



Final Declaration of the Sub-Regional Meeting on Lassa Fever Control in the Mano River Union Countries, Freetown, Sierra Leone, 13-14 September 2004

The Ministers of Health of the Mano River Union Countries, namely, **Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone**, held a meeting in Freetown on 13-14 September 2004 with the goal to adopt a joint Sub-Regional strategy for Lassa fever control in the MRU countries, 2004-2008.

The Ministers of Health of the Mano River Union Countries:

- Alarmed by the continued endemic and epidemic transmission of Lassa virus in the Sub-Region
- Concerned about the recent epidemics in Sierra Leone and Liberia
- Recognising the need to protect 58 million population potentially at risk of contracting Lassa virus infection in West Africa

The Ministers of Health of the Mano River Union Countries adopt the following Declaration on Lassa fever prevention and control in the Mano River Union Countries and commit themselves as follows:

1. Implement the adopted "Sub-Regional Strategic Plan of Action for Lassa Fever Prevention and Control, 2004-2008."
2. Convene annual Sub-Regional meetings, to be rotated among MRU and other interested countries.
3. Encourage the inclusion of additional, potentially affected countries.
4. Convene periodic meetings of the technical groups to address specific issues

The Parties will jointly pursue the following objectives:

5. Among others, the technical groups will collaborate on the following issues:
 - a. Exchange of scientific information and materials.
 - b. Address cross-cutting activities
6. Collaboration in the area of patient management, namely—
 - a. Adopt a standardised clinical case definition
 - b. Common treatment guidelines
 - c. Set up strategically placed Lassa treatment centres within each country of

- the Sub-Region
- d. Establish an appropriate, feasible and sustainable referral system
 - e. Establish a Sub-Regional expert panel
 - f. Establish an Epidemic Response Team
7. Collaboration in the area of laboratory, namely—
 - a. Development of human resources in laboratory diagnosis of Lassa fever and other infectious diseases.
 - b. Provide timely, accurate and reliable diagnostic service following standardised laboratory procedures.
 - c. Provide opportunity for research that improves diagnostic capacity, surveillance, case management, and treatment.
 8. Collaboration in the area of surveillance, namely--
 - a. Support countries to improve integrated disease surveillance and response (IDSR) to respond to the needs of Lassa fever
 - b. Adopt a standardised surveillance case definition
 - c. Strengthen existing bodies to yield--
 - i. Networking of surveillance experts
 - ii. Documentation, advocacy, information for the media
 - d. Direct communication between cross-border districts
 - e. Logistics management and support for emergency preparedness
 9. Information, Education, Communication (IEC) should be a key component of Environmental Control activities.

The Ministers of Health of the Mano River Union Countries:

Acknowledge the efforts and collaboration of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the European Union, the Governments of the United States, China and the United Kingdom, and other partners in the fight against Lassa fever globally, and in Mano River Union Countries in particular.

Request further support and technical assistance to the Sub-Region to ensure that the success of a Sub-Regional strategy for Lassa fever control is replicated in the fight of other diseases of epidemic potential.

Signed at Bintumani Hotel, Freetown, Sierra Leone on 14th day of September in the year 2004,