



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

All Hands on Deck: The US Response to West Africa's Ebola Crisis

In 2014, an unprecedented outbreak of Ebola virus disease in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea shined a harsh spotlight on global capacity to deal effectively with a fast-moving epidemic that crossed international borders. Within months, the outbreak had started to overwhelm health care systems in the affected countries. In Liberia, health centers began to close, and President Ellen Sirleaf appealed for help from the United States. President Barack Obama tasked USAID's Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance to lead an interagency response. From August 2014 to January 2016, an OFDA Disaster Assistance Response Team, or DART, deployed to the region to help coordinate efforts to stop the spread of infection. The DART was the first to involve a large-scale partnership with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to combat an infectious disease outbreak. It required extensive adaptation of standard practices, but it succeeded in helping bring the epidemic under control. The total number of people infected--28,616--was well below the potential levels predicted by the CDC's models. This case study highlights the challenges of making an interagency process work in the context of an infectious disease outbreak where health systems are weak.

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Liberian President Ellen Sirleaf, Madame Deborah Malac, U.S. Ambassador to Liberia, and Bill Berger, USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team leader, exit an Mv-22 Osprey in Liberia. Photo By center with striped coat (<https://www.dvidshub.net/image/1636354>) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.

Featured ISS Interview

In this interview with ISS, **Nicolas Dupont** describes his role in overseeing Médecins Sans Frontières's (MSF) procurement of medical and logistical supplies during its emergency response to the 2014 Ebola Outbreak in West Africa. He discusses the most difficult logistical issues he encountered and the need to avoid market bottlenecks in future emergency responses.

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