

Case Study Two: Alcoa Partners to Fight Ebola in West Africa

How Alcoa set out to protect its employees, its business, the local community and beyond

Alcoa, winner of International SOS Foundation's 2016 Duty of Care Award in the category Partnership, worked with many others to safeguard its employees and their families, as well as the wider community, in the face of the Ebola outbreak.

The largest Ebola epidemic in history began in West Africa in December 2013. As the cases and deaths mounted, the gravity of the outbreak became vividly clear to Alcoa, a company with operations in West Africa. At risk from the disease were Alcoa's 13 Guinea-based employees, their families and communities in Conakry and Boké and 2,500 employees at Alcoa's partner Compagnie des Bauxites de Guinée (CBG). The supply of bauxite to the company's alumina refineries in San Ciprian, Spain and Point Comfort, Texas was also at risk. Plus, there was significant potential for further downstream business disruption.

Quick action was needed. Not only to protect employees and their communities from contracting Ebola but to bolster the local and country-level response. Making the most of existing partnerships was at the heart of these activities.

A cross-functional team

To meet the extreme challenge posed by the Ebola outbreak, Alcoa established a cross-functional, global Ebola Monitoring Team. These experts represented core disciplines including Security, Government Affairs, Communications, Business Operations, Medical and Health, and

the Alcoa Foundation, Alcoa's charitable arm.

The team's charge was to monitor the epidemic, advise on local health protection measures, address communications needs, engage with public health authorities and NGOs and assure business continuity as far as possible. This all had to be achieved in a culturally-sensitive manner.

The team took quick action to train all Alcoa Guinea employees and their families on Ebola prevention practices. The training materials and best practices were then shared with CBG.



Left Alcoa "Stop Ebola" Meeting. Right Public health workers, Boké prefecture.

Identify key partners

The Stop Ebola Campaign went well beyond the immediate Alcoa and CBG businesses. This showed both Alcoa's ongoing commitment to the local communities in which it operates and the realities of the Ebola outbreak.

Dr James Wesdock, Alcoa Health Director, was the team leader. He says: "Given the nature of the disease and its methods of transmission, enhanced and sustained community engagement was essential. We worked through existing community development programmes to deliver vital training on sanitation and Ebola prevention."

The team forged relationships with a range of reputable and experienced NGOs, academic institutions and key public health agencies. Another ongoing partnership was with International SOS, who provided further access to pandemic preparedness, specific resource materials and expert guidance.

The team worked with other multinational corporations in the region via the Ebola Private Sector Mobilization Group (EPSMG). This created

a focal point for private sector coordination, advocacy, and information sharing, thus promoting best practice.

Develop materials from reliable sources.

An early challenge was obtaining credible information about the disease. In first months of the outbreak, there was much disarray and misinformation. Against this background, the team pulled together accurate and up to date information to assist in the identification, tracking, and prevention of Ebola. It used both its internal resources and a wide range of external materials from leading experts and organisations.

Deliver extensive training

The Alcoa Foundation partnered with international health NGO, Jhpiego, to provide infectious disease preparedness training for health care workers in the Boké Region. A series of five-day training sessions were conducted in several local languages. These took place at three local health facilities, serving more than 200,000 Guineans. Follow-up training provided coaching to improve hand washing practices, waste management and remove of protective masks and clothing.

Other initiatives delivered training in 13 literacy centres in the Boké region of north-west Guinea, train-the-trainer sessions for representatives of 9 villages and a Fishing Port Sanitation Programme held at 18 fishing ports near Kamsar. These reached thousands of people, both directly and indirectly.

All objectives were achieved. There were no Ebola cases among Alcoa employees or family members. The bauxite supply to Alcoa's refineries remained uninterrupted. Long-term healthcare capacity was bolstered. More broadly, the Stop Ebola Campaign helped ensure economic continuity for Guinea at a time of severe crisis. The President of Guinea publicly acknowledged the contribution made by Alcoa and the Alcoa Foundation.

Dr Wesdock summarises: "Alcoa is well-connected, keen to collaborate and openly share solutions to improve public health. In response to the Ebola outbreak, we used our existing partnerships for the betterment of both our employees and the wider community."

STEPS	BEST PRACTICES IN PARTNERSHIP
Step 1.	Take a multidisciplinary approach.
Step 2.	Cooperate with key partners.
Step 3.	Obtain information from all reliable sources.
Step 4.	Deliver training using existing community partners and resources.
Step 5.	Share information and best practices.



Top Arnaud Vaissié, Dr James Wesdock and Andrew Sharman. **Left** Training public health workers. **Right** Engaging local communities in Ebola prevention.