

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Australian humanitarian agencies issue joint call to action on Ebola

**Date**

22 October  
2014

**Media Contact**

See below

**As the unprecedented Ebola outbreak in West Africa worsens, leaders of Australian humanitarian agencies have issued a joint call to action for the Australian government.**

“The world is fast approaching a point of no return in halting the spread of Ebola. Current estimates indicate that we could see 10,000 deaths per week by mid-December. Should global efforts at this stage fail to increase in both pace and effort, the long-term consequences in West Africa and beyond will be catastrophic,” said Marc Purcell, Executive Director of ACFID.

“The Australian Government can play an essential role in averting a further escalation of this global public health crisis. We welcome the government’s \$18 million contribution, and acknowledge that Australia has been one of the quickest countries to disburse funds. Rapid funding allows UN agencies and NGOs to immediately get on with the work required to halt the spread of this disease.

“We also acknowledge the bilateral negotiations currently underway to secure the appropriate arrangements required to deploy Australian personnel, including formal medical treatment and evacuation arrangements. We strongly urge the government to continue to accelerate bilateral negotiations with key partner countries and when formal arrangements are reached, support the deployment of appropriate personnel.

“Additionally, there are other ways that Australia can scale up its support to assist the global community to contain the crisis,” Mr Purcell continued.

“Australia should immediately increase support for programs aimed at raising awareness in communities about how to prevent and contain the spread of Ebola, as well as seek treatment.

“Additionally, the government should consider supporting Infection Prevention & Control training for health workers. Further to this, the provision of basic equipment including chlorine, gloves and personal protective equipment is desperately needed.

“The government should also consider supporting preparedness and contingency planning in the region to strengthen the capacity of neighbouring countries to respond, should an outbreak occur.

“Australian NGOs are supporting communities to prepare for, respond to and prevent Ebola outbreaks across the Western Africa region. NGOs are tackling the spread of this disease from a range of angles – we are raising awareness in communities, training local health workers, opening health facilities and providing protective equipment and essential services on the ground.

“The collective efforts of Australian NGOs will reach over 8.5 million affected people,” Mr Purcell said. “But we are facing an unprecedented situation that aid agencies alone cannot contain – governments like Australia can make a critical contribution. As we have seen in Nigeria and Senegal, this is a crisis that can be contained. The international community still has the opportunity to turn this crisis around in the next few weeks, but this requires a significant and immediate increase in human, material and financial capacity.”



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Australians interested in donating to ACFID members operating in the crisis, can find more information: <http://www.acfid.asn.au/aid-issues/humanitarian-response/ebola-outbreak-west-africa>

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