

UNDERSTANDING ZOOONOSIS IN SIERRA LEONE

INTRODUCTION

Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs is the lead organization for Breakthrough ACTION funded by the United States Agency for International Development. Breakthrough ACTION uses state-of-the-art evidence-based approaches to increase adoption of healthy behaviors and normative change worldwide. Breakthrough ACTION Sierra Leone works with the government of Sierra Leone and Global Health Security Agenda implementing partners to improve the risk communication capacity of government and partners, and to address specific behaviors in the population that are associated with selected high-priority diseases.

STUDY AIMS

Explore community members' perceptions, knowledge, and behaviors associated with PZD in general, and more specifically with rabies. Specific objectives included to:

- > Understand awareness and knowledge of risk to health from animal-human interactions;
- > Understand factors (individual, community, structural, economic, socio-cultural norms, etc.) that influence animal-human interactions;
- > Assess community members' knowledge of zoonosis and rabies regarding risk, symptoms, prevention strategies, and reporting mechanisms;
- > Identify predisposing factors for risk and prevention of zoonotic illness;
- > Describe community member perceptions of animal health workers and their work;
- > Describe personal experiences with animal-human interactions, zoonotic illness, and rabies; and,
- > Identify accepted sources of information on zoonotic diseases and rabies that community members use

TARGET AUDIENCE



children (10-17 years old) and adults from 16 communities and 5 constituencies in Bombali District



Constituency 31	Constituency 34	Constituency 35	Constituency 37/38
Gbendembu	Binkolo	Kanekay	Makama
Kalangba	Kagbo	Karena	Matinka
Kotohun	Kapethe	Kayanko	Ropolon
Masongbo-Loko	Masongbo-Limba	Manjoro	Stoko

QUALITATIVE STUDY INFORMANTS

- community members
- community leaders
- hunters
- traders
- district health officers
- facility- & community-based health workers (for humans)
- disease surveillance officers
- program staff of community-based organizations working on PZD

No animal health workers were available in selected communities during data collection period.

BACKGROUND

2014 Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in Sierra Leone resulted in 3956 deaths¹. Highlighted need for coordinated, harmonized, targeted, and effective global health response to public health emergencies.

2017 A One Health zoonotic disease workshop in Sierra Leone identified the following priority zoonotic diseases (PZD) for the country: viral hemorrhagic fevers (Ebola, Lassa), rabies, zoonotic influenza, salmonellosis, anthrax, and plague. Rabies is endemic in Sierra Leone; however, poor reporting and surveillance have contributed to underestimations of cases and mortality. There is very little information about community-level perceptions and behaviors that influence transmission of rabies in Sierra Leone.



PRESENT Breakthrough ACTION and partners are collaborating to design and implement a communication campaign to increase knowledge and awareness about the connection between animal and human health, and to promote behaviors to protect and maintain the health of both humans and animals interacting in the same environment. Breakthrough ACTION conducted formative research and an outcomes monitoring baseline assessment to inform, in part, the design of a high-quality communication campaign strategy on PZD and rabies, and to relay information on rabies to community members.

¹Reference: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Number of Cases and Deaths in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone during the 2014-2016 West Africa Ebola Outbreak

METHODS & SAMPLE



unstructured focus group discussions stratified by age and gender



focus group discussions with 133 informants



quantitative cross-sectional household survey



1312 survey participants