

Civil Society Organizations help with the fight against Ebola

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Working for democracy & making democracy work

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NDI CSO-partners plan to assist fight against Ebola

The rapid spread of the Ebola Virus Disease throughout Liberia since March 2014 continues to overwhelm the country's healthcare system, thus limiting the ability of the nation to respond. In an effort to contain the disease, the President declared a State of Emergency on August 6, instituted a nation-wide curfew and established the National Ebola Task Force. As the outbreak continues to grow, access to information on the risks of Ebola still remains limited. The international community understands that West-African countries, including Liberia, cannot beat Ebola on their own. Since mid-September the UN, USA, European Union, and various Asian and Latin-American countries have pledged their full support and assistance. The challenge now is for all the international, national and local actors to work together in an efficient way to tackle the Ebola outbreak.

Ebola Disease Outbreak (March 22 – September 30, 2014)	
Total (confirmed, probable, suspected) cases	3834
Total cases among Health Care Workers	188
Total number of patients currently in Treatment Units	481
Total deaths in confirmed, probable, suspected cases	2069
Total deaths among Health Care Workers	94

Source: *Liberia Ebola SitRep no. 138, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of Liberia, September 30, 2014*

In September an emergency team of experts of the World Health Organization (WHO), working with the President of Liberia and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, published [a report on the Ebola situation](#). In the report, they

recommended that: *“Far greater community engagement is the cornerstone of a more effective response. Where communities take charge, especially in rural areas, and put in place their own resolutions and protective measures, Ebola transmission has slowed considerably.”*

The experience of Liberian CSOs reveals that local authorities do not yet have a plan in place to help them respond to the rapid transmission of the virus. That is why CSOs established the CSO Ebola Response Task Force, which coordinates the efforts of civil society to enhance prevention measures. The CSO Ebola Response Task Force underlines that community participation and mobilization should form an integral part of the overall response strategy.



Therefore, NDI’s CSO-partners NRM, SEWODA, WASH and LMDI, are planning, with support of NDI and its donor, the Embassy of Sweden, to work together with the CSO Ebola Response Task Force to assist communities in their fight against Ebola. Updates on the activities of this community-based approach are forthcoming.

NRM: CSO Consortium on Natural Resource Management
 WASH: Liberia CSOs Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Network
 SEWODA: Southeastern Women Development Association
 LMDI: Liberia Media for Democratic Initiatives

NDI’s partners will work towards the following objectives:

- To assist efforts of the Government of Liberia and international organizations to contain the spread of the disease by facilitating the development of community-based action plans
- To create opportunities for legislators and community leaders to develop a citizen-centered Ebola response process at the community level by implementing the developed community-based action plans

- To gather information on the performance and resilience of the health sector and government response in the wake of the Ebola outbreak, to conduct a legislative investigative mission on this topic once the situation has stabilized

Civil Society engagement can help with the fight against Ebola

Below are a few excerpts of an article written by Prince Kreplah, chair of Liberia's CSO WASH Network. This Network is a partner of NDI. Kreplah is an expert on water, sanitation and hygiene. He is working on the ground with communities to tackle the ongoing Ebola crisis, advocating for increased collaboration between civil society and governments, adequate provision of WASH and the improvement of public health systems. You can read the full article [here](#) .

“With more than 1,500 civil society organizations and over 900 community-based organizations in the country, the government must tap into this framework to ensure that its messages reach even the most marginalized and isolated communities. Civil society is critical to reaching communities that would otherwise take months to contact.”



“There is a dire need for emergency response funds and intervention plans. Most hospitals lack basic equipment and are chronically understaffed. Health systems strengthening is crucial. We need to decentralize and diversify our

health systems, and increase our human resource capacity.”

“We can’t lose this battle. We need to scale up the response immediately to ensure that people do not continue to die of preventable diseases and neglect. Right now, what we do have is a strong civil society platform with the mechanisms, capacity and strategy to reach out to the most marginalized communities throughout Liberia. If civil society can get the message across that public health workers are working to eradicate the virus, it can mobilize communities to work alongside governments in the fight against Ebola.”

Legislative Spotlight Radio



Every Wednesday and Thursday Legislative Spotlight Radio

The NDI-sponsored Legislative Spotlight radio program is broadcast live on Truth F.M. 96.1 every Wednesday at 11:00 a.m. The show is rebroadcast every Thursday at 11:00 a.m. on Radio Veritas 97.8 F.M. Look out too for the magazine version on community radio stations in all 15 counties.

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