



EBOLA IN CONTEXT: UNDERSTANDING TRANSMISSION, RESPONSE AND CONTROL

WEEK 1 STEP 1.20 IMMEDIATE HEALTH SYSTEM CONSEQUENCES OF EBOLA IN WEST AFRICA (VIDEO)

Health systems that were already weak prior to the Ebola outbreak have all but collapsed during it. The numbers of doctors and nurses, again very low prior to the outbreak, have been further reduced by Ebola deaths. This has a devastating effect on services and many health centres and hospitals are closed. Some people stay away from those that are functioning due to fear. The impact on illness and deaths from other preventable and treatable illnesses is expected to be huge, but is largely unknown at this time.

The video highlights examples of this impact. Maternal mortality was already very high in Sierra Leone, and recent progress that was being made to reduce it will have been undermined. Malaria deaths could rise 4-fold. Routine immunisation programmes have stopped. Aid programmes have stopped, and the money that is being spent now is Ebola-specific and will have few long-term benefits. The Ebola outbreak has highlighted the need to invest in health systems, not just vertical programmes.

The longer term consequences on health and development are considered in a later step.

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