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SUMMARY

UNFPA's response to the Ebola Virus Disease

UNFPA showed great agility and leadership in its response to West Africa's 2014 Ebola crisis, receiving recognition locally, nationally and internationally for its contribution.

The organization maximised its financial and human resources by swiftly reallocating budgets and funds and reassigning staff.

It recognised that tracking and monitoring the health of all those who had had contact with Ebola sufferers was the key to containing the spread of the disease.

UNFPA provided investment and training to contact tracers and mobilized the community to become both decision and change makers, using local leadership structures and the media.

But, crucially, the work did not focus solely on the immediate situation. It was clear that without strengthening the most affected countries' fragile health systems, they would never withstand shocks such as the Ebola outbreak.

As a result, UNFPA's response also looked forward to recovery and resilience. Initiatives paved the way for youth empowerment, as part of a strategy to harness the Demographic Dividend, and supported maternal, reproductive and sexual health service development.

UNFPA also recognised the need for better cross-border, inter-country cooperation to ensure comprehensive, consistent approaches to maternal, reproductive and sexual health. The organisation has played a pivotal part in the development of the Mano River Integrated Response which sees Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, three countries most affected by Ebola, work together to improve health service delivery.

The crisis taught UNFPA staff, and indeed all stakeholders, important lessons. They have learnt from these lessons and will apply this knowledge in future situations.

From now on, all responses to humanitarian crises will include plans for recovery and future development of the community and its infrastructure, providing a comprehensive, forward-looking response which will improve and strengthen health service provision.



A midwife attending a patient at the Princess Christian Maternity Hospital (PCMH), Freetown, Sierra Leone. © UNFPA/Habibatou Gologo