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A SHORTAGE of trained health workers in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea who can treat Ebola victims and prevent further spread of the deadly disease is hampering response efforts, say Health Ministry and NGO staff, who say their efforts are at "breaking point".

Stéphane Doyone, West Africa coordinator of NGO Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), which is shouldering a bulk of the case management burden in the three countries, told IRIN: "We are reaching the breaking point of our capacity where today we can't guarantee to do more of what we're doing - particularly when it comes to human resources. We need more actors to get involved on the ground."

MSF has deployed 300 health workers, 80 of them expatriate staff, to work on the Ebola response. "It's a huge programme but human resources are very challenging: staff must be highly trained and they have to be turned over every 4-6 weeks due to stress and fatigue," said Doyone. Thus far, MSF has spent US\$9.3 million on its Ebola response and does not know how much more it will take, "but rather than focusing on more money, what is needed are more actors on the ground and implementation... Ministries, humanitarian organizations could all be doing more."

Ministry of Health staff in Liberia and Sierra Leone also called on donor governments and international agencies to urgently step up their response. Tolbert Nyensuah, assistant health minister for preventive services in Liberia, told IRIN both the Liberian Health Ministry and the government as a whole, lacked the capacity to contain the Ebola virus. "We need trained nurses, trained doctors

