

UN mission to combat Ebola opens HQ in Ghana

September 29 2014, by Sarah Dilozeno



Children sit in front of their home in the St. Paul Bridge neighborhood of Monrovia, Liberia, Sunday Sept. 28, 2014. Six months into the world's worst-ever Ebola outbreak, and the first to happen in an unprepared West Africa, the gap between what has been sent by other countries and private groups and what is desperately needed is huge. Even as countries try to marshal more resources to close the gap, those needs threaten to become much greater, and possibly even insurmountable. (AP Photo/Jerome Delay)

The U.N. mission to combat Ebola opened its headquarters on Monday

in Ghana, where it will coordinate aid for the accelerating West African crisis.

The spread of Ebola has spiraled into the worst ever outbreak, and the World Health Organization says it has linked more than 3,000 deaths to the disease, although that is likely an underestimate of the true toll. Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea have been hit hardest. Senegal and Nigeria have also been touched, but have not reported a new case in weeks.

Some have criticized the response to the outbreak as too slow and haphazard. Ebola was first identified in March in Guinea. But more recently promises of aid have poured in, with many countries committing to sending [health care workers](#), building hospitals or providing much-needed supplies, like protective suits for doctors and nurses.

The United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response, also known as UNMEER, is now tasked with figuring out where the greatest needs are and making sure aid gets there, said Christy Feig, director of communications for the World Health Organization, which will play a significant role in the mission.

The head of the mission, Anthony Banbury, and his team are expected to arrive Monday in Ghana's capital of Accra.

Many countries in the region have closed their borders with the worst-affected countries and suspended flights into and out of them. That has choked off routes for supplies and health care workers into Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. But Senegal officially opened a humanitarian corridor this weekend, and U.N. flights can now make regular flights into the affected countries from Dakar. Ghana has also agreed to an air bridge.

The needs of the outbreak have continually outstripped projections: WHO says around 1,500 treatment beds have been built or are in the works, but that still leaves a gap of more than 2,100 beds. Between 1,000 and 2,000 international health care workers are needed, and they and local doctors and nurses will require millions of disposable protective suits to stay safe. Thousands of home hygiene kits are also being flown in to help families protect themselves at home.



Residents of the St. Paul Bridge neighborhood wearing personal protective equipment take a man suspected of carrying the Ebola virus to the Island Clinic in Monrovia, Liberia, Sunday Sept. 28, 2014. Six months into the world's worst-ever Ebola outbreak, and the first to happen in an unprepared West Africa, the gap between what has been sent by other countries and private groups and what is desperately needed is huge. Even as countries try to marshal more resources to close the gap, those needs threaten to become much greater, and possibly even insurmountable. (AP Photo/Jerome Delay)



Children pray during Sunday service at the Bridgeway Baptist Church in the St. Paul Bridge neighborhood of Monrovia, Liberia, Sunday Sept. 28, 2014. Six months into the world's worst-ever Ebola outbreak, and the first to happen in an unprepared West Africa, the gap between what has been sent by other countries and private groups and what is desperately needed is huge. Even as countries try to marshal more resources to close the gap, those needs threaten to become much greater, and possibly even insurmountable. (AP Photo/Jerome Delay)

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