



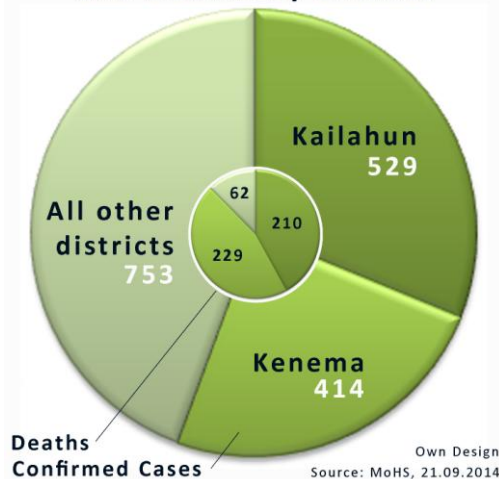
EBOLA IN SIERRA LEONE

The impacts of the 'Ebola Virus Disease' on the livelihoods of rural communities, agricultural production and food security

Introduction

In August 2014 *Deutsche Welthungerhilfe* (DWHH) in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), the FAO (Sierra Leone) and key partners in the food security and livelihoods sector conducted a rapid assessment of the impacts of the 'Ebola Virus Disease' (EVD) on the livelihoods of rural communities, agricultural production and food security in the hardest hit regions of Sierra Leone. The survey focused on the epicenters of the epidemic, the two eastern districts of Kailahun and Kenema: To date the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoSH) has registered a total of 1.696 confirmed cases of Ebola in Sierra Leone. While 501 victims have died, 374 patients have survived and fully recovered from the disease. The two districts of Kailahun and Kenema alone have reported 943 confirmed cases of the EVD and 439 deaths. Currently the disease is spreading exponentially, posing a great risk to the livelihoods of millions of people (MoHS: 21.09.2014).

No. of Confirmed Ebola Cases and Deaths by District



Key Findings

1. The people's livelihoods have been affected by the outbreak of the EVD. 97% of the surveyed households indicate that their income has dropped since May 2014.
2. In the epicenters of the Ebola outbreak the food production is decreasing: 80% of the surveyed households expect lower returns than last year. By-laws discourage many farmers from attending to their fields. 71% of the interviewed households struggle to find laborers for their farms.
3. The EVD limits the availability and increases the costs of food. Certain foods have become scarce. The price of rice has - in average - risen by 30% since May 2014.
4. The Ebola epidemic has effects on community members' access to financial services: For 77% of the interviewed market vendors the access to credits has decreased since May 2014. In 5% of the surveyed communities banks and financial institutions have halted operations.
5. Market prospects have deteriorated in the wake of the continuing spread of the EVD. Two thirds of the interviewed traders remark that the volume of traded commodities has dropped significantly.
6. Awareness among rural communities of the dangers of the EVD has increased considerably: 83% of the interviewed households claim to know details about the disease and its transmission.

Between the 10.-17. September 2014 trained enumerators interviewed 110 rural households, 79 market vendors, 64 traditional leaders and three private sector enterprises operating in the respective districts.

Survey Results

1 Impacts of the EVD on Rural Livelihoods

Key Statement: The people's livelihoods have been affected by the outbreak of the EVD. 97% of the surveyed households indicate that their income has dropped since May 2014.

88% of the surveyed households in the districts of Kailahun and Kenema sustain their livelihoods with agriculture. 49% provide services to make a living and 23% are engaged in petty trading. For 13% of the surveyed households regular employment is also an important source of livelihood. 74% of households own small livestock such as poultry and goats. Most community members are subsistence farmers who produce food crops for own consumption.

97% of the surveyed households confirm that their livelihoods have been negatively affected by the outbreak of the EVD: The farmers' income from agriculture has dropped. Due to transport restrictions and the closure of certain markets, they struggle to sell their produce. Similarly, household incomes from other sources such as petty trading and service delivery have decreased. 67% of the surveyed households attribute this to the strict regulations imposed by government in a bid to contain the rapid spread of the EVD in Sierra Leone. However, the sudden death of family members, the unavailability of farm inputs as well as the lack of labor (see 'Section 3: Impacts of the EVD on Agricultural Production') are also identified as reasons.

2 Impacts of the EVD on Migration

Between May and August 2014 a number of people have left their home communities because of Ebola: 15% of the surveyed households indicate that members of their family have migrated to other communities. In 50% of these cases the EVD was the main driver. Mostly, people left for fear of being infected or quarantined against their will. Some survivors had to relocate because they faced strong stigmatization after their return from hospital.

Traditionally, people are highly attached to their family and home. Migration is thus, even under the existing circumstances, not a mass phenomenon in Sierra Leone. This will make it easier to rebuild livelihoods after the end of the current crisis and the return of normality.

3 Impacts of the EVD on Agricultural Production

Key Statement: In the epicenters of the Ebola outbreak the food production is decreasing: 80% of the surveyed households expect lower returns than last year. By-laws discourage many farmers from attending to their fields. 71% of the interviewed households struggle to find laborers for their farms.

Crop farming forms the main agricultural activity of the rural population: 98% of the surveyed communities produce cash and food crops. In 51% of the communities livestock rearing is practiced and in 27% fishing is of relevance. The five most important crops are rice, cassava, cocoa, palm oil and coffee:

This year 79% of the surveyed households have planted rice, 55% produce cassava, 45% cocoa, 30% palm oil and 23% coffee.

80% of the surveyed households expect a lower yield this year than last year. This is congruent with 73% of the interviewed community leaders who state that community households have not farmed as much this year as they did last year.

The agricultural workforce has decreased in 91% of the surveyed communities. The sourcing of labor for agricultural work has thus become a problem for farmers. 71% of the surveyed households have problems finding laborers for their farms. Especially youth gangs who normally perform farm work cannot work anymore. 56% of the interviewed market vendors believe that this is due to the restricted movement of people, the prohibition to gather in groups and the migration of young people to urban centers. The mostly young members of the work gangs thus lose an important source of income. In addition, the popular system of sharing labor among several farmer households has collapsed as the solidarity and the mutual support among community members has dwindled: Many villages have established by-laws regulating the social intercourse of the community members and propagating a "do-not-touch" policy which is counterproductive in many rural settings. Villages which are not affected by the EVD should not apply such by-laws in order to maintain social cohesion.

The outbreak of the EVD also has effects on the operations of the private sector and the activities of cocoa and coffee traders: While many foreign-led trading companies have ceased operations and indeed, left the country, local companies are still - on a limited scale - operating. However, one of the interviewed trader states that staff members have been unable to come to work because they were quarantined. All traders are currently operating below capacity. As this is not unusual during the rainy season, this year is different: Two of the three interviewed traders have downsized their workforce and reduced the working hours of their staff. The traders complain that their total operational costs have increased and their profitability has decreased due to the outbreak of the EVD.

Many buying agents who usually give advice and provide support to farmers and function as contact points for the traders to their producers refuse to enter certain operational areas for fear of Ebola. Police check points have been established at various locations. As passing road blocks is only permitted with the necessary authorization, the evacuation of fresh produce and cash crops such as cocoa and coffee from the field is difficult. Bringing in new supplies from other regions is similarly aggravated. Quarantined areas are not accessible at all. The number of customers has decreased. The interviewed traders struggle to monitor their field activities. In the hotspot areas of the EVD farmers have been discouraged from pursuing farming activities as a result of strict by-laws (see above).

On the major markets the impacts of the restrictions put in place by government to contain the EVD are also visible: The number of functioning stalls has changed dramatically between May and August 2014. Especially the number of stalls selling cocoa, coffee, palm oil, rice, groundnuts and cassava has dropped.

Product	No of stalls has risen (in % of respondents)	No of stall is stable (in % of respondents)	No of stalls has dropped (in % of respondents)
Cocoa	18	21	61
Coffee	20	20	60
Palm Oil	27	15	58
Rice	31	11	58
Groundnut	29	15	56
Cassava	38	15	47

4 Impacts of the EVD on Food Availability, Access and Utilization

Key Statement: The EVD limits the availability and increases the costs of food. Certain foods have become scarce. The price of rice has - in average - risen by 30% since May 2014.

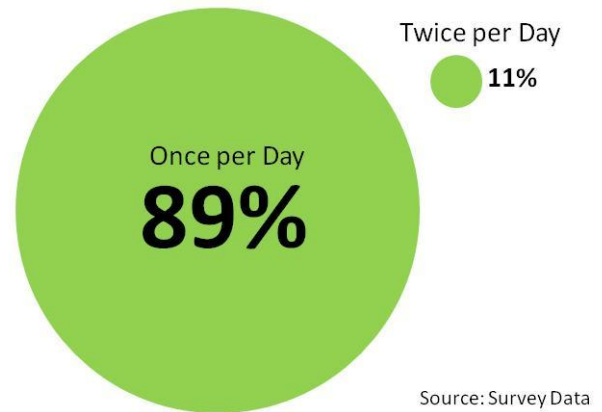
95% of the surveyed households in the districts of Kailahun and Kenema source their food from their own farms. What is not self-produced, is bought at the market: 82% of the surveyed households source food and other commodities from small local markets, 51% from larger district markets. This shows the high dependency of the rural population on markets. Government regulations should not restrict the access of citizens to those trading hubs if serious economic disruptions are to be avoided.

99% of the surveyed households indicate that the availability of food has been limited during the past four months. 71% of the community leaders attribute this fact to the season (i.e. the rain and hunger period). But 38% also indicate that the transport of food supplies has been problematic due to the travel restrictions imposed by government.

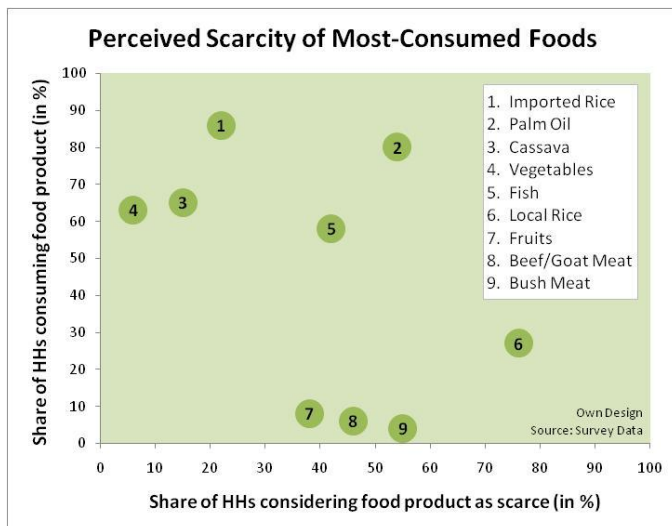
government, the access of the rural population to food is limited. As the situation provides a basis for increasing commodity speculations and corruption, food prices rise steadily.

Imported rice, palm oil, cassava, vegetables and fish are the five most consumed food items. It is thus alarming that more than 40% of all interviewed households consider fish, palm oil and local rice to be scarce and difficult to get (see chart above).

Intake of Staple Foods by Rural HHs



52% of the surveyed households state that they have had to limit their food intake since May 2014. 11% of the respondents eat staple foods twice per day, the remaining 89% only once. Maybe this is due to the increased prices of fresh produce: 87% of the interviewed market vendors stress that the prices of commodities have increased. At the surveyed markets the prices of groundnuts have - in average - increased by 39%, vegetables and cocoa by 32% and rice and cassava by 30% and 29% between March and August 2014. The five most consumed products have increased by 10%-30% in average.



Since May 2014 the access to food has been difficult for 95% of the surveyed communities. 98% of the interviewed community leaders stress that food has become scarce. 96% of them have received complaints by community members over the low availability and high costs of food. At the moment it is too early to harvest rice, the major staple crop. Because many markets have been closed and transport restrictions imposed by

Product	Unit	Average Price Mar-May (in SLL)	Average Price Jun-Aug (in SLL)	Price Increase (in SLL)	Price Increase in % (min/max)
Groundnut	cup	1.528	2.131	603	39 (-6/67)
Vegetables	pile	1.000	1.322	322	32 (-50/400)
Rice	cup	969	1.260	291	30 (6/50)
Cassava	pile	1.529	1.976	447	29 (0/300)
Palm Oil	pint	6.722	8.193	1.471	22 (-12/80)
Fish	pile	2.000	2.196	196	10 (0/100)

5 Impacts of the EVD on the Access to Financial Services

Key Statement: The Ebola epidemic has effects on community members' access to financial services: For 77% of the interviewed market vendors the access to credits has decreased since May 2014. In 5% of the surveyed communities banks and financial institutions have halted operations.

Although 55% of the interviewed market vendors have access to financial services from institutions such as 'Village Savings

and Loan Associations', banks and microfinance institutes, 77% of them believe that their access to financial services has decreased due to the outbreak of the EVD. Since the beginning of the Ebola epidemic banks and financial institutions in 5% of the surveyed communities have halted operations.

6 Impacts of the EVD on the Markets / Business Prospects

Key Statement: Market prospects have deteriorated in the wake of the continuing spread of the EVD. Two thirds of the interviewed traders remark that the volume of traded commodities has dropped significantly.

87% of the interviewed market vendors state that the current market situation is worse than before the outbreak of the EVD. Only 2% feel that it has improved. Among the traders a similarly gloomy sentiment prevails: For two companies the volume of traded commodities has dropped significantly. Likewise, the commodity flows between rural areas and the urban agglomerations have decreased. However, all three enterprises assess their future business prospects differently: While one trader expects business to worsen, one is certain that business prospects will remain unchanged in the medium term and one insists that business prospects will improve once the check points have been removed. All statements indicate that lifting the various restrictions imposed by government would bolster economic recovery in the affected areas.

7 Awareness among Community Members of the EVD

Key Statement: Awareness among rural communities of the dangers of the EVD has increased considerably: 83% of the interviewed households claim to know details about the disease and its transmission.

In March, April and May 2014 only very few community members understood the risks and dangers of the EVD and knew how to protect themselves from transmission. However, due to massive efforts of the government and its partners,

awareness among rural communities has been heightened considerably: Because of the risks involved in the consumption of bush meat, only 15% of the surveyed households admit to hunt and eat rodents, bats or monkeys. 83% claim to know details about the EVD and 17% have heard of it. Only 2% of the interviewed traditional leaders state that the members of their community are not knowledgeable about the disease.

Conclusion

The study reveals that the outbreak and spread of the EVD in Sierra Leone has a multitude of impacts on the livelihoods of rural communities, agricultural production and food security in the epicenters of the epidemic. As trends indicate, the situation is likely to worsen in the course of the next months: *Deutsche Welthungerhilfe* (DWHH) thus expects serious food shortages to hit the country in early 2015: As most households in rural areas depend on agriculture and grow their own food, the declining agricultural production and poor harvests will cause widespread hunger among rural communities. Lifting the current restrictions imposed by government would ease the situation. Markets have shown to have an enormous socio-economic relevance in the surveyed districts of Kailahun and Kenema. They drive economic development and supply the needs of rural communities who cannot fully self-sustain themselves. Should the restrictions remain in place food will become increasingly scarce and expensive. The incomes of rural communities will continue to drop, harvests continue to fall and the people affected by the EVD continue to suffer from a low availability of and a limited access to food.

Breaking this vicious circle requires a smart reaction from government and its development partners: *Deutsche Welthungerhilfe* (DWHH) advocates the development of tailor-made technical support programs in order to strengthen the self-help capacities of rural farming communities. The market bans and travel restrictions have to be lifted and smallholders enabled to re-engage in farming and market activities. The health system must be further strengthened (tracing capacities need to be improved, sensitization efforts expanded and trust built) and an early-warning-system established. It will help to quickly detect and contain new Ebola outbreaks.

References

Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS). 21.09.2014: *Ebola Viral Situation Report*

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Cover Photograph: Police and army help to enforce the quarantine measure declared by the government of Sierra Leone. Photo: *Deutsche Welthungerhilfe* (DWHH)

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