



11 April 2014 – [UNICEF](#) , in partnership with the Ministries of Health of the seven West-African countries affected by Ebola, is using text messaging through mobile phones, radio shows, TV programmes and door-to-door campaigns to disseminate life-saving information in an effort to raise awareness about the deadly virus.

“Ebola kills people; but more lives are put at risk because of lack of information or misinformation though rumours”, [says Dr. Guido Borghese](#) , UNICEF Principal Advisor Child Survival and Development for West and Central Africa. “Bringing patients with suspected symptoms to health centres as soon as possible increases their chances of survival and prevents other people from getting infected.”

Collaborating with NGO partners such as the Red Cross and the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF is stepping up efforts to design culturally sensitive communication strategies and raise awareness of Ebola at the grassroots level. They operate across the seven at-risk or affected countries: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Mali and Guinea-Bissau.

“Most of the people in this part of the world had never heard of Ebola before,” says Borghese. “In this environment, unfounded fears and rumours spread quickly and widely. More than ever, it is crucial that families have both the means and the right information to protect themselves and prevent dangerous misunderstandings. We are running against time to avoid further spread in

West Africa.”

In addition to providing critical prevention supplies, such as soap, chlorine, and gloves to the people in affected communities across West Africa, UNICEF is carrying out mass and digital media and inter-personal communication activities amongst communities and health workers in mosques, churches, schools, health centres and markets to prevent people contracting the Ebola virus. In addition, UNICEF is supplying national and local health authorities in Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal and Mali with prevention medical equipment, including soap, gloves, tents, hygiene kits and two large isolation units, required to help contain and prevent Ebola.

West Africa is [witnessing](#) its first major outbreak of the disease which has no vaccine and no cure. The disease has already claimed 111 lives in Guinea and neighbouring Liberia as of 8 April 2014. In total, a growing number of 178 suspected, probable and confirmed cases has been reported in Guinea and Liberia, as well as six suspected cases in Mali.

UNICEF is urgently appealing for US\$1.2 million for Guinea and almost US\$1.3 million for neighbouring countries including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Guinea Bissau and Mali, to provide disinfectant products, essential medicines, life-saving supplies and communication support crucially needed to stop Ebola from spreading further across West Africa.

UNRIC related links:

- UNRIC's backgrounder on [Mali](#)