Ebola Crisis in West Africa!

Despite the impact of Ebola, not one child in the WCF-sponsored Liberia feeding programme has contracted Ebola or died during the most widespread epidemic of Ebola ever recorded.

“It’s an exciting and encouraging statistic,” said Andy Perkins, WCF liaison and director of the Liberia feeding programmes. WCF has been supporting the feeding of approximately 600 children, five days each week at two feeding locations in Liberia. WCF recently increased funding for education of children in the programme, as well as assisting with costs of a new maternity clinic. Thanks to our generous supporters, the number of children fed has climbed to nearly 1000 and a third feeding location has opened.

Liberia—a Troubled Past and Uncertain Future

- 1980 After several years of fragile democracy, ethnic tensions erupt into a military coup led by Samuel Doe. President William Tolbert and top ministers are publicly executed.
- 1990 Rebels execute Doe.
- By the mid 1990s most of Liberia is controlled by rebel factions led by multiple warlords.
- Years of Civil war leave an estimated 250,000 dead.
- 2003 cease-fire agreement. Warlord and former president of Liberia, Charles Taylor, is tried at the Hague for crimes against humanity, war crimes and violations of international law, including murder, rape, sexual slavery, and enlisting children as child soldiers.
- In economic ruin from years of war and chaos, Liberia is one of the countries hardest hit by the Ebola crisis in West Africa. Its Capitol, Monrovia, functions on generators, without electricity or running water, and several thousand U.N. peacekeeping forces remain on the ground. Liberia is one of the most expensive peacekeeping efforts in U.N. history.
World Children’s Fund responded to the Ebola crisis by sending three additional ocean containers, in addition to regular shipments of rice meals that WCF normally sends. Each container holds more than 281,000 life-saving meals. These highly nutritious rice meals feed children in the programme and are also disbursed to local orphanages, homes for the blind and elderly and others in desperate need.

According to Perkins, the first confirmed Ebola death in Buchanan, occurred at the Catholic clinic where children in the programme are routinely taken for medical care. Programme administrators educated children about the highly contagious virus, and instituted a strict hand-washing regimen using heavily chlorinated water. Children wash on arrival, prior to eating and again when they depart to walk back to their villages.

“Liberians are haunted by the sights they witnessed, as Ebola spread and began to take its toll,” said Perkins.

Dead bodies piled up until arrangements could be made for proper disposal. Fear of contagion infiltrated every segment of society. Health workers fled. Clinics and hospitals shut. Liberia’s already fragile health care sector collapsed under the weight of Ebola. The entire country was estimated to have only 50 physicians prior to the outbreak. People stopped receiving, and in many cases, stopped seeking health care for common, treatable diseases, like malaria and tuberculosis. The result was more collateral damage and death.

Schools along Liberia’s borders were closed. Planting and harvesting were abandoned as families moved, or succumbed to the virus, or death from illness and disease. Trade and local commerce halted and quarantines were enforced. Food became scarce and expensive.

“The present situation here in Liberia is worse than what I witnessed during the years of war here,” said Perkins. “I have hope when I see the condition of the children in our feeding programme, but the number and severity of malnourished children in Liberia has increased dramatically since the Ebola epidemic. My heart is broken anew,” he said.

The children in the WCF-supported feeding programme are truly grateful for your faithful support! Your commitment is saving lives and making a difference during this critical time in Liberia.