Ebola Outbreak: WACSOF urges Collective Measures

Given the intensity of Ebola outbreak currently spreading across West African nations leading to the death of over 1000 people, West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) observes that:

1. As confirmed by World Health Organisation (WHO), West African nations have recorded over 1,000 deaths and about 2000 infected people from Ebola virus disease outbreak since February, 2014 across Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria.
2. No fewer than 100 healthcare workers have been exposed to the virus while caring for Ebola patients across Africa as a result of inadequate or wrong safety procedures as well as prevention and control measures.
3. In response to the Ebola outbreak, some West African countries have ban flights and other means of transportation from infected countries within the region into their territories as against African Economic Community Treaty adopted by the African Union (AU) in 1991; and ECOWAS Free Movement Protocols and Local Integration of West Africa’s Refugees adopted in 1975 conferring on Community citizens the right to enter and reside in the territory of another member state provided that they possessed valid travel documents including international health certificate.
4. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) also recently announced the decision to call off all important meetings of the commission slated to hold in Abuja and closure of its Lagos state office, primarily to avoid the spread of Ebola virus.
5. Health workers treating patients, family members or others in close contact with infected people and mourners who have direct contact with the bodies of the deceased as part of burial ceremonies remain the most vulnerable groups to Ebola virus.
6. Common cases of Ebola virus in humans have occurred as a result of human-to-human transmission from direct contact through broken skin or mucous membranes with the blood, or other bodily fluids or secretions (stool, urine, saliva, semen) of infected people; broken skin or mucous membranes of a healthy person having contact with contaminated environments by an Ebola patient’s infectious fluids such as soiled clothing, bed linen, or used needles.
7. Additional transmission has been reported from many communities during funerals and burial rituals where mourners have direct contact with the body of the deceased person.
8. Apart from the ongoing intensifying awareness on Ebola virus by West Africa governments, civil society, media and developmental partners, efforts to obtain ‘technological-know-how’ and medical support from technological advanced nations remain unclear.
WACSOF Recommends as follows:

1. Provision of adequate safety measures and working equipment for health personnel treating Ebola patients across West Africa to avert continuous spread and exposure to the infection; with comprehensive briefs for health-care providers at all levels of the health system – hospitals, clinics, and health posts on the nature of the disease and how it is transmitted, and strictly follow recommended infection control precautions.

2. Massive awareness and sensitization by governments, civil society and the media to create well-informed communities/individuals on the causes of and preventions from contacting Ebola Virus; and persistent demand for medical support from advanced nations with curiosity to advance the regional institutions to achieve technologically-know-how to curtail existing and future outbreaks.

3. Appreciative efforts by West African governments to immediate establish well-equipped and specialized healthcare centres to effectively diagnose, accommodate and treat infected patients.

4. Prompt regional integration efforts to lift existing bans and open closed borders to allow for free movement persons, goods and services across the regions provided such satisfied clean bill of health.

5. Rapid notification of local public health authority about noticed case of Ebola virus to obtain receive appropriate training, equipment (gloves and personal protective equipment) for treatment, instructions on proper removal and disposal of the equipment, and information on how to prevent further infection and transmission of the disease from one person to other family members, or the community.

6. Persons who have confirmed dead of Ebola should be handled using strong protective clothing and gloves and buried immediately by trained case management professionals, who are equipped to properly bury the dead.

7. Immediate isolation of patients with suspected or confirmed Ebola virus disease in single rooms or designated areas, separate from other non-infected patients; restriction of access of unprotected persons to the areas; and strict dedication of needed equipment to the areas.

8. Henceforth, adequate measures should be exercised by the regional governments to carry out exhaustive health screening for travellers moving from within and outside the region to avert continuous human-to-human transmission.

Signed

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