

Commentary

The Significance of Infectious Disease Outbreak Preparedness in Africa

¹Edah Monjeza, ²Dora Kashimbi Miyato, ³Emmanuel Mukambo,

¹Levy Mwanawasa Medical University, School of Medicine and Clinical Science.

²The University of Zambia, School of Medicine.

³University Teaching Hospital.

Dear Editor,

We write with interest to commend the work done in a publication in the Vol. 43 No. 2 (2016) titled '*Preparedness of response to deadly outbreaks: lessons learnt from Zambia's deployment to the 2014 African Ebola outbreak.*'¹ The article highlighted how deployment to an infectious disease outbreak hot spot led to exchange of skills and competence in dealing with infectious disease outbreaks. This professional exchange facilitated knowledge distribution and technical know-how, preparing Zambia to have the expertise in the event that an infectious disease outbreak takes precedence in Zambia.

A study conducted in 2022 showed that Africa is the leading continent affected by infectious disease outbreaks followed by Asia, the Americas, Europe and Oceania. This meant that Africa was the most vulnerable and had an increased likelihood of experiencing infectious disease outbreaks.² These outbreaks negatively impact economic development in the affected countries³ and are a significant cause of high mortality rates.⁴

The prioritization of sourcing out clinical personnel from neighbouring countries of the affected region can firstly contribute to increased workforce at the front, help create a standard disaster response system tailored specifically for African countries and speed up the response as there is a more equipped taskforce spread out on different parts of the continent. Another approach would be to prioritize clinical personnel education by conducting workshops and seminars that ensure many clinicians are adequately prepared for infectious disease outbreaks. This will lead to quicker and more informed responses in the future. Hence, calling to your attention, policy makers and the scientific community at large to consider this topic and to take the necessary steps for enhanced preparedness.

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