



Ebola Emergency Appeal Update

Whilst many of us know now perhaps more about Ebola than we have ever wanted to, the people of Sierra Leone have been living with the disease for many months. At CODEP we have been working with our friends in Waterloo to bring aid and help to the community we have become a part of in recent years.

We wanted to explain how we have been able to use the generous donations to our emergency Ebola appeal and what we hope to be able to achieve in the future. We also wanted to pay tribute to our team in Sierra Leone who have been at the forefront of the efforts in Waterloo to try and prevent the spread of Ebola.



The situation in Waterloo - an Ebola hot-spot

Although Waterloo was not one of the regions of Sierra Leone where Ebola first hit, it has become one of the regions which is worst affected. Indeed it has been officially listed as one of the Ebola hot-spots. The first two deaths from the Ebola virus occurred in Waterloo on 25th August. Today that figure stands at over 300. In the Weston Area Rural region, where Waterloo is situated, it has been reported that in Waterloo there are now more than 20 deaths every day.

One of the first areas to be quarantined was the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital. All the staff and patients were placed under military guard. This meant that the local health centre become even more stretched. According to Channel 4 news, Sierra Leone had 170 doctors before the Ebola epidemic; 60 of them have died.

The Community Health Officer James Jajua, as well as continuing to work at the health centre, became a prominent figure in the campaign to try and prevent the spread of Ebola. Tragically he caught the disease and was laid to rest on 12 October 2014.



Ebola is non-partisan. It affects everyone whatever their religion or tribe.

What have we done?

We began by contacting UNICEF who are coordinating the response to Ebola in Sierra Leone. The way the treatment of Ebola in Sierra Leone was supposed to work is that only special Ebola response teams are allowed to treat or move Ebola positive patients and they must move them in special ambulance to Kenema and Kalihun, the only two Ebola Treatment Centres in Sierra Leone. The Ebola response teams visit quarantined people daily. They test them and send anyone who tests positive to the centres.



Local health workers and anyone else are not supposed to touch or treat anyone with Ebola symptoms. People without symptoms are not infectious. However we soon learnt from Rosetta that the extent of the tragedy in Sierra Leone is so great that there are simply insufficient resources. The local health team in Waterloo, led originally by Mr Jajua had to test the suspected cases themselves. They are also the only ones visiting and monitoring the quarantined people in their homes. For this they need protective gear. This cannot be washed with chlorine and has to be burnt. The Ebola response ambulance can take a long time to come if it comes at all, by which time contamination can occur.



UNICEF advised that we concentrate on the following:

- (i) Prevention and sensitisation training. What is Ebola? How is it spread? This is to get the "no touching" message across. There are a number of versions of the Ebola ABC, the simplest being: avoid body contact;
- (ii) Food Aid for the quarantined and increasing food supplies;
- (iii) Supplies to the health centre including gloves, protective and sanitisation equipment, chlorine drums, hand sanitisers, liquid soap, floor brushes. All the SL health clinics are running low on equipment and supplies of every kind.

Delivering aid to the quarantined

One of the immediate problems Rosetta and her team identified was the need to support those in quarantine. It was not just the hospital. These photos give perhaps just an idea of what it must be like for those cut off from everyone else in their community. If you can see a yellow line, it marks the boundary you cannot cross.



What we quickly found out was happening was that houses or communities were being placed in quarantine, a rope was placed around the area, police or soldiers were tasked with setting up a guard and that was that. No one was there to deliver food or aid. Our team therefore went into the markets to buy food, water, charcoal for cooking and then had to go round delivering that aid to those in quarantine. And remember, that although the quarantine period is 21 days. If someone you are with becomes Ebola positive, the clock starts to tick again.



The "Ose to Ose Ebola Tok" lock-down, 18-21 September 2014 – where volunteer health workers went house-to-house identifying cases and raising awareness of Ebola – identified further bodies and Ebola cases in Waterloo. Houses in Kwama have been quarantined and Rosetta has reported that areas around Anifa Drive, New London at Lumpa, Morabi, Mapari, Monkey Bush and the other outskirts of Waterloo have been quarantined.

Working with our friends at the Waterloo Partnership and Build on Books, we have made regular deliveries of aid to those who remain in quarantine. Over time, more than 300 households have been quarantined. Our initiative was bolstered by the delivery of aid by the World Food Programme on 17/18 October 2014.

However, we learnt at our healers forum on 18 October that there remain gaps in the distribution that need to be plugged. Leaving aside the humanitarian aspect, if those in quarantine are not fed, they will try to leave thereby potentially spreading Ebola further.

Helping the Ebola Orphans

However, when as often happened, the adults in quarantine died, this brought new difficulties. What to do about the children who have been left behind.

The tragedy of the Ebola orphans was quickly identified by Rosetta. Our literacy coordinators have heading teams in Waterloo who are carrying out surveys to try and find out just how many there are. Rosetta has explained that many of the children have not been tested and they do not know whether they are positive or not.

When their parents die, there is no procedure in place for the children to be collected and tested for the disease. We have found children just left to fend for themselves. This a situation that is made worse by the community and their extended family 'rejecting' them out of fear and superstition.



For example, in the week commencing 12 October 2014, two little boys were found, who had been given the all-clear yet they were being shunned by their community. Rosetta explained the position to Claude Kamanda MP, and after words with the headman, the situation was resolved. Another six year old girl has been found left alone in the holding centre. The priest in Kwama has now taken her in.

These are the children Rosetta and her friends are actively looking to identify and support. We are using some of the money donated to us, to buy food for the Ebola orphans on a regular basis. Once we have started, we know that we cannot stop. The food includes bread, milk, juice, gari, sugar, sardine, water and baby food. Our team made the food up so the children can eat that food straight away without cooking.



Rosetta has said that they have currently identified over 150 children.

The CODEP team in Waterloo have made the continued provision of support to the Ebola orphans a priority. We support them all the way.

Education and sensitisation programmes

The other area we have concentrated on is education and the organisation of training on Ebola awareness and prevention. One of the priority needs across the country is information. Most people, even now, know very little about Ebola in terms of its nature, effects, symptoms and means of prevention. As a first step, Rosetta and her colleagues arranged training at our library and also went out into the Waterloo markets. They were assisted by the Hon, Claude Kamanda, the MP for the district where the library is sited. The Community Health Officer, Mr James Jajua, helped to provide the Ebola prevention advice and we were pleased to be joined by Alieu Badara from the Waterloo Partnership.



The markets are a key feature of life in SL and this means that the market women play a major role in SL society. They sell food stuff and other goods to everyone regardless of their status. They are therefore very well placed to pass on what they have learnt to others. The CODEP team went out to the market places of Waterloo, distributing buckets and other sanitisation and preventative materials as well as explaining how everyone can help stop the spread of this disease.

Some of the market women then joined everyone else at a further session at the library. The preventative message can be spread in many ways, speeches, posters, comedy sketches or standing in a market place with buckets and soaps. We have organised a number of similar events together with Build On Books and the Waterloo Partnership. The most recent one focused on the traditional healers.



The traditional healers are often the front line carers. They are the first point of contact for most people. The aim is by engaging with them, we can enlist their help to guide people to the clinics. They need to know what to do – from the first phone call or point of contact with the patient through to getting them to the clinic. They need to know the symptoms and they immediately call for help and isolate the family. At the same time, the forum is intended to be an opportunity to discuss and explore roles and exchange ideas.

Traditional Healer Training - 19 October 2014

Rosetta and her team have been working with the Waterloo Emergency Organisation Committee to set up an orientation forum for the traditional healers, village-head and tribal heads. This took place on Saturday 19 October 2014. The event was very well attended, with 108 representatives present.

The primary purpose of the forum was to ensure that the healers understood the threat posed by Ebola and understood that it was a real threat and to help them learn to identify the symptoms and infection control techniques. This way they can help by referring patients rather than potentially spreading the disease. However it was equally important to embrace the healers and bring them within the umbrella of the overall efforts in the fight against Ebola.

Speakers included representatives from the Emergency Operations Committee, Rosetta and Alieu Badara from the Waterloo Partnership as well as Jean a representative from UNICEF.

Jean, who is from the DRC shared his experience about the spread of the virus and the dangers of traditional beliefs and superstitions and slow community mobilization. He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet with everyone and explained to the forum how Ebola could be spread through the tradition of washing or re-using mattresses. Jean reminded everyone that Ebola is non-partisan. It affects everyone whatever their religion or tribe.



One of the most interesting parts of the forum was the responses from the traditional healers. They raised concerns that the Imams, Traditional Healers and Tribal Authorities had been neglected in the fight against Ebola. That was the first forum that they have been invited to and they gave their appreciation to CODEP for that.

As importantly, those present stressed that they would spread the news to all the communities. Now that they have been involved, they will help to fight the virus by enforcing the by-laws in their communities. They understood that they had no cure for Ebola and would not try and treat it any longer but refer patients to the hospital.

Using the Chukuma Johnson Library as a store

One of the immediate consequences of the Ebola outbreak was to close the schools. However, our Chukuma Johnson Children's Library is now being used as a hub for education forums about Ebola and also to provide a base for the secure storing and distribution of food supplies and aid.

Living Under the Shadow of Ebola - 20 September 2014

Outside of Sierra Leone, it is difficult to appreciate what life is like living with Ebola. We asked Rosetta. This is what she said:

Thank you very much for your support at a time the country needed you most. We have started the three day lockdown. It is really not easy for one to be kept in one place as a prisoner. If that is the price we have to pay for our lives to be saved am happy for that. Because of the lockdown, seven dead bodies were discovered at Monkey Bush at the outskirts of Waterloo. That area was quarantined. My only worry is that there are more quarantined homes that need food. Because of the percentage of illiteracy of some of our people, especially in the remote villages. They accept false rumours and keep infecting people.



We need to do more sensitization and provide buckets and disinfectant as preventive measures for the outskirts of Waterloo. It is going to be education and food.

We were out with Hon Claude yesterday taking food to the quarantined homes. It is really terrible. The message I gave to those people was to be of good courage and that there are humanitarians out there like you people that care for them. To be honest with you I found out that these people needed good care and good nutrition. That will even build up their immunity to resist the virus. Even at the treatment centres where the confirmed cases are taken to, this is the challenge they are facing.



There was a confirmed case on a lady working at the central bank. The bank gave her full support, provided her beddings, food and all that she needed when she was taken to the eastern part of the country to be treated. Thank God it was detected early, she survived it. Now she is back to work. She also confirmed that patients needed good care for them to survive the virus. Now if one has a little temperature, it becomes a nightmare. Last week I had slight temperature. I had to tell everyone at home not to come close to me.

When my husband wanted to feel my temperature I told him not to touch me. When I called the CHO. He told me to get malaria drugs. When I took them I was O. K. People are afraid of reporting to the health workers when they are sick. That is what I have been preaching during our sensitization sessions. It is not every rise in temperature or vomiting that is Ebola. Some people die of other diseases just because of fear.

God bless you, Rosetta



Working Together

Where we can we are pooling resources whether funds, people or supplies with the Waterloo Partnership and Build on Books to try and ensure that the aid we are able to provide is as widely spread as possible. Rosetta and the team are also now able to make deliveries of aid using vehicles donated by Shepherds Hospice. We are also now part of the Western Area Rural District Emergency Operations Committee which has been established to co-ordinate efforts to stop the spread of Ebola. One of the driving forces behind the EOC is the Hon. Claude Kamanda, representative for constituency 95 where the library is situated. Working with the Waterloo EOC we will know exactly where our efforts should be focused next.

How you can help

Everyone in Waterloo is tremendously grateful for the support you have shown to date. Claude Kamanda has written to us expressing his "deep appreciation of what we have been able to do." The Chief Administrator of Waterloo, Mr Alhassan Cole has sent a letter of appreciation. However, as he said in his letter, it remains necessary to "build up stronger synergy and remain relentless until this epidemic becomes history."



Of course, we would not have been able to achieve any of this without the tireless work of our entire team in Waterloo. Our admiration for their efforts, in situations of some personal danger, knows no bounds. Equally, we would not have been able to achieve anything without your generous support. Our Emergency Ebola Appeal will run for as long as it is needed. If you are able to help at all, please either visit our website, www.codep.co.uk, or twitter account, @codepsl, where you will find regular updates on what we have been doing, or go to our justgiving site: www.justgiving.com/codep-ebola/.

Thank you, the CODEP Team