

Liberia's Action Plan for RMNCAH during the COVID-19 Outbreak

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The challenge

- On March 16, the Government of Liberia announced its first confirmed case of COVID-19; now there are 3 confirmed cases
- Although the confirmed cases are few, given the global situation, it is imperative to prepare for an outbreak situation. This includes:
 1. Ensuring that the health system is prepared to respond to COVID-19 cases
 2. Ensuring that routine health services, such as RMNCAH, are continued

Lessons on RMNCAH from Liberia's Ebola epidemic (2014-2015)

Lesson 1: Pregnant women were abandoned and gave birth anywhere including outside in the open, due to the lack of a defined guideline at the start of the outbreak (2014)

Lesson 2: The lack of IPC materials and the fear of conducting evasive procedures such as delivery made health care providers abandon pregnant women (2014)

Lesson 3:

- Guideline for Managing pregnant women and newborn developed and disseminated;
- Adequate IPC materials provide;
- Community awareness and involvement enhanced
- Service providers confidence increased
- Community trust regained

How Liberia is addressing RMNCAH during the COVID-19 outbreak

1. Starting early

When the first case was confirmed, we immediately began drafting (1) an action plan for ensuring that routine RMNCAH care continues and (2) guidelines for caring for mothers & newborns exposed to COVID-19

2. Gathering available evidence from around the world

We drew on experiences from Ebola & emerging evidence from China and other countries with more advanced COVID-19 outbreaks

3. Collaboration & stakeholder engagement

We developed a guideline and costed action plan for addressing RMNCAH during the COVID-19 and have engaged our partners through email and virtual conference calls for technical input and to discuss how we can cooperate and align resources to ensure that RMNCAH services are not neglected during the outbreak

Anticipated RMNCAH challenges to consider during COVID-19 outbreak

Reduction in antenatal visits

Reduction in use of family planning services

Reduction in institutional deliveries

Limited access to routine immunization services

Increase in SGBV cases

Increase in maternal and neonatal morbidity & mortality

Increase in infant and child morbidity & mortality

Potential actions to mitigate the negative consequences of COVID-19 on RMNCAH

- Implement infection prevention and control (IPC) measures at all facilities (hospital, health centers & clinics) and for all community health assistants currently offering RMNCAH services
 - Provide critical IPC and RMNCAH materials and equipment
 - Consider how existing distribution channels can be used to deliver IPC supplies to health facilities and communities
 - Train RMNCAH services providers
- Establish call lines for RMNCAH advice
- Raise community awareness about available SGBV support
- Work with COVID-19 response team to ensure that the Family Health Division is notified of all pregnant suspected and confirmed cases to ensure appropriate care

Thank you *for listening*