

Study on Public knowledge, attitudes, and Practices related to EVD prevention and medical care in Sierra Leone

Field Work Conducted: 20th - 25th August

Objectives

- Examine the public's knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in Sierra Leone
- Identify barriers hindering the containment of EVD
- Use the study to inform evidence-based strategies in preventing the transmission of EVD and caring for those already infected and affected by the epidemic

Methodology

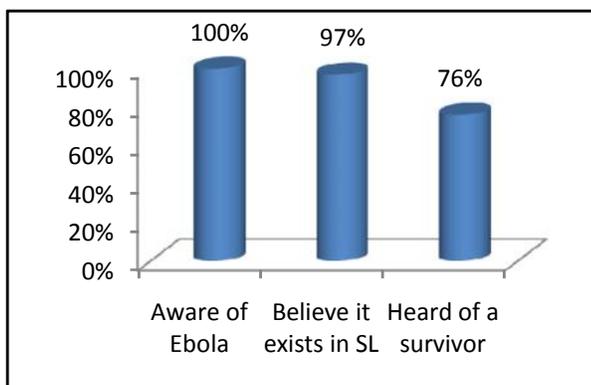
Administered a household survey to a random sample of 1413 people in Sierra Leone:

West Area: Rural and Urban
East: Kenema and Kailahun
North: Kambia, Port Loko, and Koinadugu
South: Moyama and Bo

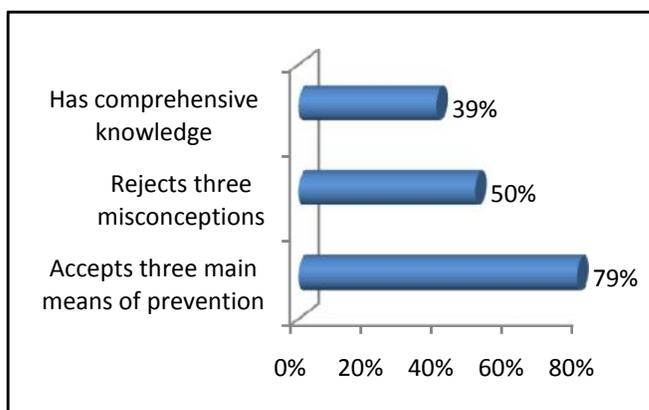
Conducted in-depth interview and focus groups with traditional/religious leaders, health workers and teachers, local councils, law enforcement personnel

Key Findings

High level of awareness and low denial



Comprehensive knowledge on EVD is low



Positive attitudes towards EVD prevention

- 87% agree with statement that one should “**avoid contact with blood and body fluids**”

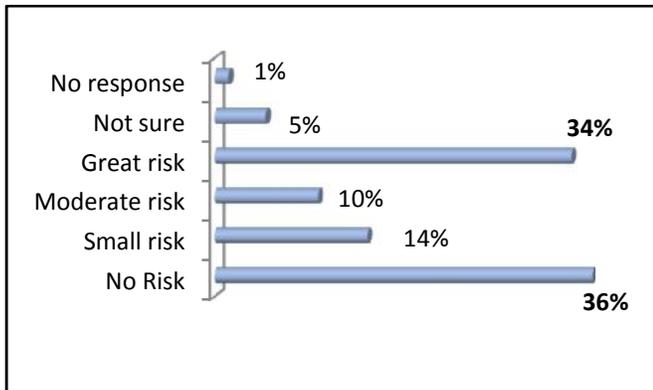
85% agree with statement that one can “**protect oneself by avoiding funeral or burial rituals that require handling the body of someone who died of EVD**”

91% agree with statement that a “**person with Ebola has higher chance of survival if he/she goes immediately to a health facility**”

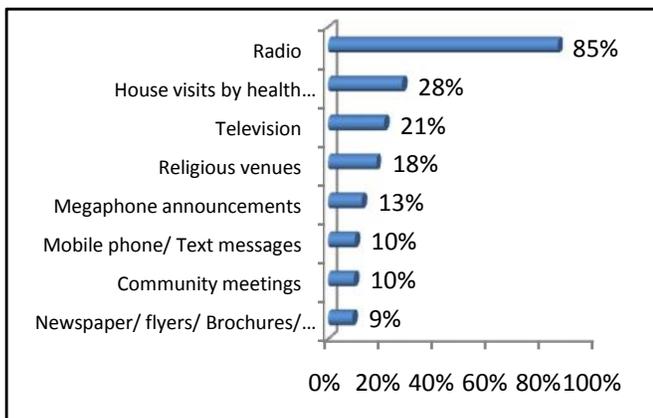
There are serious misconceptions

- Almost a third of population thinks one can get Ebola from Mosquitoes (30%)
- 30% also believes Ebola is airborne
- 20% believe Ebola can be treated successfully by Spiritual Healers (in Western Area – urban & rural - this misconception is especially high).
- 42% believe that bathing with salt and hot water can prevent Ebola.

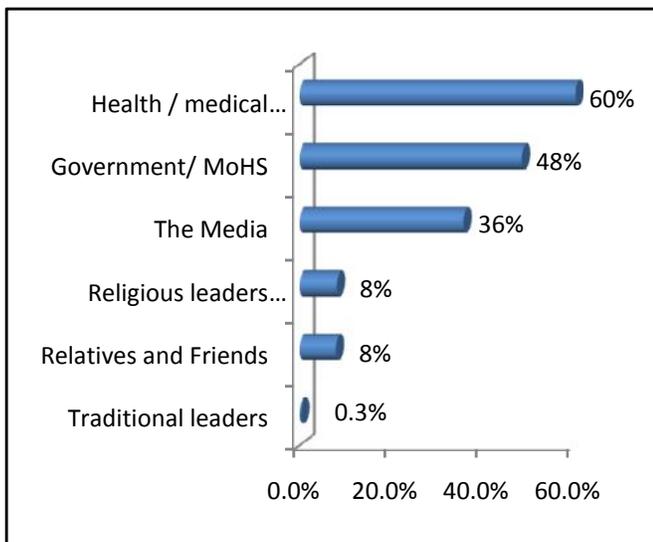
Risk perceptions are mixed and polarized



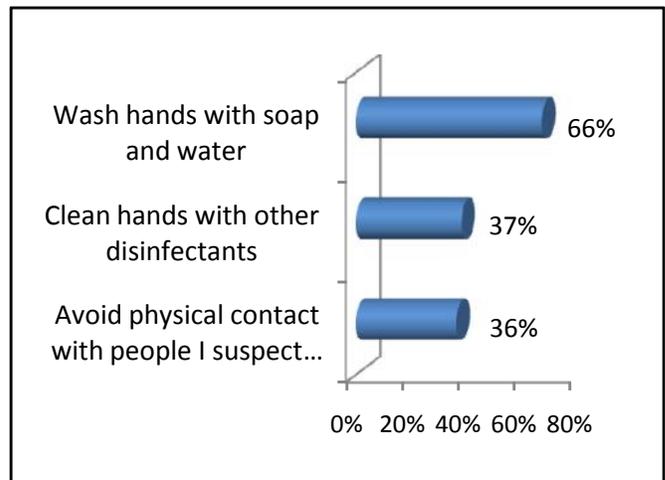
Radio by far the preferred means for receiving information about Ebola



Health professionals and Government/MOHS are the most trusted source of information



Nearly everyone is reporting some behavior change (95%)



Very high level of stigma and discrimination towards Ebola victims

- 96% report some discriminatory attitude towards people with suspected or having (had) Ebola.
- 76% would not welcome someone back into their community after a neighbor recovered from Ebola.
- 32% believe that a school pupil fully recovered from Ebola will put other pupils in their class at risk of Ebola infection.
- 9% would keep the information secret if a family member contracts Ebola.

Recommendations

- Address misconceptions about the disease
- Clearly spell out modes of transmission in local lang.
- Develop clear messages on protective practices
- Develop special messages around community acceptance of Ebola affected persons and families
- Radio, Radio, Radio – must be maximally used
- Inter-personal engagement at grassroots level
- Effective use of television to tell Survivor Stories
- Strategic engagement with churches and mosques
- Information should come from health professionals and MoHS because they are the most trusted source