) in June as a response to the ongoing cases in Port Loko and Kambia. Restless Development and our SMAC partners, with support from DFID and UNICEF, have launched a significant scale-up of activities to play a lead role in the social mobilisation activities. We have learned from 'surges' in other districts what works and what doesn't and are bringing this experience to bear on the last affected communities.

Cross-border Collaboration.

Restless Development has been at the centre of efforts to increase cross-border collaboration with Guinea and Liberia given the large amount of movement across borders. Trade between the two countries, along with a search for improved health facilities, is resulting in a high level of traffic between countries a daily basis.

Volunteer Peer Educators (VPEs)

Our alumni of 2014/15 VPEs working within the Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme completed work in their placements in July. 102 VPEs shared experiences and lessons at their debrief ceremony held in Makeni. Ebola was the greatest challenge faced by the VPEs; during school closures and quarantines, the VPEs work providing peer leadership on issues of sexual health, life skills and psycho-social support was more important than ever.

The UN Ebola Recovery Conference.

Restless Development represented SMAC at the International Ebola Recovery Conference at UN Headquarters in New York on the 9–10 July. At the request of UNICEF, we collaborated with colleagues from NGOs and Community-based Organisations to ensure that community engagement and voices of local actors were heard during technical session and the pledging assembly.

EBOLA RESPONSE AND IMPACT IN NUMBERS

- Working in **13** of the 14 Districts nationally
- **2,581** Community Mobilisers trained and supported.
- **8,634** rural communities supported by Mobilisers to develop Community-led Ebola Action plans.
- **55%** of rural communities reached across Sierra Leone on a regular basis.
- **49,000** individual Mobiliser visits to communities.
- **1,896,923** community members directly reached.
- **3,000** approximate alerts of community deaths requiring safe burial and community members with Ebola symptoms.
- **9%** increase in community reporting of safe burials.
- **23%** increase in sick referrals within 24 hours.

'OPERATION NORTHERN PUSH' – SCALE-UP IN KAMBIA AND PORT LOKO



A Massive Response in the North

Operational Northern Push in Kambia and Port Loko was announced by the National Ebola Response Centre on the 16th June 2015. The Restless Development and the SMAC team have gathered their reserves for one final effort in eradicating transmission in the country.

Restless Development and SMAC Response

Our response for Operation Northern Push has been significant and includes:

- Office opened in Port Loko.
- 444 additional Mobilisers recruited and trained in Port Loko, along with 357 in Kambia.
- Over 2,000 communities reached.
- Over 100,000 community members reached weekly.
- Staff relocated to affected districts.

Focus on Traditional Healers and Seeking Treatment

Rural areas of these districts are renowned for having well respected traditional healers with close links with traditional healers from Guinea. There is evidence that the sick are travelling across borders to be treated by traditional healers for Ebola. Cases of Ebola positive people travelling to Kambia and Port Loko caused a surge of cases, indicating that a new strategy of community engagement was required. There has also been an increased incidence of secret burials in communities.

Restless Development and our partners are working directly with traditional leaders, while our Community Mobilisers are focused on establishing trust and encouraging communities to refer their sick for treatment and report deaths for safe burial.

Working Across Borders

Restless Development and SMAC staff worked with the Social Mobilisation Pillars and other partners to plan a two-month cross border engagement to address issues related to movement of people crossing from both Guinea and Sierra Leone. Activities includes meetings to strengthen bilateral coordination with Guinean partners, visiting communities close to border areas to conduct community engagement to address issues of movement and complacency.

Chieftom Stewardship.

In Port Loko, Restless Development is operating based on the stewardship approach under the leadership of the District Health Medical Team and UNICEF and endorsed to the Paramount Chief. Restless Development is working as "chieftom stewards" in five chieftoms, while in Kambia we re working across all seven chieftoms.

Highlights of the Response

- Training integrated surveillance and social mobilisation teams at border crossing points to engage in active case identification.
- Working in Camp Hope for quarantined community members in Kambia, 8 SMAC Mobilisers and one SMAC Chieftom Supervisor managing the social mobilisation unit in the camp and supporting psychosocial and other response teams.
- Establishment and manning of checkpoints at district level, and participating in joint visits to assess international border checkpoints.
- Working with quarantined households.
- Measles and Polio Vaccination Campaign in June, support to supervising and coordinating vaccination teams, radio discussions and preparing communities.

INCREASED ALERTS AND SAFER BURIALS

All deaths in Sierra Leone must be reported to authorities and receive a Safe and Dignified Medical Burial from one of the dedicated Burial Teams. There has been a strong social mobilisation focus on supporting communities to make alerts of deaths for safe burial. SMAC Mobilisers are trusted by community people, as they are often recruited from amongst their own family members and communities. As a result, they are being consistently informed about deaths and sick cases in their communities, which are further being reported to the appropriate authorities for action.

SMAC Community Mobilisers facilitate and make reports of deaths in communities that require Safe and Dignified Medical Burials, often after having accessing communities across rivers or wading through high levels of water. As they are located close to communities, the Mobilisers also play a role as an advance team to ensure communities are providing support in cooperating with burial teams, especially when a long wait is needed.

This requires strong community engagement skills on the part of Mobilisers, as often communities can become understandably frustrated at the delay and often wish to go ahead with burials themselves.

In mid-July, SMAC Community Mobilisers communicated 3 death alert calls from the Rosos and Bathekame communities in Bombali District and provided advance support for the Burial Team. When the Burial Team was delayed in conducting the burial in one community, the SMAC Community Mobiliser responsible, Antonett A. Conteh, went there to provide advance support until the burial team arrived. This included explaining to communities the reason for delays, the process for the burial and why it is important that all burials are conducted in a safe manner. Thankfully, the burial team arrived after 5 to 6 hours and they were able to conduct the burial safely and to the community's satisfaction.



Antonett Conteh walking to a community.

SNAPS FROM SALONE EBOLA ACTIVITIES

MICROFINANCE IN A TIME OF EBOLA—NEWS FROM OUR PEACE-BUILDING PROGRAMME.

In Kono and Tonkolili, UNICEF is funding the Peace-Building, Education and Advocacy Programme, which supports locally-recruited VPEs in 32 communities.

Ngo Town is a community located in Kono and it is well known for its local trade fair activities. Being a trade centre, Ngo Town has been heavily impacted by community Ebola by-laws that includes a ban on all market activities.

Ebola Limits Opportunities for Youth.

Due to this situation, community leaders were concerned that young people were left with limited options which was leading to some crime and conflict. It is also a concern that the majority of young people do not have the required skills to be engaged in formal employment, while skills training has been undermined by the by-law on public gatherings and the closure of training and learning institutions. This situation has left the youth of Ngo Town unemployed and with limited opportunity to engage on other livelihood activities.

In order to work for a solution, Restless Development Volunteer Peer Educators (VPE) from Ngo Town decided to engage in household visits in order to encourage young people to become a part of a savings program.

Community Volunteers Facilitate Change.

After several household visits, the VPEs were able to galvanise young people in the community into be part of the savings group. The VPEs decided to hold a meeting with the interested members, where they discussed the importance of savings and the necessity of coming together to support each other.

The VPEs addressed concerns related to the safety of the money, the savings mechanism, and the benefits of contributing to the savings group. During the meeting, the interested young people agreed to save 1,000 Leones (25c) on a weekly basis.

Although it was initially difficult to bring the young people together to be part of the saving group, after the VPEs held several meetings attendance increased and everyone started to participate in the savings activities on a weekly basis. Due to the cooperation of the group members they were able to save 150,000 Leones (\$38) in a short time. After such savings success, the group members decided to invest the money together. It was agreed that the group would make local soap. The soap would be sold by members in order to compliment the funds that group had already saved.

Savings Provides Opportunities for Young People.

Within two months the group raised 300,000 Leones (\$76) and their work is ongoing, serving a means of livelihoods during a difficult time in the community.

Members of the group are now working on a new initiative to provide loans to members, which will be repaid with a minimum interest charge per loan. Members of the group hope will enable them to start their own small businesses and provide self-employment and prepare them to benefit when external trade returns to the town.

WORKING WITH QUARANTINED FAMILIES

Being placed in quarantine is a traumatic experience for families, especially those who have lost loved ones. Shengbeh Village in Port Loko was the home community of a traditional healer that died from Ebola, and his family was placed in quarantine after initially running away.

Listening to and Engaging Quarantined Families.

A Restless Development staff member, Sallieu Jalloh, supported by the Chiefdom Liaison Officer Michael Sesay, visited the family. The family expressed their unhappiness with the situation and the circumstances of their quarantine. The concerns of the family are common to families Restless Development supports in quarantine every day; confusion over the time to be spent in quarantine, treatment from security and police that may not have received psycho-social training, access to food and water.



Sallieu Jalloh and Michael Sesay Engaging the Family in Port Loko.

Sallieu engaged the family members from outside the quarantine, stressing the importance of quarantine for them as a family and for us all as a nation. He explained to them that staying in quarantine is safer than running away without knowing one's Ebola status; by staying in quarantine a person that showing signs can be immediately moved to the treatment centre and increase their chance of survival. Sallieu empathised with the family and encouraged them to abide by the rules and communicate any difficulties to the surveillance team or tracer checking on them on daily basis. He also provided his contact details in the case they needed further support.

Finding Solutions and Involving Communities.

The elder sister of the deceased man was said she was relieved to have someone listen to her problems and explain to the family the conditions of their quarantine. She thanked the team for coming and promised they will remain in the quarantine for the 21 days.

The Village Chief and other stakeholders were also engaged on their role of supporting the process; including not entering the quarantined home and providing words of hope and courage from a distance. Conflict between the family and authorities over the length of the quarantine was settled, and an issue of food shortage was communicated to the District Ebola Response Centre. The community people were satisfied that their concerns and the local community leaders were asked to give a text or call on daily basis to update on the welfare of the family in quarantine.

VOLUNTEER DEBRIEF AND CERTIFICATION 2014-15

GRADUATION OF 2014-15 ALUMNI

July saw this year's annual Volunteer Peer Educator (VPE) Debrief and Certification, held in Makeni. In 2015 we celebrate 10 years of the VPE Programme. For a decade young Sierra Leoneans have been recruited, trained and supported to work for eight months in rural communities. They undertake a range of activities including peer instruction in schools, youth friendly resource centres, psychosocial support and organising events and celebrations.

Volunteering during Ebola.

Volunteering in rural communities is a significant challenge for our young people; for this group of VPEs and the staff supporting them, working during the Ebola outbreak was an even greater challenge.

The Debrief is a two-day workshop where VPEs discuss achievements and provide feedback on lessons and challenges. It is a time to reflect on their work and consider their own perceptions of change in communities as a result of their work.

Impacts of the Intervention.

VPEs found the main issues for young people in their communities were low clinic attendance, a lack of family planning and teenage pregnancy, sexual harassment and negative peer influence. They nominated the following as impacts felt across all communities:

- Increase in clinic visits as a result of engagement with households and outreach to communities.
- Increased understanding and enforcement of by-laws related to Ebola.
- Linkages created with partner NGOs such as Marie Stopes to increase access to contraceptives for girls.
- Support to teenage mothers with remedial classes helped them to return back to school
- Trained and awarded small business grants to Teenage Mothers
- Peer advice and condom education.

- Improved communications skills.
- Mobilisation skills.
- Advocacy, negotiation, and leadership skills.
- Informed decision-making.
- Conflict resolution and mentoring skills.



For the past two years we do not have any incidence of teenage pregnancy. On behalf of my community, I really appreciate the work of the volunteers especially during the peak of Ebola virus outbreak when schools were closed and girls were at high risk of getting pregnant.

- Moses Blackie, a community board member from board

Skills I have learnt as a VPE.

When asked what skills they had developed during their volunteering experience, the VPEs identified the following:

- Valuable working experience and report-writing skills.
- Skills training on CV writing and interview techniques.
- Team work.
- Gained confidence and motivational skills.
- Experience in M&E and quality reporting.
- Knowledge in SRH and life skills.

MUSU KPACA'S VOLUNTEER STORY

Musu Kpaka is a Restless Volunteer Peer Educator. She leads sexual reproductive health and life skills lessons in in Maboma Community, Bo District. However, the path to leadership, responsibility and respect was a difficult one.

In her early childhood, Musu stayed with her parents in Komende Village. After taking her Primary School Exams, she stayed with her aunts in Kenema to undertake her secondary education. It was a difficult time for Musu and sometimes she did not have enough money to buy soap. Life was a struggle, but Musu continued to work hard at school and she did well in school and was successful in the Basic Education Certification Examination.

Musu started her Senior Secondary School education but had to leave when she became pregnant at the age of 17 years. Although her parents were very angry with her, Musu was very determined to continue her schooling. After giving birth, she asked her parents to send her back to school and promised to study hard.



Musu went back to school and completed her education. According to Musu, she is the first teenage mother in her village to go back to school. She said, "in my village, parents perceived teenage mothers as people who have failed in life and will not do well in school or in any other learning activity. With this perception, they are very adamant about not sending teenage mothers to back to school, but I have proved them wrong". Musu was the first in her village to go back to school after she gave birth, now other girls are doing the same. She feels proud of that.

Musu is among the 102 young people recruited and trained as Community Volunteer Peer Educators.

THE SRH VPE PROGRAMME IN NUMBERS: 2014/15

- 102 Volunteer Peer Educators completed their work.
- 51 communities, 13 districts.
- 8,057 young people accessed peer instruction in schools.
- 667 out of school young people received training on family planning and drug abuse
- 9,688 lessons on sexual and reproductive health, life skills, livelihoods and civic participation conducted.
- 10,008 youth accessed psychosocial support and lessons at Youth Friendly Resource Centres.
- 90 Teenage Mothers returned to school.
- 510 teenage mothers trained and supported with small grants.
- 594 Youth Action Club activities were conducted.
- 10,395 condoms distributed to 4,253 young people
- 323 Community Board Members trained to support VPE activities and SRH issues affecting adolescents girls.
- 492 teachers were trained in SRH instruction.
- 1,006 peer leaders trained.

MONITORING 49,000 COMMUNITY VISITS



MEASURING OUR IMPACT, IMPROVING PRACTICE

While working directly with and for communities is central to our Ebola response, just as important is monitoring and measuring the work that we do. Monitoring our work across several thousand communities has been a monumental task for our dedicated Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (RM&E) team – all undertaken while continuing to provide M&E for our non-Ebola programming across the agency.

Our Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, Saiku Bah, (pictured above training Mobilisers) gives us an insight into the monumental task of monitoring the Ebola programme.

What does the RM&E team do?

Prior to the Ebola response, we were monitoring activities in just under 100 communities. Since Ebola started we have expanded to cover over 9,000 communities and have managed to collect, process and analyse data from these communities to inform Restless Development and SMAC's work.

Team members are located in all offices and travel regularly in support of the Ebola response effort; the work includes tool development, data entry and analysis and report writing. Key to the RM&E team's role is the training and mentoring they do of staff and Mobilisers on the correct use of tools to ensure the accuracy of what we measure.

Since May, when Restless Development began its Ebola programme, the RM&E team has:

- Developed, revised and updated several sets of tools and templates to measure our triggering and follow up community engagements, house-to-house campaigns and other social mobilisation activities;
- Processed over 9,000 individual triggering and over 40,000 individual follow-up tools submitted by Mobilisers. These tools record activities for each community visit.

Why is our monitoring so important?

The monitoring of our Ebola programme is so important not only because it allows us to report to donors, government and

partners, but crucially it provides us the mechanism to figure out what differences we are making in the social mobilisation effort.

Accurate and timely data tells us how and why we are making these differences in a fast-changing and fluid environment, how we can improve on our delivery, efficiency and effectiveness and what lessons to take forward. This has allowed the team to tailor our response to emerging issues related to the Ebola crisis. For example, during a mid-term review of our response attended by all staff in February, the RM&E data was essential in informing new ideas and programmatic changes.

What has been the biggest challenge?

The most challenging aspect of our work has been the fact that this is the biggest social mobilisation effort in the fight against Ebola, thus generating huge amounts of data. As such, and given the limited number of staff, processing and analysing the data collected to respond to the various informational needs of the programme teams, partners and stakeholders in a timely manner has not been easy.

Prior to the Ebola response we were monitoring activities in just under 100 communities. Since Ebola has started we have expanded cover over 9,000 communities and managed to collect, process and analyse data from these communities to inform on all of Restless Development's work. This includes data for 49,000 community visits. And almost 1.9 million people.

Therefore, telling the full story of the incredible work that is happening in the field has been a challenge. As a matter of fact, I believe we are still in the introductory chapters of the story because there are literally hundreds of impact stories out there waiting to be told.

Has the response worked?

Across our communities, we have recorded a clear increase in the core target indicators identified as necessary in reducing Ebola transmission. Increased safe burials and referral of people with symptoms within 24 hours has increased 9% and 23% respectively to 93% in both cases.

Personally it has been amazing to see that, apart from a few isolated cases, there has been a downward trend in Ebola transmissions in relation to the increase social mobilisation effort of our gallant Mobilisers and staff. Their work on the ground gave hope to communities and transformed the conversation from one of top-down messaging to one that emphasised collective and personal effort to defeat the disease. The social mobilisation effort moved the conversation from the exotically dressed health responders and what they can do to a human level of what and how the people can deal with Ebola on their terms.

The results of the shift speaks for itself and to me the level of change achieved by our staff and Mobilisers is just unquantifiable!!

COMMUNITY MOBILISER PROFILES



ARUNA SHERIFF – SURVIVOR AND MOBILISER

Survival and Stigma

Aruna Sheriff (pictured on right) is a young married man with children living in Mongerewa Village, in Bonthe District. He is an Ebola Survivor, SMAC Community Mobiliser and young leader.

Aruna contracted Ebola through his child when living in Kaniya Village in Bo District. Tragically, his child did not survive and when Aruna started showing signs and symptoms he was admitted to the Bandajuma Treatment Centre in Bo. After undergoing early treatment, Aruna survived and was discharged and returned to Kaniya. However, he faced stigmatisation from community members there, so he decided to return to Mongerewa in Bonthe, which is his birth place.

Identified by the Restless Development Team

During the three-day stay-at-home in September 2014, a Restless Development staff member, Mohamed M. Sippo, was conducting a monitoring visit in Mongerewa. When Mohamed was talking to households about their opinions on their experience of the stay-at-home, he was informed about a Survivor staying in the community. Immediately, he located Aruna in order to learn from him more about his circumstances. Together they met with the Town Chief and they discussed Aruna's case and his role in the community.

The Restless Development team asked Aruna to join as a Community Mobiliser. He agreed, and was recruited, trained and then he returned to his community. During training, Aruna was given the opportunity to narrate his story and experience to fellow Mobilisers, highlighting his unique understanding of the Ebola outbreak. Survivors are heroes and have a vast knowledge on the ways communities can learn and react to the Ebola virus.

Survivor Education

In his community, Aruna continuously shared his true life story during engagements with community members, including triggering and follow-ups. According to his colleagues, having Aruna as a Mobiliser created lot of impact. Many people who did not believe in the existence of the virus were moved by Aruna's story. Apart from his testimony, his physical appearance (looking healthy and strong)

reinforced messages of early detection and reporting of suspected Ebola cases.

During his first testimony in Mongerewa, Aruna was asked many questions including: "did you run away when you started experiencing the symptoms?". In his response, Aruna told community people that he was frightened but did not run away. He said that was one of the reasons he survived the virus. Aruna encouraged community people to be vigilant and report any suspected cases early.

"I never saw an Ebola survivor since the outbreak started, seeing Aruna testifying in public that he was an Ebola Survivor makes me believe that indeed the virus exists", Ms. Rogers, a community member, confessed.

MABINTY KARGBO – LEARNING LEADERSHIP



Mabinty Kargbo (on right) is from Kongbora Chiefdom in Moyamba District. She dropped out of junior secondary school two years ago as a result of her parents not being able to give her the required support. She volunteered to represent her community to work with Restless Development as a Community Mobiliser in Mongere Section.

Facing Her Fears

Mabinty cannot read or write and was afraid to talk in public or address a gathering, but was nominated by her community to a their representative. She participated in a training for 100 Mobilisers in Moyamba on the Community-Lead Ebola Action approach and gained the required skills as a SMAC Mobiliser.

During the implementation, Mabinty, who has very bashful and shy, took the lead in conducting a series of outreach activities within Mogbere and surrounding villages with her fellow Mobiliser, local Community Champion, stakeholders and community members in setting up of action plans and follow up.

Becoming A Young Leader

Mabinty Kargbo is now bold, confident and a leader. This is demonstrated in her confidence in addressing the public, role plays at assembly in schools and leading assembly talks on Ebola. As a Mobiliser Mabinty is now very effective in taking part in matters affecting her community. As an early school leaver from Junior Secondary School, she has also vowed to attend school coming next academic year with the support of some savings from the stipend she has being receiving from Restless Development.

OUR PARTNERS:



FIND OUT MORE

www.restlessdevelopment.org/sierraleone
Find Restless Development on Facebook
Follow @RestlessDev on Twitter