End of the Ebola virus outbreak: time to reinforce the African health system and improve preparedness capacity

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The recently released report of the Harvard-LSHTM Independent Panel on the Global Response to Ebola by Suerie Moon et al. illuminates several essential reforms necessary to prevent future epidemics and consequently pandemics. These reforms target the following three areas: 1) Prevention, 2) Response of major disease outbreaks, and 3) Research which encompasses production and sharing of data, knowledge and technology. Ability to optimize response to an incident requires series of coordinated and synchronized responses that intertwines core components of disease response such as tele-communications, Information Technology, road and transportation network, epidemiology and laboratory capacity, crisis communication, Infection control practices and human capital development. To address ongoing infrastructure problems governments should use the EBV after-action Reports to create customized SWOT and GAP analysis; increase per-capital spending and use the results of the aforementioned analysis to bolster financial funding for public health services and health systems development. The low hospital infrastructural density should ignite hospitals development across the region; planning should be supported by con-current analysis of population density data, transportation network analysis, and improved tele-communications infrastructure. African governments should as part of preparedness capacity building invest in equipping hospitals with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and basic health care resources which include protective gloves and gowns, intravenous fluids, adequate sanitation, and clear health protocols and guidelines as noted in a previous study to have been deficient in most areas where the EBV outbreak occurred.

As health care professionals from developing countries, we ask our governments to invest in the core components of disaster preparedness and capacity building so that countries are self-sufficient and prepared to respond promptly in future responses instead of waiting for external help. The return of investment (ROI) in public health infrastructure strengthening include accelerated economic development, prompt response capability, improvement in life expectancy, increase economic activity and growth, saving of lives of millions of Africans and prevention of disabilities. It is documented that healthy individuals are more productive, earn more, save more, invest more, consume more, and work longer, leading to a positive impact on GDP of a nation. These ROI factors should motivate African governments to start planning and re-enforcing health systems now.

**Competing interests**

The authors declare no competing interests.

**Authors’ contributions**

Ivy Mulinge and Kenneth Soyemi, made substantial contributions to conception and design, and/or acquisition of literature, and wrote the manuscript. Ivy Mulinge acted as corresponding author. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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