

September 2, 2014



HEALTH - By August 28 the media had spread much information about the damage that Ebola is causing in many countries of the African continent. Father Jorge Crisafuli Provincial of West African region has sent a detailed report of the situation in these countries and the involvement of the Salesians with the Ebola affected people.

The statistics show that the situation is deteriorating rapidly in Liberia (1386 cases and 754 deaths) and Sierra Leone (1050 cases and 392 deaths). In Nigeria the outbreak seems to be under control (16 cases, 12 confirmed and 5 deaths). Ghana remains the only country in our province which is “Ebola free”. WHO stated today that up to 20,000 people could be affected by the virus. An issue of concern is that 240 health workers fighting the outbreak have contracted the disease and more than 120 have succumbed to death.

The numbers are underestimated and not realistic: they are definitely greater. Many people do not report and keep the bodies for burial, which is proving extremely dangerous. Death toll continues to mount as many die at home for lack of treatment, frequently due to other sicknesses not related to Ebola.

The Ebola outbreak is not only a sanitary challenge but it has deep and severe economic, political and social consequences. Several shops and markets are closed. Prices of products have increased, especially of the basic food items and disinfectants which are scarce. Borders

are closed and air companies have stopped flying to and from affected countries. Big companies have closed their operations and withdrawn their personnel. Crime and delinquency are on the increase with curfews imposed to maintain order and discipline.

Several hospitals and clinics are closed since doctors and nurses are reluctant to report for work due to fear of contagion. People do not report new cases due to the social stigma attached to the virus. The sense of isolation is growing.

The Salesians remain in both the countries, close to their people. The Provincial and the National Task Force groups have been set up to coordinate the relief efforts. Their interventions are focused on education, prevention and concrete actions as follows:

- Ghana: the main focus is on prevention. In dialogue with the Ministry of Health, Don Bosco Youth Networks (DBYN) - our local NGO - is organizing a nationwide prevention campaign to educate the people by video, audio, stickers, bill boards, text messages, etc.
- Nigeria: The Salesians are focusing on promoting awareness and educational programmes in Lagos to prevent the spread of the disease.
- Liberia: the situation is becoming very serious. Restrictions on gatherings and the movement of people are hindering relief efforts. The people are in need of food and sanitary materials. Salesians are organizing a programme to feed more than 500 families, providing sanitary materials (chlorine, disinfectants, protective gear, etc).
- Sierra Leone: the situation is worsening. The government has asked the Salesians to take care of an increasing number of orphans. Advanced preparations are made for an Interim Children Care Centre to receive 120 children who have been affected by the Ebola epidemic. The Salesians of Don Bosco will carry out the registration, in consultation with UNICEF and the Ministry of Health. *Doctors Without Borders* will collaborate with screening of the children. The activities in the centre will include non-formal education, counselling, rehabilitation therapy through music, sports, games, etc. The main aim of the programme is to offer immediate support and to reunite the children with their extended families. Members of the Salesian Family will be involved in the day-to-day management of the Centre.

Fr. Jorge concludes saying, “We are very grateful to all who have shown their concern for us and our people during these difficult times, especially our Mission Offices, some Provinces and Salesians, individual friends and benefactors who have offered us support and concrete help.”

Source: Agenzia Info Salesiana, August 29, 2014