



## PSI Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Intervention Strategy

### **Purpose of brief:**

- Inform EB-148 of related work and activities.

### **Relates to:**

- ✓ PSI Ebola Virus Disease Intervention Strategy 2014.

**Background:** Following the worst outbreak of EVD in West Africa in 2014, PSI launched an intervention strategy aimed at strengthening trade unions to lobby around better working conditions and to promote the renewal of public healthcare systems. The intervention strategy is supported by the PSI Aid Fund which in 2014 was augmented by a round of fund-raising.

**Discussion:** The situation of EVD stabilised in 2015 and reduced significantly due to massive interventions in the outbreak countries and to external support. Through to the end of March 2016, more than 11,000 deaths from EVD have been recorded, of which more than 500 were health and allied workers. Many more unrecorded cases are suspected.

It is estimated that during 2014-15 more than 100,000 health and social services workers were hired to deal with the crisis in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia – this just highlights the extent to which the outbreak countries were vastly under-resourced. Much of this employment was of a precarious nature and often through NGOs or private providers, rather than through employment by the state.

In 2015, PSI appointed an Ebola Response Coordinator working in Accra, Ghana, from the beginning of June. Together with the PSI Africa/Arab regional office, an action plan was elaborated and contacts were developed in the different countries. Representatives of the three most affected countries gathered for a first consultation meeting in Accra (prior to this, travel from the affected countries was not possible).

After this extensive input on the regional strategy and the possibilities for the national action plans, the unions present in the consultation meeting were asked to elaborate a national action plan for their countries, together with a budget proposal.

While this process was going on in the three countries most affected by Ebola, health sector unions in the two other participating countries, Ghana and Nigeria, were active in supporting the strategy as within WAHSUN, the West-African Health Sector Unions' Network.

During 2015, international lobbying work played an important role in PSI's work around EVD.

PSI was able to participate in the UN High-Level Conference on Ebola in July, in New York. A delegation of four persons participated. PSI secured a speaking seat during the technical conference event and was able to incorporate a statement on health workers' protection and rights into the conference dialogue. PSI also worked with the ILO on social protection issues and was able to lobby government representatives of the outbreak countries, along with representatives of the Dutch and Swedish governments.

In October, PSI, with the support of its affiliate SEIU, organised a delegation of health workers from Liberia, Ghana and Sierra Leone to the USA to lobby in Washington DC around aid issues – this

included meetings with the World Bank, USAID, US Surgeon-General and representatives of the US Congress. The delegation also met with health workers' trade unions in New York and Los Angeles who are part of teams covering pandemic outbreaks and Ebola treatment.

PSI was also able in November to meet with the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Ebola, to lobby on securing trade union rights for health workers.

In part as a result of PSI's work on EVD in 2015, PSI General Secretary Rosa Pavanelli was appointed to the World Health Organization's High-Level Commission on Future Health Employment and Economic Growth.

Throughout 2015, there has also been an increased distribution of information through the internet to the health unions in West Africa. The second subregional Ebola Conference in November 2015 was a major event for health unions, supported by WAHSUN, to exchange information and experiences on the fight against Ebola, the elaboration of qualitative health systems, decent working conditions and social security.

Finally, in Liberia, workers still do not have the right to form trade unions in the public sector – PSI is supporting a freedom of association complaint through the ILO and assisting its affiliates in campaigning on the issue.

PSI's work on EVD is supported through the PSI Aid Fund through generous contributions from many affiliates, including UNISON (UK), Kommunal (Sweden), SEIU (USA), Jichiro (Japan) and FNV Public Sector (Netherlands).

**Budget implications:** as per proposed 2015/16 budget; PSI EVD work is supported through projects and the PSI Aid Fund.

**Next steps:**

- Continued implementation of the PSI EVD Trade Union Intervention Strategy;
- Evaluation and review of strategy in November in collaboration with WAHSUN;
- Continued collaboration with North American and European affiliates for lobbying influential donor organisations.

**It is recommended that EB-148:**

1. **NOTE this report.**

**YES / NO**

**Related document:**

- <http://www.world-psi.org/en/psi-ebola-virus-disease-evd-intervention-strategy-2014-16>