

Reach Every District (RED) Strategy: A Response for Community Participation and Ownership



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Background

Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) struck Liberia when its health care system was weak from years of war, a nationwide strike was held by health workers seeking better working conditions and incentives, and barely adequate funding was available to support either. High levels of denial, fear, and panic and traditional beliefs and practices were some factors that fueled the spread of EVD and cost the lives of thousands.



Program description: Reach Every District (RED) Strategy

- The RED strategy was a wakeup call to community leaders and members to accept the reality that we had a problem on hand and the only solution in addressing this deadly disease was to make “Ebola everyone’s business”. Through empowerment, communities took ownership of the EVD response in their various areas to stop the transmission of the virus. Communities transmitted the correct messages in their local dialects and conducted active case search, reported sick or suspected cases, supported quarantined communities with food, water, and other basic needs until the MOH and partners could respond. It also drew the attention of the public that no matter what the situation may be the involvement of everyone in the EVD response paid off.

Methods

Twenty central-level Master Trainers trained 30 county-level Master Trainers and 352 district-level Master Trainers in the 15 counties. About 114 volunteers and 45 chiefs, elders, and religious leaders were also trained in Ebola preventive measures and active surveillance, after which they formed watch teams to protect their communities. Following the initial training, the central-level and county-level Master Trainers supervised the district-level trainers who in return trained the health volunteers in their community. The health volunteers conducted door-to-door interpersonal communication (IPC) in their communities on the EVD response for a period of one month.



Training of Master trainers



gCHVs training



Head of Traditional Chiefs In Liberia



Training of Traditional Chiefs

Results

From a rapid assessment conducted with support from our partners in March and April, 2015, almost 1.5 million people were reached during the door-to-door campaign. Another important survey was conducted in April 2015 to assess the impact of the RED strategy on how to prevent EVD and sustain positive behavior to prevent the spread of the virus. A total of 1,140 households in 15 counties were reached targeting 30 districts.

CHVs doing IPC/Community engagement





Discussion

Overall, the RED approach played a key role in the successful EVD response in Liberia, due primarily to the involvement of various players including community and religious leaders, health workers, survivors, motorcyclists, peer educators, teachers, chiefs and elders, and partners. Capacity building and the provision of logistics and incentives empowered communities for action to improve their own health. As the country transitioned from the Ebola response to rebuilding health services, the RED strategy was successfully implemented to increase measles campaign coverage from 30 percent to 90 percent in May 2015, highlighting the adaptability of the strategy to address current contexts.



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