



**STOP** *Spillover*



# OVERVIEW OF LASSA FEVER IN LIBERIA: INTERVENTION AND CHALLENGES

Earth Journalism Network Lassa Fever  
Presentation

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# LIBERIA PROFILE

## Liberia

- In West Africa
- Population - Approximately 5 million people
- Divided into fifteen Sub- Political Division
- Bordered -
  - Sierra Leone – Northwest
  - Guinea – North
  - Ivory Coast - east

# LIBERIA HEALTH SYSTEM STRUCTURE

Liberia Health System is divided into different levels:

- National Level
- County Level
- District Level
- Community Level

## CONT.

### **865 health facilities**

- 471 public and 346 private
- Hospitals 36
- Health center 67
- Clinics 768
- Faith base health facilities 33
- Concession health facilities 13

## FIRST CASE OF LASSA FEVER IN LIBERIA

- In March and April 1972 a nosocomial Lassa fever epidemic occurred in Curran Lutheran Hospital, Zorzor, Liberia
- Following the first case, there have been sporadic outbreak in other Counties

## Lassa Fever endemic Counties

- Lofa
- Grand Bassa
- Margibi
- Nimba
- Bong Counties

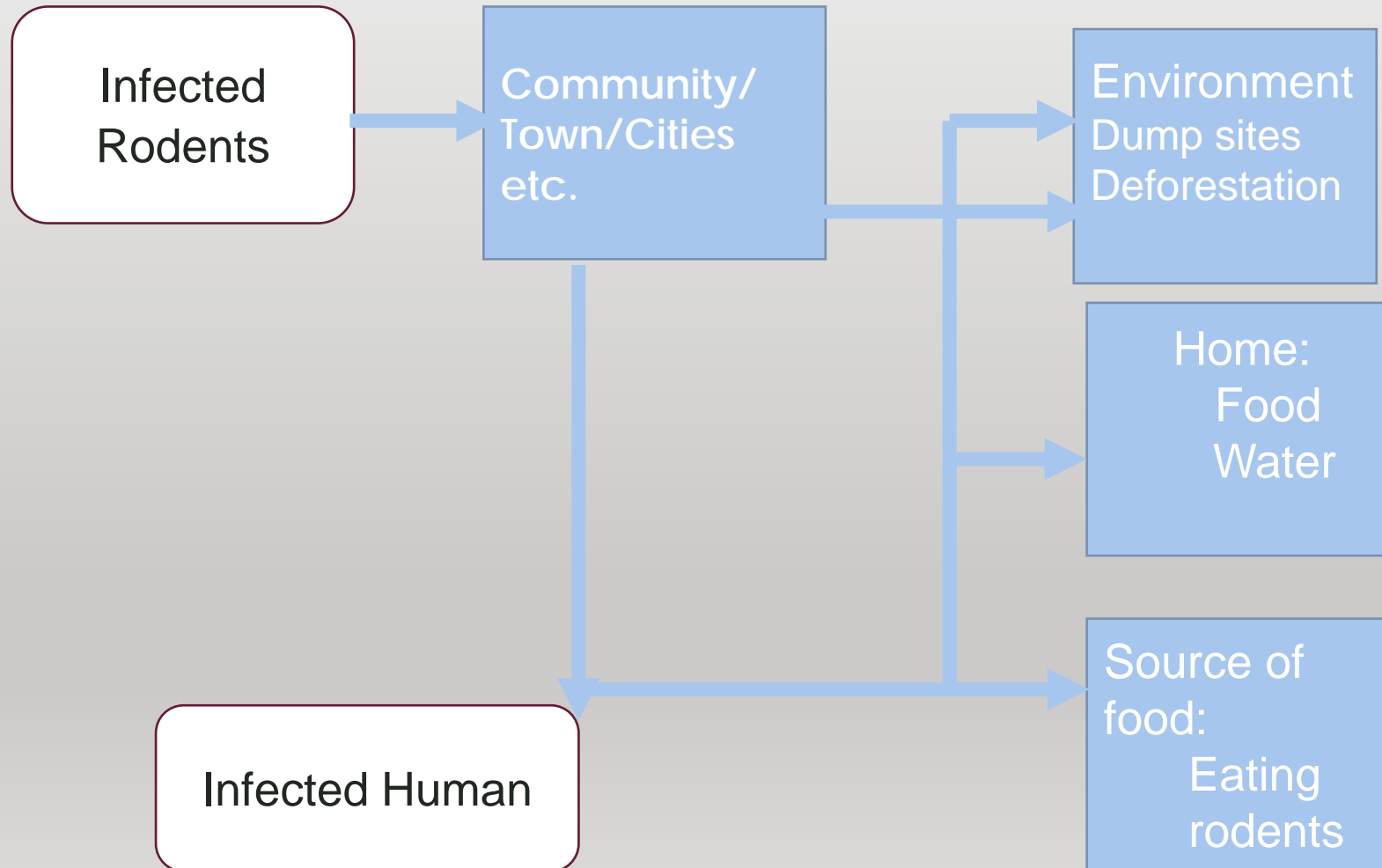
Lassa Fever cases were during dry season but cases are reported in the rain season

## DEFINITION OF LASSA FEVER

### Lassa fever

- acute viral hemorrhagic illness
- caused by Lassa virus,
- a member of the arenavirus family.
- Incubation period ranges from 2 to 21 days
- **Signs & Symptoms**
  - Fever
  - weakness
  - Headache
  - sore throat
  - muscle pain
  - Vomiting
  - Bleeding

## LASSA VIRUS RISK INFECTION PATHWAY





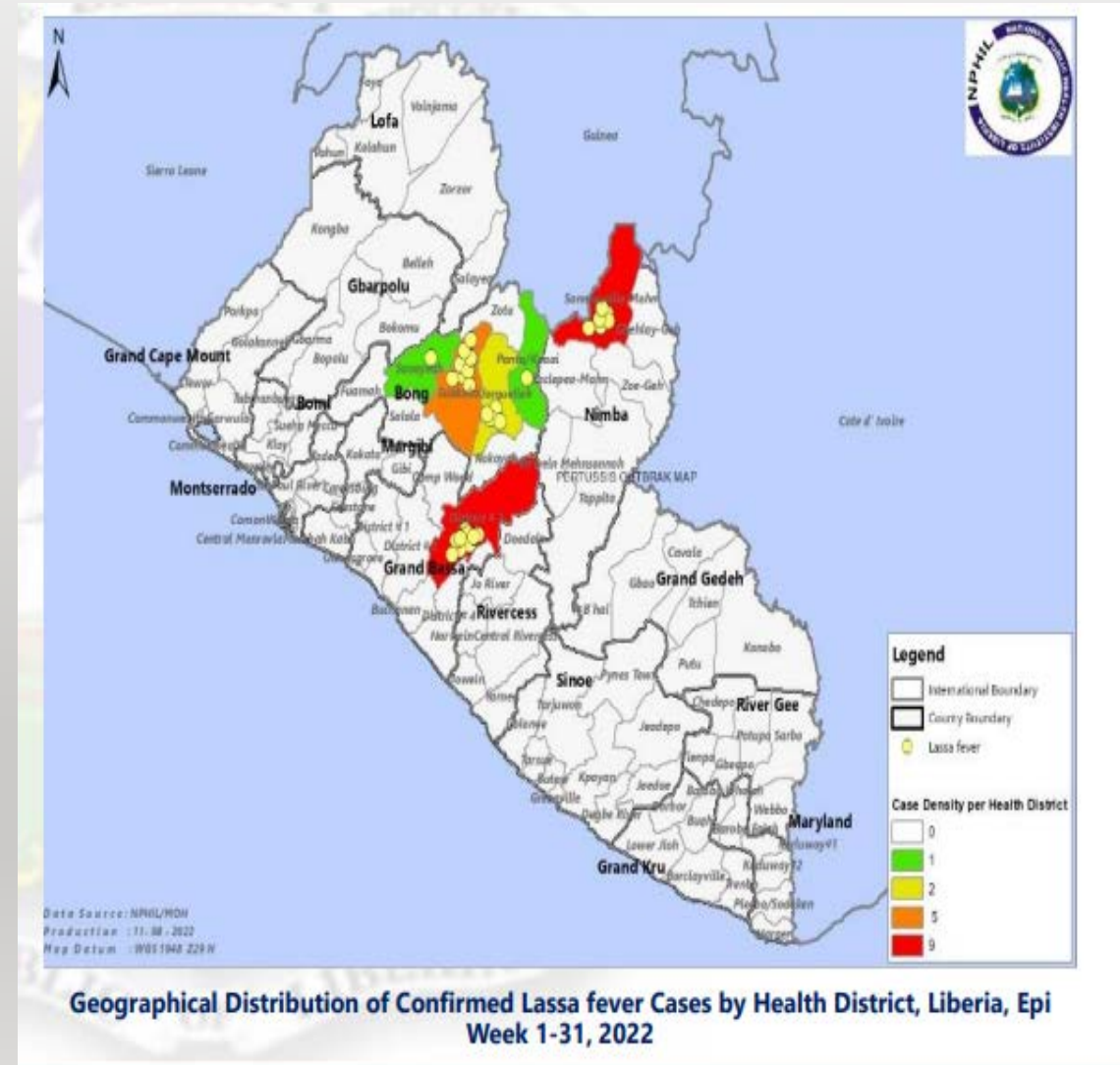
# CASE INVESTIGATION AND SPECIMEN COLLECTION

- At the community level, cases are detected and investigated by human health surveillance officers
- Specimens are collected by Human surveillance officer
- Specimen are transported to the National Reference Laboratory for testing
- Feedback on test result are communicated with relevant individuals

## HIGHLIGHTS OF LASSA FEVER EVENT AUGUST 1-7, 2022, REPORTING WEEK 31

Five (5) suspected cases reported

- Bong-3 including 1 deaths. (2 confirmed positive)
- Grand Kru-1 (Tested negative)
- Nimba-1 Counties (Tested negative)
- Cumulatively, 100 suspected cases have been reported including 14 deaths
- 32 positive, 65 negative, 2 rejected, 1 pending
- Case Fatality Rate is (9/32) 28%



# LASSA FEVER RESPONSE

In Liberia:

- An Incident Management System (IMS) is set up
- The Emergency Operation Centers (EOCs) are on the alert and responding county EOC is activated
- Joint investigation and response during Lassa fever outbreak:
  - Ministry of Health (MOH)
  - National Public Health Institute (NPHIL)
  - Ministry of Agriculture (MOA)
  - Environment Health Agency (EPA)
  - National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA)

# OPPORTUNITY

- Developed Social Behavior Change messages and materials available for Lassa fever
- Health Promotion Focal Persons in the 15 Counties working with local media outlet
- Establishment of One Platform in the 15 Counties
- Most of the county level staff are trained in risk communication
- One Health Risk Communication Plan available
- Regular clean-up campaign in hotspots Counties and communities

## CHALLENGES DESPITE INTERVENTIONS

- Despite interventions made by Ministry of Health, NPHIL and partners:
  - Poor health seeking behavior leading to high case fertility
  - people primarily seek treatment at drug store/pharmacy before going to health facility
  - Late detection of cases at health facility
  - Community perception about the disease
  - Poor environmental/waste management practices

## CONT.

- Inadequate budget and support allocated to risk communication
- Limited partners/ stakeholders support and involvement in Lassa fever risk communication
- Multiple health messages from different sources before, during and after an outbreak
- Lack of Lassa fever lessons in School health modules

## PUBLIC HEALTH ACTIONS

- NPHIL and MOH providing technical and logistical support to counties
- Case isolated and managed at health facility
- Conducting community engagement on the prevention of Lassa fever, rodent control measures and hygiene
- Encouraging affected communities to enhance clean-up campaigns



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**THANKS**

**QUESTIONS**