

## **Internews Articles and Posts about Lassa Fever and Ebola Virus in Sierra Leone**

From 2021 to 2022, the Internews Earth Journalism Network trained and mentored several journalists in Sierra Leone under USAID STOP Spillover. One of them, Mabinty Magdalene Kamara with Free Media Group, an independent media organization in Sierra Leone, later led media training for other journalists. Mabinty Kamara, Alpha Abu, and Emma Black wrote the articles and post below about two zoonotic viruses, Lassa fever and Ebola virus. These viruses pose a threat to public health in Sierra Leone and other countries in West Africa.

### **Lassa Fever: The Other Public Health Risk**

In this article, Mabinty Kamara and Alpha Abu describe the status of Lassa fever in Sierra Leone and other countries, risk pathways, and how to prevent and address Lassa fever once symptoms develop. Suna Tucker with the STOP Spillover team in Sierra Leone notes that prevention requires a One Health approach that includes all stakeholders, with a focus on behavior change and community action to move away from cultural practices such as hunting and eating rats. The Deputy Director of Environmental Health and Safety in Sierra Leone's Environmental Protection Agency calls for people to stop practices that destroy the environment, saying that poor environmental management has negative effects on humans.

### **Surviving Lassa Fever in Sierra Leone**

In this article, Mabinty Kamara and Alpha Abu focus on treatment for Lassa fever. Although there is no specific treatment for Lassa fever, some supplemental drugs have been prescribed. Infected persons typically receive supportive care and symptomatic treatment until they recover. The authors tell the story of Musa Momoh, who lives in the town of Panguma in Kenema District. Musa and several family members were infected with Lassa fever. All of the family members except Musa's father survived. Musa Momoh shared many challenges facing those undergoing treatment for Lassa fever, such as lack of funds to purchase supplemental drugs prescribed at the hospital to be taken with medications that are offered free. He mentioned that prevention and early treatment are key to surviving Lassa fever. "*Lassa fever is real.*"

### **Hunters and Butchers Put Sierra Leone at Risk of Ebola**

In this article, Emma Black recounts the first recorded case of Ebola virus disease in eastern Sierra Leone, which occurred in the Kingsway Corner bushmeat market in May 2014. This Ebola epidemic ravaged the country from 2014 to 2016. Despite a ban on the sale and consumption of bush meat by the Sierra Leone Ministry of Health and Sanitation, the hunting, butchering, sale, and consumption of bats and primates continues across many rural areas of the country. USAID STOP Spillover worked in the Kingsway market to promote biosafety practices, structural interventions, and related social behavior change among vendors and the larger community. In this article, Lily Kainwo with the STOP Spillover Sierra Leone Country Team noted that "*It's almost impossible to stop people from eating bushmeat. It's a source of income and food and things have been that way for generations. On our project, we tried to do what we can to sensitize people to these risks.*"

### **Lassa Fever Transmission**

In January 2023, Mabinty Kamara developed this Facebook post with illustrations depicting the transmission of the Lassa fever virus through the *Mastomys multimammate* rat, the ways in which people can get infected, related symptoms, and steps to address spillover risks. She emphasizes that early diagnosis and treatment are key.