

Ebola Response

What is Ebola?

Ebola is a severe, **often fatal**, illness that spreads by human to human transmission. It first appeared in 1976 in a community in the Democratic Republic of Congo near the Ebola River from which the disease gets its name.

The virus is spread through direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes) with the blood, secretions, organs or bodily fluids of an infected person or from contact with surfaces that have been contaminated by these fluids.

To control the spread of the Ebola virus, people in at-risk communities must be educated about the disease and how it can be prevented. This includes training on how to recognize symptoms, the importance of wearing gloves and protective equipment when caring for those infected, the importance of a quick and proper burial of those who have died, and training in how to disinfect your hands, clothing, and contaminated belongings.

The current outbreak began in West Africa in March 2014. **The World Health Organization has said that this is the largest outbreak since the disease was first discovered.** The countries that have seen the highest numbers of infections and deaths are Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea – countries with very weak health systems and little infrastructure to deal with this kind of crisis.

How has Ebola impacted World Renew's work?

World Renew's West Africa staff in the affected countries and our partners in Sierra Leone have postponed community work that they had previously planned in order to **completely focus all their efforts on fighting Ebola**. That is because the potential harm from Ebola is so dangerous — if not contained it could kill over a million people and ruin the economies and destabilize governments of the affected countries!

The staff members of World Renew's local partners are showing great bravery and commitment as they work to combat Ebola. People in the communities where we work are experiencing constant fear because they don't know who might be a carrier of the disease. Medical care has been disrupted, since doctors and nurses have died and the hospitals and clinics that remain open are overwhelmed.

Travel in the region has been restricted. This has led to food shortages and rising costs for the food that is available. In addition, people have seen loved ones die and are dealing with the resulting trauma.

World Renew's programs in Senegal, Nigeria, Mali, and Niger have been able to continue without interruption.

In Sierra Leone, we have had to postpone two water system construction projects in Sierra Leone. Our women's rice growing program was started in April before the crisis was severe, and we hope and believe that their rice crops will be successful despite the fact that staff had to postpone some community visits.



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What is World Renew doing in response to Ebola?

World Renew is focusing its Ebola response in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In Liberia, **World Renew is working with the Christian Health Association of Liberia (CHAL) to train community health workers in 18 health facilities** on Ebola prevention and care. World Renew has also supplied CHAL with much-needed medical supplies including gloves, face shields, intravenous solution, medicines, thermometers, and other equipment.

In Sierra Leone, **World Renew is working with Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM), the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL), Christian Extension Services (CES), and the Christian Reformed Church of Sierra Leone (CRCSL)** to respond to Ebola. They are focusing on communities that border Ebola “hot spots” to educate people with key messages about how Ebola is spread, how to recognize the symptoms, what to do if you have the symptoms, how to prevent transmission to others, and the role of the whole community in dealing with Ebola.

Through CRWM, pastors of the CRCSL are being trained using a manual prepared in partnership with the Timothy Leadership Training Institute. This includes lessons in pastoral care specifically for communities affected by Ebola.

Through CCSL and CES, World Renew is also providing hand washing basins, sanitizer, soap and chlorine bleach to infected communities and is training people how to disinfect homes and personal belongings.



How can I help?

The Ebola crisis is devastating and urgently needs your prayers. Please join World Renew in praying for those impacted by Ebola. Pray that those infected will receive treatment and be healed. Pray that World Renew’s staff, partners and others on the front lines will be protected from infection. Pray for churches and church leaders who are providing pastoral care in the midst of this crisis. And pray that this disease will soon be contained and defeated.



Please also consider supporting the work of World Renew with your financial gifts. Donations can be made at worldrenew.net/ebola and will be used to support the training and materials highlighted above. **World Renew’s partners have the capacity to scale up their response to reach even more communities** if sufficient financial support can be found.

A third step you can take is to use your voice. Please spread the word to your friends and family about the needs of people in West Africa and their ability to join a response. Please also encourage your government to do what they can to support the fight against Ebola.

Where can I find out more information or read the latest news about World Renew’s response?

To learn more, visit worldrenew.net/ebola. You can also follow World Renew on Twitter or Facebook to see photos and hear updates about the work.