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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