Ebola: How can we help?

Experiences from Sierra Leone

Third Global Symposium on Health Systems Research
Cape Town, 1st October 2014

Ebola Updates – 29th September 2014

- Cumulative confirmed cases – 2095

- Cumulative confirmed deaths – 544

- Survivors - 434

Health system in Sierra Leone

- In Sierra Leone the health system is divided into six pillars
    - Governance including decentralisation
    - Human resource for health – including training and development
    - Service delivery – including health education and promotion
    - Infrastructure
    - Drugs and technology
    - Research, monitoring and evaluation
- The current Ebola outbreak has further highlighted the challenges in all the six pillars mentioned above.

Situation on the ground

Health Workers

- Demotivated
  - Financial and non financial incentives
- Ill equipped and not fully trained in effective infection control measures
- Victims
  - Stigmatised in society

Health services

- Decreased assess to health services and negatively impacted other health programmes
- History of under-performing, health service delivery, coupled with high levels of out of pocket spending
  - shifted health-seeking behaviour towards traditional healers and drug peddlers.

What can be done to help?

- Evidence based research to address
  - the challenges
  - facilitators and
  - enablers of an effective response to the current Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone
- Recommendations for building an effective and efficient response system for future communicable disease outbreaks
  - how aspects of the system can be changed to ensure it is better able to cope and respond to infectious outbreaks in the future.
- Efficient relations with external partners to allow for continuity of research
- More engagement between evidence based researchers and decision makers

The way forward

Overall goal

- An emergency response plan should be put in place for future outbreaks of this nature, as in other countries e.g. Uganda

- Evidence-based health systems research and strengthening should be an utmost priority

Leadership and governance

- Local capacity built to ensure effective leadership and governance systems are in place, addressing the challenges

Health systems

- Health worker motivation package should be developed, including training

- Challenges that impede efforts in achieving UHC should be addressed particularly in the marginalised rural areas

- Health facilities should be fully equipped

Community involvement

- Health education and promotion should be a priority both at central and district levels, with community participation

Thank you

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