

Joint statement of the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) and the African Federation of Public Health Associations (AFPHA) on the current Ebola situation: Mobilizing public health resources and revitalizing primary health care for a sustainable response to the public health emergencies.

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The Ebola epidemic in several West African countries with nearly one thousand deaths was declared on 7 August by the Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization (WHO) an international public health emergency requiring an extraordinary global response. This infectious disease outbreak affects not only an immediate geographic region; it has global implications.

The World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) and the African Federation of Public Health Associations (AFPHA) express their solidarity with the people in the countries affected directly by the Ebola outbreak. Our two Federations regret the suffering and pain experienced by the people who have been infected and died, to those infected and recuperating, to their families and to the communities where the outbreak has occurred.

We salute the dedication and efforts of the hundreds of health care workers involved in preventing further infection and who care and treat those already infected. These front line professionals are working under difficult conditions and, despite best efforts, are often at risk of also being infected. The current Ebola outbreak has taken a high toll among health care workers.

The WFPHA and AFPHA welcome the prompt emergency response taken by WHO, by the affected countries, by other African countries and the international community. All African Governments, especially those of West Africa, are to be commended for the measures taken and envisaged to contain the advance of the epidemic.

The WFPHA, the AFPHA, and the global community of national and regional public health associations, stand ready and willing to lend whatever assistance is needed and appropriate to national and global health authorities to help in this global infectious disease prevention and control effort. Our Federations make themselves available to the WHO, governments and other organizations to get involved in the actions of education for health and empowerment of the communities, protection of health care workers, monitoring of preparedness for health emergency situations and quick reaction.

As means towards mobilizing public health resources and revitalizing primary health care for a sustainable response to present and future public health emergencies, the WFPHA and AFPHA:

1. Call upon the African Union to remind Member States with a strong voice about the urgency to operationalize the framework for implementation of the Ouagadougou Declaration on primary health care and the health systems in Africa, developed by WHO AFRO in 2010 to strengthen their institutional capacity to act on the social determinants of health in a concerted manner, to take care effectively the double burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases while preparing for the risk management of the disease outbreaks such as cholera and Ebola which have become recurrent and devastating;
2. Call upon all National Public Health Associations to get involved in national and inter-African efforts to respond and contain the epidemic;
3. Appeal to all African countries, all African organizations and the international community for a greater solidarity with the countries directly affected and at risk;
4. Encourage African countries, friends of African countries and organizations as well as WHO to intensify efforts to contain the advance of the epidemic with full respect of human rights and ethical practice;
5. Call upon National governments to develop and implement strategies and tools including adequate resource allocation which enhance disaster/emergency response risk management so as to improve the capacity of national health care systems to respond to public health emergencies, such as Ebola.
6. Call upon sister health professions' federations worldwide for an active solidarity in terms of their capacity-building and technical support and those of their member associations in the fight against public health emergencies like the Ebola epidemic.

Once the emergency humanitarian response efforts are contained, our two Federations recommend serious reflection on how governments and the international community could strengthen crisis management capacity for such public health emergencies. As a first step, the WHO should, in consultation with national governments and local stakeholders, including health professional organizations, take stock of the implementation of the International Health Regulations and the Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Management in the affected region and beyond.

Emergency/pandemic preparedness is an essential public health function. The WFPHA and the AFPHA also recommend that emergency/pandemic preparedness be integrated into national health plans and become an essential

public health function within all health facilities. Health care workers in all countries should be trained and outfitted with appropriate and adequate competencies resources for emergency/pandemic response. Ministries of Health should ensure that basic public health good practices, such as health facility infection control, are put in place and function as they should. Infection control systems, procedures designed to limit the spread of infection, the protection of health care workers, quality care of infected patients, awareness raising/education of the public about infectious disease prevention and control, and the development and application of infection control guidelines used by health care facilities should become the 'norm' for national health care systems. Developing national emergency/pandemic preparedness and response capability should be an element of international funding and technical assistance.

Public health associations are part of the solution. National public health associations are willing to strengthen their own capacities to assist their Ministries of Health and communities to respond to emergency situations

For its part, the WFPHA will ensure that emergency/pandemic preparedness is a topic to be discussed at the upcoming 14th World Congress on Public Health (11-15 February, 2015: Kolkata, India). We would welcome the collaboration of the WHO and other international organizations and agencies with experience in emergency/pandemic preparedness in the conceptualization of a workshop on this issue.

The AFPHA, for its part, reassures the African populations that the epidemic can be controlled if each individual, each family, each community is aware of and comply strictly to the prevention guidelines issued by health authorities. The upcoming International Conference organized by IGAD in collaboration with AFPHA will take into consideration the current line of the outbreak in its deliberations

The World Federation of Public Health Associations is the unique global body representing the interests of the world's public health community through the work and actions of national and regional public health associations. Founded in 1967, the WFPHA now counts over 100 public health associations, regional associations of schools of public health and other non-governmental organizations involved in public health as members. It is officially recognized by the World Health Organization and participates in the annual World Health Assembly as an accredited NGO. (www.wfpa.org)

The African Federation of Public Health Associations, established in August 2011, is a non-profit federation composed of national associations of public health in Africa whose activities contribute to the strengthening of public health. The AFPHA has a presence in 49 African countries, over 90% coverage of the



continent. AFPHA is Africa's leading advocate for strengthening of Public Health Associations. The AFPHA liaises closely with the WHO AFRO and the African Union. Its secretariat is based in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). (www.afphas.org)

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Dr. Mengistu Asnake

President-WFPHA

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Mathias SOME', written over a horizontal line.

Dr Mathias SOME

President-AFPHA