A 13-bed treatment facility equipped with necessary accessories including ventilators was commissioned on 28 May 2020 at the 34 Military Hospital. This facility is been used as an intensive Care Unit for critically ill COVID-19 patients. This was a joint United Nations project done with technical coordination from UNFPA while WFP designed and built the facility and also provided a 250 KVA generator and procurement of supplies.

WFP Aviation in support of the Government of Sierra Leone in the fight against COVID-19 has started humanitarian passenger air services. The first passenger service flight landed at Lungi International Airport in Sierra Leone on 02 June 2020. Connecting a number of capitals in Africa from the hubs in Accra and Addis Ababa as well as some countries in Asia and Europe, WFP Global Air Services are aimed at overcoming the lack of available commercial capacity and ensuring humanitarian personnel can deploy close to or into affected regions. The flights to Freetown are scheduled twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays.

In response to the request by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, WFP working on facilitating the arrival of 17 Cuban health workers to Sierra Leone to help in the fight against COVID-19.
WFP also facilitated the delivery of the first and second rounds of the Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation donations as well as donations from China to support the Government of Sierra Leone in the fight against COVID-19. The items included: viral transport medium, extraction kits, sets of protective clothing, ventilation machines, thermometer guns, medical gloves, and face shields. These items were sorted and packaged in Ethiopia by WFP not only for Sierra Leone but for a number of Africa countries to help the continent grapple with the rise in the number of people infected with the virus.

Halting the spread

WFP in support of containment measures by the Ministry of Health and Sanitation delivered assorted food commodities to six COVID-19 Treatment centres in Freetown and Port Loko. Also, in order to meet the food and nutrition needs of vulnerable groups during the 3-day nationwide lockdown, WFP provided food assistance consisting of rice, pulses and vegetable oil to some 4,486 vulnerable individuals including street children, orphans, people living with disabilities, people living with mental illnesses and homeless in shelters and institutions managed by Ministry of Social Welfare, Street Child, SOS Children Village and Don Bosco across 10 districts (Bo, Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, Kono, Port Loko, Bombali, Tonkolili, Western Area Rural and Western Area Urban).

To ensure the continuity of WFP and MAF's youth contractor model during the COVID-19 outbreak – whereby talented young agriculturalists provide technical guidance in improved agricultural practices to other farmers within their communities – WFP donated a smart phone to each of the 27 youth contractors
supporting implementation of livelihood activities in Kenema, Moyamba, Pujehun and Tonkolili districts. Each smart phone is uploaded with a GPS app so that youth contractors can precisely monitor the development of irrigation systems in their localities, in addition to enhancing the ability of youth contractors to share ideas with one another and report to WFP during COVID-19 when their movement is curtailed.

WFP ICT has been providing technical support to the Emergency operations centre and the Office of the President by deploying and configuring zoom teleconferencing equipment to facilitate virtual meetings.

Minimizing the impact

WFP supported the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to transport over 900 metric tons of improved seed rice for distribution to smallholder farmers on a loan basis across the country who are cultivating lowland ecologies. This is aimed at boosting local production of the staple rice under cluster 5 of the Government’s Quick Action Economic Response Plan (QAERP) in order to mitigate the potential impact of Covid-19 pandemic on food security.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, FAO, and IFAD, WFP supported preparations for an emergency Food Security Monitoring System assessment to better understand the impact of the COVID-19 on food security. The data collected will be useful to the key food security stakeholders to guide their interventions in addressing food insecurity and the impact of COVID-19 on the population.

WFP completed the first of two rounds of cash payment of 846,000 Leones per household to 1,095 farming households (representing 5,475 beneficiaries) in Moyamba district (Lower and Upper Banta)
chiefdoms) and Pujehun district (Malen and Makpele chiefdoms) to meet their own food needs while engaged in Inland Valley Swamp (IVS) development activities under the Peace Building Fund (PBF) project: “Mitigating Resource-based conflicts and increasing community resilience in Pujehun and Moyamba districts in Sierra Leone.”

WFP distributed agricultural tools and seeds to vulnerable smallholder farmers living in the areas identified with higher food insecurity by the latest food security monitoring (January 2020). Ten sites in were targeted in Falaba district whilst eleven sites were reached in Kambia district. This Government of Japan supported project will benefit 1,150 vulnerable farming households (representing 5,750 beneficiaries) in Falaba, Karene, Kambia, Kailahun and Pujehun districts with 40 days FFA, tools, seeds and training in improved agricultural practices to cultivate 92 hectares of cowpea, pumpkin, okra, maize, groundnut, hot pepper and orange fleshed sweet potato.

For more information contact:

- Housainou Taal, Housainou.taal@wfp.org, Representative and Country Director.
- Yasuhiro Tsumura, Deputy Country Director and Head of Programmes
- Francis Boima, francis.boima@wfp.org about Operational Information Management and Reporting.
- For Food Assistance and Nutrition pillar, contact William.hopkins@wfp.org, logistics pillar, eden.guizaw@wfp.org and ICT, rashid.conteh@wfp.org