

Sierra Leone Association of Journalists

56 Campbell St.

Freetown, Sierra Leone

Press Release (for publication)

Included:

1) Photograph of SLAJ President Kelvin Lewis pinning a yellow ribbon on Spray Hygienist, Maseray Conteh, 28, at the MSF Treatment Centre in KingTom.

2) SLAJ Yellow Ribbon to End Ebola logo.

SLAJ launches national Yellow Ribbon campaign to End Ebola

On Saturday, 14th February, the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) launched the national Yellow Ribbon Campaign to End Ebola at the central cotton tree in downtown Freetown. A gigantic yellow ribbon adorned the cotton tree to remind every passer-by that Ebola is still with us and we can end Ebola in Sierra Leone.

“The Sierra Leone Association of Journalists is stepping up its intervention in the fight to rid the country of Ebola,” says SLAJ President, Kelvin Lewis. “We are acting together, as a media industry, as families, community members, concerned citizens and as patriots. We, the media, are taking action against Ebola.”

Ending Ebola is everyone’s concern

- The Yellow Ribbon symbolizes the commitment of individuals, groups and institutions taking action to end Ebola in Sierra Leone – and hopefully across the region.
- The Yellow Ribbon represents a commitment to protect yourself, your family, your community and your country - from Ebola.
- The Yellow Ribbon recognizes those Sierra Leoneans who have committed to fight Ebola including healthcare workers, security forces, journalists, bike riders, GoSL stakeholders, NERC and many others.
- The Yellow Ribbon symbolizes a personal commitment to working towards getting rid of Ebola by changing dangerous behaviours and adopting all the key activities.

“This campaign will be a massive crusade initiated through the print, electronic and social media and will draw on the unique strength of SLAJ whose membership is spread across the country,” says Julius Spencer, Chair of the SLAJ Ebola Response Committee. “The media will be used to drive the campaign but it’s anticipated that many, many organizations and institutions will jump on board.”

The Yellow Ribbon Campaign to End Ebola ties together the Four Key Messages that we must all do to rid Sierra Leone (and West Africa) of Ebola.

Bury all dead bodies safely

- Call 117 and tell your community leader if you know someone has died
- Do not touch, bathe or bury a dead person. Do not hide dead people
- Allow only trained people to handle a dead body

Keep sick people away from others

- Do not touch sick people or things they have used
- Keep them in their own area and stay 4 steps away
- Get the person treatment quickly by calling 117 and telling your community leader

Speak out if you know of a sick person

- Help find everyone who touched or interacted with a person who has Ebola. If you did, stay home - Call 117 and tell your community leader
- Do not hide sick people - Do not let others hide sick people
- Anyone who touched or interacted closely with a person with Ebola is a “Contact” who could have Ebola

“Contacts” must stay in one area with food and water

- Anyone who touches or interacts with a person who has Ebola must stay in their area for 21 days - Make sure “Contacts” do not run away
- Help health workers find these “Contacts”
- Give them food and water and encourage them – talk to your community leader

Show your commitment

The yellow ribbon can be worn by everyone and anyone – on any part of the body – pinned to a lapel, tied on wrists, as headbands or armbands, as neckties and even used to tie one’s shoes. Yellow ribbons can be tied around streetlights, flagpoles, fences, gates, trees, window bars, doorknobs, stair-railings or on any public fixture. Yellow ribbons can be used to adorn motorbikes, cars, taxis, poda-podas, busses and even helicopters.

Yellow ribbons will soon take over the city and the nation symbolizing Sierra Leone’s commitment to ending Ebola. The yellow ribbon brand will be associated with the fight – and victory – over Ebola using the four basic activities and key messages.

Individuals and organizations are encouraged to join the campaign and display the yellow ribbon as a demonstration of their commitment to end Ebola.

What can your organization do to support the Yellow Ribbon campaign to End Ebola?

- Wear and encourage your staff, congregation, group or followers to wear a yellow ribbon on their lapel, skirt, shirt or trousers.
- Print t-shirts with the yellow ribbon and “End Ebola” emblazoned on the front and your logo on the back.
- Print a banner or bumper stickers with the yellow ribbon and slogan.
- Print flyers branded with the yellow ribbon and the four key messages to end Ebola.
- Hang a yellow ribbon from your building for all to see.
- Tie a yellow ribbon on vehicles in your fleet.

- Use yellow ribbons to tie groundnuts, bread or cassava leaves in the markets.

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For more information contact Julius Spencer, Chair of the SLAJ Ebola Response Committee and/or Kelvin Lewis, President of SLAJ. (phone numbers)

Background

The first confirmed case of Ebola was diagnosed in Sierra Leone in May 2014 and by January 18, 2015, the country has recorded 7,897 confirmed cases with 2,767 confirmed Ebola deaths. In November 2014, the infection rate of the virus was so high that the country recorded over 100 new infections in one day. Thankfully, there has been a reduction in the infection rate in the past two months and it is generally believed that the EVD infection rate is on the decline.

Even though this is welcome news, it is also generally agreed that there is still a long way to go to rid the country of Ebola. We need to sustain a zero infection rate for 42 days for the country to be declared Ebola free by the World Health Organization (WHO). The National Ebola Response Centre (NERC) has now embarked on Phase 2 of its Ebola response, which is geared towards achieving a zero infection rate.

SLAJ Activities

In August 2014, SLAJ established an Ebola Response Committee and charged it with developing and leading the association's response to the EVD in order to complement government's efforts. SLAJ has embarked on a series of interventions, starting with all newspapers donating a daily, quarter page advertising space for Ebola messages and radio stations donating 30 minutes of airtime. This print space was increased to a half page with the support of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Radio is a primary form of mass media and is crucial to the SLAJ Ebola response. The Association has been producing a radio programme that is simulcast on 48 radio stations across the country. The programme, "Dreb Ebola", started as a 30 minute, daily programme and was increased to 1 hour after about a month.

SLAJ has also trained journalists across the country on Ebola issues as a means of empowering them to engage members of the public on the issues. In addition, SLAJ and Premier Media have been producing a daily 5-minute radio drama broadcast as part of its daily radio programme.

The SLAJ Yellow Ribbon campaign to End Ebola

To support the SLAJ Yellow Ribbon campaign to End Ebola, SLAJ members and affiliates will undertake a large variety of activities including (but not limited to)...

Newspapers

- A yellow ribbon will be printed on top right corner (front page). For those who print in B&W the ribbon will be reproduced in B&W with the slogan or “Yellow Ribbon campaign” text.
- Yellow strip with slogan or one of the key messages printed to put on dashboards or windows
- Yellow ribbon photo ops including “pinning” healthcare workers, security forces, journalists, frontline staff at ETCs, etc.
- Supporting editorial on key messages with yellow ribbon branding and “SLAJ supported” info.
- Syndicated stories through a revolving pool of trained reporters (media development initiative)
- Fieldtrips for journalists (as part of media development)
- Cartoons on the key messages

Radio

- Jingles and Public Service Announcement (PSA) slots
- Campaign key messages will be posted over microphones in all IRN studios for continuity announcers to read at the top of every hour or during breaks. (could be pre-recorded and shared)
- Syndicated stories/radio packages through the SLAJ media development initiative
- Contact / interview contact list to support key messages
- Signature tune to represent the yellow ribbon campaign
- Quizzes on key messages to be played on Dreb Ebola program via IRN

Television

- SLBC to buy into campaign via DG
- All on-air hosts to wear yellow ribbon
- Change green screen background to have a yellow ribbon
- Encase yellow ribbon on SLBC screen where the SLBC logo is
- Scroll bar to mention the four key messages on alternating basis
- 2-3 minute videos on key messages to be played (free) as filler on SLBC. These would probably have to be produced with “other” equipment and crews. Could be part of the media development idea.

Social Media

- Develop logo to be shared and encourage people to change their profile pictures on FB
- Newspaper and radio announcements to drive readers/listeners to the SLAJ FB page and website.
- WhatsApp group and Twitter #
- SMS messages
- Cartoons to be delivered by text or on mobile phones