



Stanovisko generálního tajemníka Mezinárodní federace ČK&ČP Elhadj As Sy

IFRC | Secretary General reiterates his call for bold, urgent action to halt the Ebola epidemic. Time is of the essence.

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Two weeks after my visit to Guinea and Sierra Leone, the situation continues to get worse, and there is no end in sight. To make an impact on this crisis, we need an urgent, sustained response from all sectors – governments, the international community, aid organizations, media and corporate partners. We need this response now.

Our National Red Cross Societies and volunteers have been on the front line of the response since the epidemic emerged six months ago, and they are witness to the slow, steady deterioration of the situation. More than 1,900 people have died so far; hope and optimism are being eroded.

In recent months, more than 1,700 Red Cross volunteers have been working hard, assisting with body management, tracing those who had been in contact with patients, providing psychological support and conducting preventive education at community level. Their capacity is stretched to the limit, and they are literally exhausted.

Fear, misconceptions and stigmatization fuel a vicious cycle that hampers an effective response at community level. This cycle can only be broken with a sustained mobilization from us all in close collaboration with affected communities.

An effective response requires two elements.

Firstly, this battle is unwinnable if we fail to dispel the myths about Ebola in communities and at national and international levels. We must be more robust in our promotion of precautions and behaviours that will keep people safe and stop the spread of the disease. Ignorance leads to panic or paralysis; we cannot have either.

And secondly we must encourage, inspire and enable the national and international response to the epidemic to ensure it can rise to this unprecedented challenge. No one single actor can make a decisive difference in this operation, but together we can turn the tide.

Red Cross volunteers themselves come from the villages at the heart of the crisis, they are confronting Ebola every day. A solid bond of trust allows them to work within the community. They have the local knowledge to dispel the fears, rumours and myths surrounding this disease. They can go into communities where previously roads were blocked and medical interventions refused; communities are now allowing volunteers to bury their dead safely and with dignity, despite the lack of customary ceremonial rites.

The IFRC fully supports – and echoes – the call from Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders for the international community to urgently deploy bio-disaster facilities to the region to respond effectively to the epidemic.

There is also an urgent need to intensify and sustain our efforts to improve risk communication and mass sensitization at community level.

We – together – must match our response to the gravity of the epidemic in affected countries, and to expand preventive measures and preparedness in neighbouring countries. We need more people, more funds, more resources. And we need them now.

In two weeks, the crisis has only grown more pressing. Time is of the essence if we want to control and contain Ebola.

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