The initiative against diarrheal and enteric diseases in Africa and Asia: The role of field actors to successfully address the the fight against cholera

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Background: The World Health Organization estimates that 3-5 million cases of cholera and 100,000 to 200,000 deaths occur yearly. Despite national and international efforts, cholera continues to represent a significant public health burden in Africa and Asia, now back to the Americas.

Methods & Materials: The Initiative against Diarrheal and Enteric diseases in Africa and Asia (IDEA, www.idea-initiative.info) is a network of independent, multidisciplinary and multinational health professionals involved in enteric diseases and cholera control and prevention from 20 cholera-prone countries in both continents. Considering that joint efforts will be more effective than individual ones, IDEA members are sharing information and analyzing experiences and practices in order to raise disease awareness and recommend appropriate policies and measures to improve control and prevention of cholera and other enteric diseases. Expressing a “bottom-up” view from “the field” through active advocacy towards local decision and policy-makers is the way to contribute to national and regional actions aimed at improving the control, prevention and ultimately the elimination of this scourge. Interdisciplinary, intersectorial and cross-border approaches allow cross-fertilization of knowledge and practices. It is the best way to design, initiate and/or support relevant and appropriate measures and their effective and sustained implementation.

Results: During its third annual meeting (13-17 January 2014), IDEAasia will prepares and issue a documented plea to national and local policy-makers to increase awareness about the health, social and economic burden of cholera to support ongoing international efforts towards the improvement of disease surveillance, case management and the introduction of oral cholera vaccine. It will advocate for the need for sustained resource allocation to improve water and sanitation systems as the ultimate goal to eliminate cholera.

Conclusion: On April 8-12, 2014, the fourth meeting of IDEAfrica will reinforce these messages to African countries, and then focus its activities on the analysis of - possibly erroneous - paradigms that drive cholera prevention and control and on the best approaches for cholera-prone countries to develop and implement integrated and operational plans for the management, control, prevention and elimination of cholera.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijid.2014.03.659