

Minutes from Meeting on 27th May

Ebola and Development: The reality of causes and consequences of Ebola in West Africa.

Around 30 people came to discuss causes and consequences of Ebola in West Africa.

First Presentations was held by different organisations working in West Africa.

- *Stine Skøtt Thomsen, IBIS made a presentation on “How Ebola affects education” the presentation was on the effects of Ebola on school attendance in Liberia with a point of departure in IBIS’ educational programs. (See presentation)*
- *Bauke van Weringh, Engineers Without Borders made a presentation on “How Ebola affects EWB projects” the presentation focused on how Ebola has shaped development efforts in Sierra Leone. (See Presentation)*
- *Patrick Kogler, Architects Without Borders made a presentation on “The Environmental Learning Centre” – the presentation was on how the center is designed and built to raise awareness about sustainable building and landscaping, problems with deforestation, sand mining, gold mining, and clean water, became non-functional due to the Ebola crisis.*

Discussions were held around the cultural acceptability of the compost toilet, the response from donors on this disaster, and how to overcome the situation. It was emphasized that Ebola further exacerbated the mistrust between the community and the government institutions.

Then Prof. Morten Sodemann, Odense University Hospital made a presentation on “Epidemiology and social determinants of Ebola”. Prof. Sodemann contextualized the recent Ebola outbreak within the overall public health picture in Africa, the international health regulations, and the social determinants of the disease. (See presentation)

The presentation was highly critical towards the role of national authorities and the international organizations, including WHO Africa in relation to the management of the Ebola Outbreak. This was discussed lively by the participants. Key conclusions from the discussion were that there will be other outbreaks like Ebola. Epidemics thrive on inequality, globalisation and changes in environment and social patterns. Future outbreaks should be mitigated through not only focusing on the visible manifestations of ill-being but changing the (social and health) structures that underpin them. There has been a trend where many donors support specific communicable diseases rather than strengthening the health care system at large, and now there is a shift of interest from communicable diseases to non-communicable diseases.

Then Tommy Garnett, The Environmental Foundation for Africa and Shona King made a presentation on *“Why does the Ebola crisis in West Africa present a need for improved natural resource protection across Africa”*? They present the emerging evidence that one of the underlying causes of the current Ebola outbreak in West Africa is altered land use and that as many as 22 million people in West and Central Africa could be at risk from future outbreaks of zoonotic diseases. This research is expected to be finalized in June. (Please see presentation)

It was recommended that all organisation should take social and environmental issues into account in order to reduce environmental causes of an epidemic like Ebola. This should be done in order to reduce the impact of stop and go of donor funding.

Buzz-groups were held on to discuss the spread of Ebola. Discussions were held around Environmental factors, Social behavior and Health system. The buzz- groups suggestions included the following:

- Understanding of how people understand transmission of the diseases
- Add a new chapter to the SPHERE manual – act in sustainable way

Promote eco centric ways of thinking.