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*Ebola Response Strategy  
for Guinea, Liberia and  
Sierra Leone*



# The situation

*New Ebola cases in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are declining, but it will likely take some time for the three countries, supported by the international community, to bring the epidemic fully under control.*

The death and suffering caused by Ebola are only the beginning of the story. The socio-economic impact will be felt up to a decade after the disease has ended. The epidemic has affected virtually every economic sector in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, stressed social relationships and eroded people's trust in their governments.

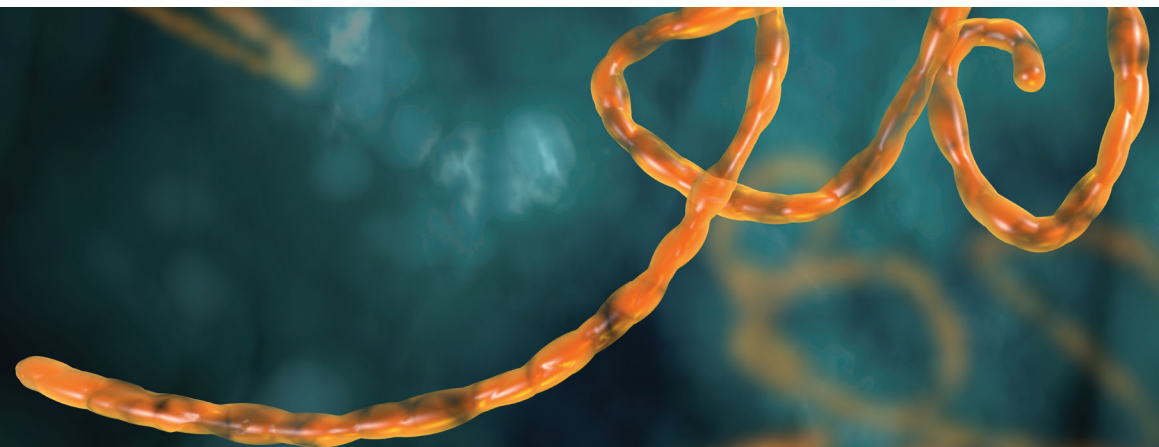
The only way to prevent future Ebola epidemics of this magnitude is to address the fundamental social and political vulnerabilities that have allowed the virus to flourish, such as weak health systems and local services, poor governance, chronic poverty, and a legacy of conflict and social divisions.

In particular, the Ebola outbreak has highlighted the need to strengthen local service delivery and the authority of the State in locations away from the capitals. There needs to be a shift in the development approach, from one overly focused on the central State to one that strengthens the social contract among communities (horizontal) and between communities and the State (vertical).

While supporting on-going efforts to reach zero cases, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is working to help the three most affected countries build back better, putting them in a better position to mitigate the impact of future crises.



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# Socio-economic impact

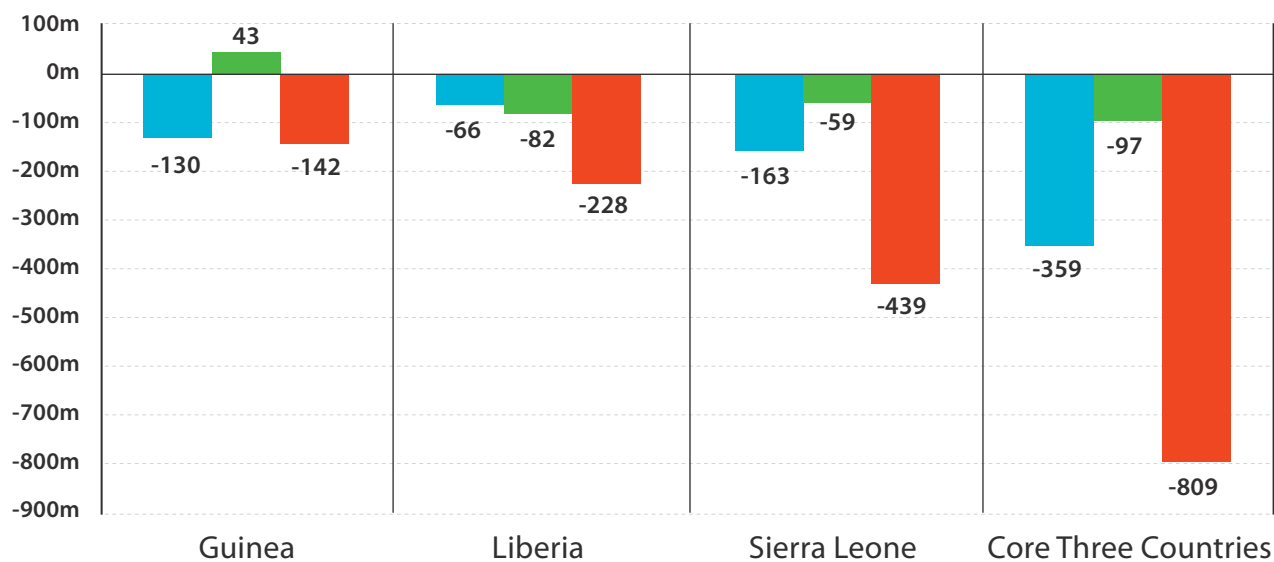
Based on UNDP's most recent estimates, economic growth in 2014 fell from 4.5 to 1.6 percent in Guinea, from 5.9 to -1.8 percent in Liberia, and from 11.4 to 7.4 percent in Sierra Leone. These figures reflect a massive slowdown in trade and business activity in every economic sector, from agriculture, which accounts for a large percentage of GDP, to construction and mining. In Liberia, commercial and residential construction activities have ground to a halt. In Guinea, potato exports to Senegal declined by 91 percent from August 2013 to August 2014 and production in manufacturing could fall by as much as 5 percent in 2015.

In addition, the epidemic is estimated to have increased budget deficits in the three countries by USD 500 million in 2014, due to reduced taxes on incomes, sales and external trade, together with increased government spending on stamping out the epidemic. This has delayed many infrastructure programmes and put additional stress on public services such as healthcare that is unrelated to Ebola.

Further, recent surveys carried out by the United Nations indicate that relatives living in different locations have started seeing each other much less frequently, stigma has spread, and confidence in the future and trust in governments have both significantly declined. These are compounded by a perception that local governments have failed to deliver essential services to their people, due to a lack of capacity and resources.



Millions of dollars lost in GDP



■ 2014 ■ 2015 (Low Ebola) ■ 2015 (High Ebola)

Sources: World Bank (2014); UNDP Africa Policy Notes (2014)

The epidemic will significantly affect the capacity of the three countries to achieve their poverty reduction objectives. According to UNDP projections, the poverty rate increased by more than 2 percent in 2014 in Guinea. In Liberia, that rate increased by a minimum of 5.5 percent. In Sierra Leone, the poverty rate is likely to increase by up to 14 percent in 2015.

The economic crisis caused by the Ebola outbreak is affecting the livelihoods of millions of people. In Sierra Leone, for instance, per capita income fell by USD 71 between January and October, and tens of thousands of people have lost their jobs. Since the onset of the Ebola crisis, inflation has flared up, buying power went down by 20 percent in Sierra Leone and by more than 25 percent in Liberia, with rural communities worst affected. About 42,000 jobs have been lost in Guinea's potato value chains. And according to a recent UNDP study, Ebola is reducing the revenues of traders and farmers and their ability to pay back loans.

Because of its effect on agricultural production, prices and jobs, the Ebola crisis will likely lead to an increase in food insecurity. Local market activity has slowed down dramatically because of movement restrictions, resulting in escalating food prices. Additionally, many farms were abandoned for a long time, leading to reduced planting and harvesting.

*The epidemic has affected women disproportionately because of the essential role they play as caretakers, health personnel and small traders.*

For instance, as of December 2014, women represented 62 percent of the sick in Guéckédou, Guinea where the epidemic first appeared, and up to 74 percent in Téliémilé, north of the capital Conakry. Further, more than 800,000 women will give birth during the next 12 months in all three countries. But with the severe shortage of health facilities and professionals, compounded by the fear of getting infected in a clinic, many could die without proper care. In the three countries, HIV screenings have decreased by 90 percent. UN Population Fund (UNFPA) has also warned that teenage pregnancy, early marriage and violence and exploitation of women are on the rise.

The Ebola crisis could pose a threat to peace and stability in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, which have just recently emerged from long periods of civil war or political instability. The crisis has led to isolated demonstrations and instances of violence against health workers and Ebola facilities. Because of its impact on youth unemployment, the Ebola crisis could lead to further unrest and continue to destabilize large urban areas.



## Sub-regional impact

Other countries in West Africa have already been affected by the Ebola crisis because of their deep connections with the three most affected countries. According to UNDP, West Africa as a whole may lose an average of at least US\$3.6 billion per year between 2014 and 2017, due to a decrease in trade, closing of borders, flight cancellations and reduced Foreign Direct Investment and tourism activity.

This has also had an important impact on human development. In Côte d'Ivoire for instance, the poverty rate has risen by at least 0.5 percentage points because of Ebola, while in Senegal, the proportion of people living below the national poverty line could increase by up to 1.8 percent in 2014. In addition, food insecurity in countries such as Mali, and Guinea-Bissau is expected to increase.



## UNDP'S work: Resilience-based development

Because reaching zero cases is likely to be a long and difficult task, emergency health efforts and recovery will both remain necessary in coming months. UNDP has been – and continues to be – at the forefront of the urgent fight to contain the disease. The agency is focusing on involving communities in the response and providing essential services, facilitating payments for Ebola workers and providing supplies, funding and coordination

support for the emergency. At the same time, UNDP has been tasked by the UN Secretary-General to lead the efforts of the UN on Ebola recovery. In this context, UNDP, in close partnership with the African Development Bank, the European Union, the World Bank and other UN agencies, is supporting Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to design and launch comprehensive Ebola-related recovery plans. In January 2015, representatives from UNDP and

the above institutions travelled to the three countries where they met with key stakeholders to identify the gaps, needs and areas of work that will to be addressed in the transition between crisis and recovery. The Ebola Recovery Assessment (ERA) identifies four key areas for the international community to assist on: health, water and sanitation; infrastructure and basic services; socio-economic recovery; and peacebuilding.



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*UNDP's Helen Clark on the ground in Sierra Leone assisting with the distribution of aid and supplies to locals at risk of contracting Ebola.*



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*A UNDP-supported Ebola response team is briefed before starting another day in the fight against Ebola.*



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# UNDP's approach: Stop and treat, help recover

## Recovery efforts

UNDP promotes national ownership, hence our role is to bolster national recovery efforts led by the governments of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Our recovery work aims to both stabilize communities and livelihoods in the short-term, and lay the foundations for resilient and sustainable development over the longer term.

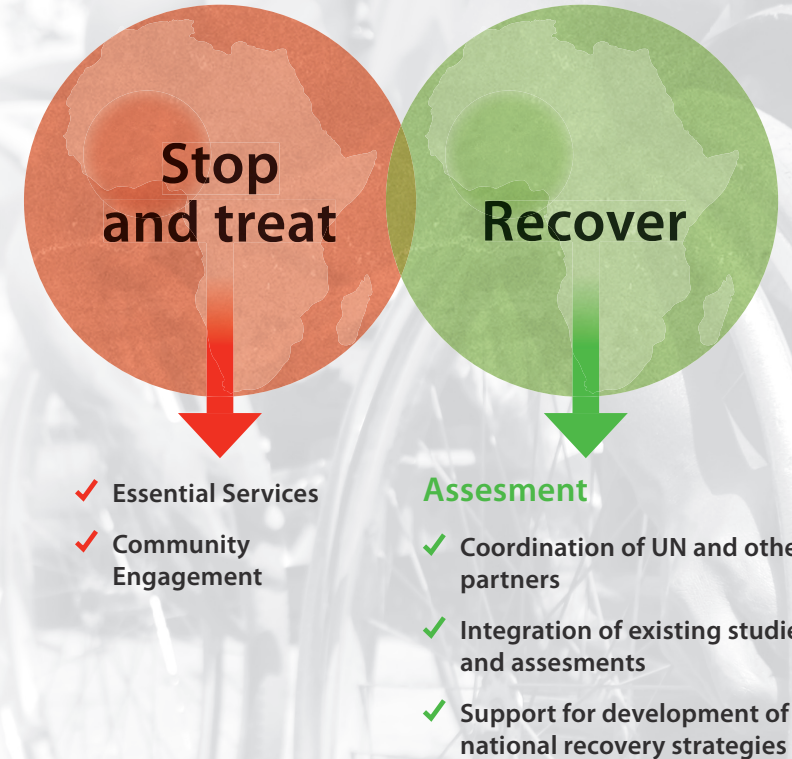
Our programmatic work focuses on four thematic areas:

- ✓ Economic opportunities and jobs;
- ✓ Recovery of the health sector;
- ✓ Resilient governance for recovery, peace and stability; and
- ✓ Risk management for future outbreaks.

While UNDP implements its own programmes, we also play an essential role in coordinating the recovery work of the UN and other partners, integrating different recovery assessments and

## Economic opportunities and jobs

UNDP has begun to assist at-risk households and communities as they recover from personal loss, try to overcome stigma and in many cases struggle to make a living in the absence of jobs and other sources of income. In the first instance, UNDP provides cash for work, cash transfers and emergency employment programmes so people in heavily-affected areas, including survivors and women heads of households, can earn a salary building essential infrastructure and serving their communities. In the second instance, grants, start-up packages and vocational training will be provided to businesses that have shut down or new ones being created. In the third instance, based on local livelihoods assessments, UNDP will support local and national governments to create the right frameworks and policies for the private sector and microfinance



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