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| **Further guidance on education radio program content in light of Ebola outbreaks in West Africa** |

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa is unprecedented in terms of geographic spread with large numbers of cases in rural but also urban and peri-urban settings. The outbreak began in Guinea in early 2014, has quickly spread to the neighbouring countries of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria. There is concern over the risks that the outbreak spreads to the broader region, and on August 29, Senegal announced its first Ebola case, imported from neighbouring Guinea. The Ebola outbreak was declared a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern” on 8 August 2-014 by WHO. As of 30 August 2014, 3469 cases including 1836 deaths have been reported. WHO reports serious problems with case management and infection prevention, with the situation worsening in recent weeks in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The spread of Ebola in West Africa has been fuelled by limited health infrastructure, poor hygiene practices, the inability to control and screen population movements across borders, the lack of adequate community involvement in the definition of communication and information and consequent suspicion and growing mistrust towards health and political authorities.

In addition, the authorities of Liberia and Sierra Leone have declared national school closures, until further notice. 3.5 million primary and secondary school-going children are affected, putting them at risk of dropping out and of increasing the current number 890,000 out of school primary or secondary school-aged children registered in these two countries. Not only are children not able to continue with their studies, but they are also placed at risk. In many settings, schools perform special functions in addition to education, such as providing social networks, care and meals, which if interrupted, could also worsen the situation of children.

Younger children are also severely affected by the current emergency and in need of caregivers’ support and attention. Some young children have lost their parents or a member of their family, or are at increased risk of abuse, neglect and violence because of the stressful situation caused by the Ebola outbreak.

The Ebola outbreak poses challenges that defy the usual responses of education in emergencies: not only can children not go to school, but they are also forbidden from congregating in groups (of 5 or more in Liberia; of 20 or more in Sierra Leone); and discouraged from as much as leaving the safety of their homes.

Thus, the entire education systems of Liberia and Sierra Leone are in limbo. In line with the Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak Regional Response Strategy, both the Liberia and Sierra Leone COs devised education in emergency response plans that a) promote the use of teachers as social mobilizers; and b) foresee the development of a radio education program.

While UNICEF has experience in several countries with using radios in education, this has thus far mostly focused on Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI), whereby radio education programs are used to boost quality in classroom settings. To our knowledge, there is no precedence in the organization of the use of radio education programs as an education in emergencies response. This guidance note is the result of a brief search and consultation; it is not exhaustive but seeks to serve as a basis for discussion and program development.

**GENERAL PRINCIPLES:**

**Emergency Radio Education Program:**

The objectives of the emergency radio education programs should be in line with the objectives education in emergencies in general. In emergency situations, quality education provides physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection, which can be both life-sustaining and life-saving. Education mitigates the psychosocial impact of conflict and disasters on children by giving them a sense of normalcy, stability, structure and hope for the future. Quality education can save lives by providing physical protection from the dangers and exploitation of a crisis environment. When a child is in a safe learning environment, he or she is less likely to be sexually or economically exploited or exposed to other risks. In addition, education can convey life-saving information to strengthen critical survival skills and coping mechanisms, such as disease prevention. Education in emergencies also provides cognitive protection by supporting intellectual development through the teaching of literacy, numeracy, and study skills. It can also teach peace building and conflict resolution.

The emergency radio education therefore is not about formal learning, grades, or substituting classroom instruction. It is about providing on opportunity for engagement, learning, routine and stability, and the reinforcement of children’s capacities, while planning for an effective reopening of schools when it becomes possible.

For more language on EiE, see: <http://www.ineesite.org/en/education-in-emergencies>

**Communicating with Children:**

The UNICEF CwC Resource Pack is extremely rich! It includes principles, guidance on age-specific child development, positive examples and resources: <http://www.unicef.org/cwc/>

The principles for Communicating with Children should be agreed by all parties developing the emergency radio education program. They are:

* Principle 1 - Communication should be age-appropriate and child-friendly
* Principle 2 - Communication for children should address the child holistically
* Principle 3 - Communication for children should be positive and strengths-based
* Principle 4 - Communication for children should address the needs of all, including those who are most disadvantaged

You can use the tips to “turn theory into practice” as guidance and training materials for radio program developers and animators. Parts of the PDF document can be printed and shared: <http://www.unicef.org/cwc/files/CwC_Final_Nov-2011.pdf>

**MESSAGES AND TIPS FOR PARENTS ON PLAY AND LEARNING:**

**WHAT?**

Messages for parents are important to help them and give them guidance and tips for so that they can allow and meaningfully engage their children in play and learning. Parents and caregivers may not believe that radio education is important, so these messages will help them appreciate the importance of regular participation. The radio programme could also contribute to support parents and caregivers in their daily tasks related to child rearing, through the promotion of early learning, stimulation and positive interaction with younger children.

* At a minimum, parents should be encouraged to offer their children with a few hours per day to play and learn, and be informed about the radio education program. Messages emphasizing the importance of play and learning in times of crisis can be shared.
* Advice on how older children can support their younger siblings could also be provided. For example: helping young children stay clean and wash their hands, games and songs to engage young children.
* This session could also be expanded to include further tips on caring for children in times of crisis. Eg. Do not talk about death or worrying news in front of your children; be honest with your children when they ask questions, but only give them as much information as they can cope with.

**HOW?**

This could be aired separately from the emergency radio education program geared at children, and be aired when parents are most likely to listen to the radio (C4D teams in-country may have done studies about this).

There could be standard daily messages about the importance of play and learning, and in addition thematic short sessions on parental tips spanning beyond education, to include:

* Avoiding conversations about deaths, Ebola, and distressing topics in front of children
* The importance of communicating with children: talking to children, responding to young children’s sounds and interests, telling young children the name of things in the house, asking children simple questions, reading and singing.
* Hygiene practices for children
* Nutrition practices

If such messages already exist in-country, they should be used as a starting point. Otherwise, they can be developed by the UNICEF CO, building as necessary on the following resources.

**RESOURCES:**

* Sesame Street has great tips for parents and care-givers, most of which can be used as is: <http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/hurricane>
* Facts for Life: section on child development and learning: <http://www.factsforlifeglobal.org/>
* The Care for Child Development Counselling Cards which includes questions for parents on how they engage their children: <http://www.unicef.org/earlychildhood/index_68195.html>
* Save the Children guide on Positive Discipline: <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/child-protection/priority-areas/physical-and-humiliating-punishment/positive-discipline>

**BASIC LITERACY AND NUMERACY**

**WHAT?**

This could focus on basic learning and revisions of last year’s curriculum, as children will need some tome to revise after the summer months.

It is important to stress that although it is important to engage children in learning, in particular literacy and numeracy, the priority here is not academic performance. Rather, it is to bring back children into a routine that includes studying and to brush up on knowledge and skills to enable them to make a smoother transition to schools once these reopen.

**HOW?**

It will likely not be possible to organize radio sessions on literacy and numeracy for each grade separately; therefore, age or grade groups will have to be identified. For instance 3 groups: grades 1&2, 3&4, and 5&6. Or even two groups: grades 1&2&3, and grades 4&5&6.

It may be useful to envisage the radio education program for an initial period of three months. Based on the evolution of the situation and an assessment of the radio education program, action can be taken either to continue with the radio program or to reopen schools.

The pedagogical content would need to be developed in coordination with the MoE. If the curriculum includes a one-month revision programs for the beginning of the year, this may be a useful starting point. Otherwise, if the MoE has developed catch-up classes materials in the past, they could also be reviewed. Otherwise, pedagogues and teachers will be called upon to adapt basic lesson plans into radio sessions.

**RESOURCES:**

* Children should be encouraged to revisit their workbooks, textbooks, and notebooks from last year’s school year.
* Alphabet chant in Sierra Leone: <http://www.codecan.org/our-programs/where-we-work/sierra-leone>

**LIFESKILLS AND HYGIENE EDUCATION**

**WHAT?**

This subject is key to respond to the critical cognitive skills that children need to acquire to protect themselves and prevent the spread of the Ebola virus, and other diseases.

Priority topics include:

* Hand-washing
* Personal hygiene
* Environmental hygiene
* Ebola prevention

**HOW?**

This could be a common program for all primary-school aged children. It could also be useful for helping adults understand vital information. The issues will be need to be discussed in a very common and simple language for children to understand the facts.

The starting point here should be any materials already developed and shared by the MoE on key hygiene practices, including hand-washing. This could be materials developed for / by school hygiene clubs or for hygiene promotion campaigns in schools previously supported by UNICEF.

Messages developed for cholera prevention could also be revisited. WASH/C4D messages developed specifically for the EVD epidemic would also be useful, but care should be given to adapt their content to a children’s audience, to take into account age-sensitivity.

This topic could be addressed in the form of messages, interviews, “talk shows”, stories, songs, etc. Consider developing a “hand-washing song”.

**RESOURCES:**

* WASH for School Children in Emergencies, UNICEF Guidebook for Teachers: <http://www.unicef.org/wash/files/WASH_in__Schools_in_Emergencies_Guidebook_for_teachers_.pdf>
* WASH in Schools: <http://www.unicef.org/wash/schools/>
* Sierra Leone Emerging Issues teacher Training: <http://learningforpeace.unicef.org/resources/sierra-leone-emerging-issues-teacher-training-programme/>
* Kids Radio Sierra Leone: hygiene messages for and by children: [http://www.kidsradiosierraleone.org/#](http://www.kidsradiosierraleone.org/)

**PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT, SOCIAL COHESION, AND LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER**

This would also be a common programme for children of all grades to provide psychosocial support and foster social cohesion among children and the communities they are in.

It is important to note that one of the first aims of education in emergencies, and therefore of the emergency radio education program, is to provide psychosocial support through the establishment of a routine / sense of normalcy, peer interaction, and recreational activities. Therefore, psychosocial support should be weaved throughout the radio education program, through positive and engaging voices and making sure children feel part of a bigger initiative.

Example:

* The radio education program should start and end the same way every day, so that it becomes a “ritual” for children who know what to expect. There could be a jingle that is easily recognizable by children. Regularity, routine and reinforcement of children’s capacities are key.
* “You are listening to this radio program, together with hundreds of thousands of children across the country!” (Message: you are not alone!).
* There could be a “quote of the day” every day for children to reflect on and share with others.

In addition, the psychosocial component of the radio program can also include recreational activities, activities aiming at building resilience, and messages preventing stigma and reinforcing social cohesion.

1. **Recreational activities:**

**Games:** are there games in the local culture that do not require materials or children touching each other? For younger children, the ECD kit guide offers suggestions (many with materials but also some that do not require any): <https://intranet.unicef.org/PD/ECD.nsf/Site%20Pages/Page0107>

**Singing:** songs that are popular with children; new songs that have a positive message.

**Story-telling:**

* + Stories from the curriculum as children might already be familiar with some of them. Make a selection of top stories by age / grade level. The stories must be short, so that they can be read in 5 – 10 min or less over the radio. Simple comprehension and reflexion questions need to be developed, to engage children after listening.
  + The Reading Liberia and Reading Sierra Leone books: Written and illustrated by Liberians and Sierra Leoneans, they tell compelling, contemporary stories that children and youth from these countries can identify with. A collaborative initiative between the WE-CARE Foundation of Liberia, PEN Sierra Leone and CODE, the collection features 23 titles at reading levels ranging from the 1st to the 6th grade, including eight with hi-lo versions for more mature students who read at lower reading levels. It allows students of any age with very limited reading ability as well as those who are more confident to enjoy reading and improve their skills: <https://www.codecan.org/sites/default/files/Reading%20Libera-Sierra%20Leone%20promotional%20piece_revised13_03_26.pdf>
  + Sara tools: Liberia has developed two books “Sara under the Plum Tree Palaver” and “Sara Let’s Speak Out”.
  + Bouba and Zaza: a series of 12 children’s books on lifeskills themes: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/adea_and_unesco_launch_bouba_and_zaza_and_childhood_cultures_an_intergenerational_african_series_of_childrens_books#.VA2_7WjFKUk>
  + Collection of short stories and reflection questions on peace: developed in the INEE Peace Education Pack could be helpful: <http://www.ineesite.org/uploads/files/resources/subdoc_1_676_Saras_Choice_-_A_Collection_of_Stories_and_Poetry.pdf>
  + Simple story for children about loss and grieving, within an African context: <http://www.unicef.org/cwc/files/Remembering_Mommy-Sithmebele_and_Themba.pdf>
  + RADIJOJO: These are existing radio programs available on the internet, done by children from Sierra Leone and Liberia:
* Existing recorded program with children from Sierra Leone:
* Where is Sierra Leone: <http://www.radijojo.de/WCN_neu/>
* what children want to becomes, songs, poems and sayings from Sierra Leone in children’s voices: <http://www.radijojo.de/WCN_neu/>
* Storytelling by children from Sierra Leone (Taima) – 3 stories: <http://www.radijojo.de/WCN_neu/>
* There are also poems and children talking about their experiences during the war and the different way of life at school and that of at home.
* Existing recorded program with children from Liberia: <http://www.radijojo.de/WCN_neu/>
* There is a reference to ABC FM, run by children in Liberia. Most of the children on the radio are ex-child soldiers.

1. **Activities aiming at building resilience:**

The radio program could encourage children and their families to appreciate their own goodness and build confidence in themselves.

*Examples:*

* Encourage children to reflect on something that they did that has given them high satisfaction
* Encourage children to make a list of things that they like.  Suggest that this list include five things they like to eat, and five things they like to see, to wear and to do.  Then, read all the lists out loud and enjoy the diversity and similarities of what children have chosen.
* Ask children what their favourite activity is? How good are they at it? Why do they enjoy it so much?

PSS activity examples could be further developed by UNICEF WCARO.

*Resources:*

* Adapting psychosocial support and children’s resilience activities for the radio. More than 70 practical group activities will help make it possible for children to engage in self-healing and self-empowerment by helping them make sense out of a world that often seems confusing and threatening: <http://www.compassionbooks.com/making-it-better-activities-for-children-living-in-a-stressful-world/>

1. **Messages to prevent stigma and discrimination, and foster social cohesion:**

See messages developed by C4D:

* + Patients who have recovered from Ebola cannot catch it again during this outbreak, hence they cannot infect others.
  + Recovered patients can help the community by taking care of other sick people with Ebola. They should follow hygiene rules so they do not carry the fluids of a sick person to other family or community members.
  + You cannot spread Ebola disease until symptoms like sudden high fever and headache appear. A person who does not have physical symptoms cannot infect others.

This could be delivered by children’s role models (football player, singer, actor, etc.) so that they speak more directly to children.

Also important would be to share messages about the MoE’s plans for reopening schools, so as to maintain confidence in the education system (especially given mistrust in institutions and the health system at present).

**OPERATIONALIZATION**

This guidance is not focused on operationalization, but here are a few elements to consider:

* **Consensus** on purpose and objectives of the emergency radio education program.
* **Dissemination:** 
  + Identify most suited radio station to air the program. It must be a radio that people like to listen to. Best if it broadcasts nationally or has experience of running programs for children.
  + Clarify how much airtime will be available on a daily basis. Good to aim for at least 3 hours.
  + Plan to record the program and provide cassettes to community radio programs so that they can disseminate the programs. For instance in Sierra Leone: <http://irnsierraleone.org/>
* **Content development:** Working Groups might be set-up to develop / adapt / contextualize radio session under each theme. Working Groups will need to be briefed / trained on EiE, CwC, and the purpose of the radio education program. Content can be produced for an initial month – this should be enough to get the program started.
* **Radio facilitators** to be identified, briefed, trained.