

LIFE AFTER EBOLA:
MOTHERS RETURN TO HEALTH FACILITIES IN SIERRA LEONE

ADVANCING PARTNERS & COMMUNITIES, SIERRA LEONE
PHOTO JOURNAL

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Advancing Partners & Communities is implemented by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc., in collaboration with FHI 360. The project focuses on advancing and supporting community programs that seek to improve the overall health of communities and achieve other health-related impacts, especially in relationship to family planning. Advancing Partners & Communities provides global leadership for community-based programming, executes and manages small- and medium-sized sub-awards, supports procurement reform by preparing awards for execution by USAID, and builds technical capacity of organizations to implement effective programs. Learn more about Advancing Partners & Communities at advancingpartners.org.

In Sierra Leone, the project is implemented by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. in collaboration with FHI 360 and in partnership with Action Contre la Faim, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, GOAL, International Medical Corps, and Save the Children. The project supports the Ministry of Health and Sanitation's post-Ebola recovery efforts, with a focus on reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health.

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JSI RESEARCH & TRAINING INSTITUTE, INC.

JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc., is a public health management consulting and research organization dedicated to improving the health of individuals and communities. JSI collaborates with government agencies, the private sector, and local nonprofit and civil society organizations to improve quality, access and equity of health systems worldwide.

FHI 360

FHI 360 is a nonprofit human development organization dedicated to improving lives in lasting ways by advancing integrated, locally driven solutions. FHI 360 serves more than 70 countries and all U.S. states and territories. FHI 360's work is grounded in research and science, strengthened by partnerships and focused on building the capacity of individuals, communities and countries to succeed.



A new mother makes her way to the George Brook CHC.

Photo: Pia Kochhar

The rain pours down in Freetown, Sierra Leone as new and expectant mothers trek to the George Brook Community Health Center (CHC), exactly two years after the community of Dwarzark was first stricken with the deadly Ebola virus.

Of the 58 people who contracted the Ebola virus in Dwarzark and its neighboring community, only 14 survived.



A baby's temperature is checked.



New and expectant mothers wait to see nurses.

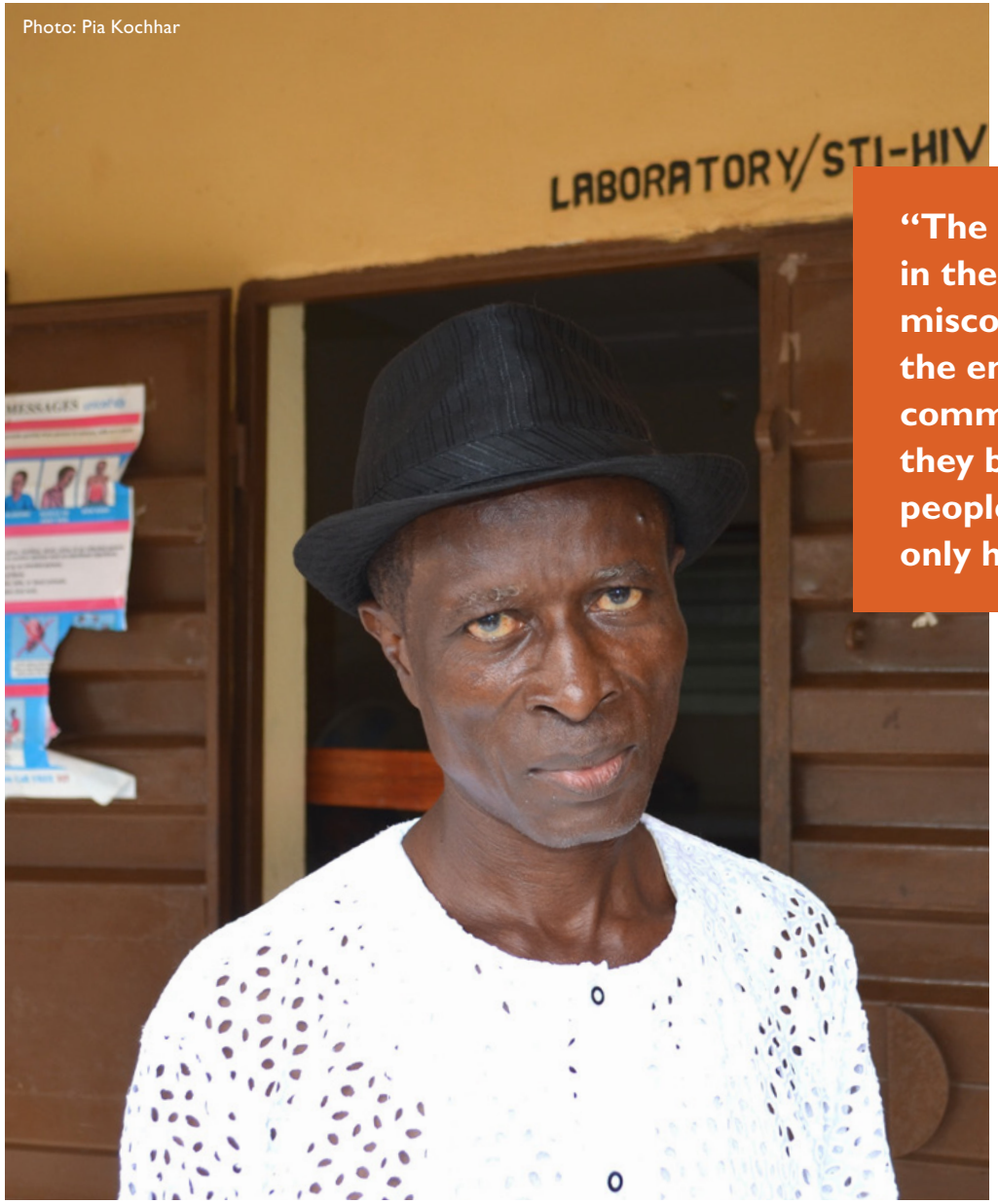


Photo: Pia Kochhar

Abu Turay

Abu Turay, a health coordinator at George Brook, recalls some of the horror.

"The message about Ebola wasn't initially clear in the communities and this led to so many misconceptions. Since I was at the center of the entire Ebola crisis, when I would visit the communities, they would nearly beat me because they believed I was sent by the government to kill people. It took time for them to believe that I was only helping to save lives," says Abu.

Two nurses-in-training who worked night shifts at the health center contracted the virus and died. Over the course of the epidemic, the health facility was quarantined three times.

"During this time people were not using the center for fear of contracting the disease," explains Abu. "We worked with community leaders, who notified people about the dangers of avoiding the health center during pregnancy and of giving birth at home."

Two years after the first case of Ebola was detected, women and children are returning to the George Brook CHC for health services.



A nurse attends to a baby.

Photo: Pia Kochhar

The USAID-funded Advancing Partners & Communities project, implemented by JSI Research & Training Institute with partner *Action Contre La Faim*, supports the Ministry of Health and Sanitation's Post-Ebola Recovery Plan through capacity building for health care workers and renovation of water sanitation and hygiene and infection prevention and control structures.

Renovations at the George Brook CHC, supported by Advancing Partners & Communities, included repairing a leaking roof; constructing hand washing stations, incinerators, and placenta and sharp pits; improving plumbing and light in the delivery rooms; and providing delivery kits and other medical equipment.

The project trained health care workers on infection prevention and control; labor, antenatal, and surveillance services; care for Ebola survivors; and maternal, newborn, and child health.



Photo: Pia Kochhar

A mother and her baby wait to be attended to.

Josephine Pewu, a midwife and the in-charge of the George Brook CHC participated in the trainings.



Photo: Pia Kochhar


Photo: Pascal Masuba

Josephine Pewu holds a baby as the mother looks on.

"At the workshop, we were taught to use personal protective equipment, and we haven't taken any chances since," says Josephine. "People began coming back when they heard that their safety was assured."

Josephine Pewu



Nurses and expectant mothers singing, praying, and dancing.





Photos: Pia Kochhar

Before receiving health services, expectant mothers sing welcome songs and pray with the nurses as a way to establish trust.



Photo: Pia Kochhar



Photo: Pia Kochhar

Josephine gives a health talk.

Then they get a health talk, which, explains Josephine, "is the best way to convey information about safe pregnancies and family planning. We talk about prenatal care, the various form of contraceptives, and help them choose a method."

"Sometimes we invite the husbands to come into the delivery room to provide support," says Josephine. "When they see how difficult childbirth is, most declare that they will always call their wives "mum" to acknowledge the pain that women undergo."



Photo: Pia Kochhar

Josephine attends to a pregnant patient.

Jenneh Sesay, a 27-year-old student and mother of two, brings her infant daughter to the facility for regular checkups.

"I tell pregnant women to visit health facilities to get complete check-ups and diagnosis and treatment for any ailment," says Jenneh.



Photo: Pia Kochhar


Photo: Pia Kochhar

Jospehine Ashley and her baby.

The nurses at the health center taught teenage mother Josephine Ashley about family planning.

"I chose the birth control implant because it can be easily removed when I get married and am ready to have more children."

More importantly, the nurses provide Josephine and all the women who come to George Brook CHC with encouragement and support.

"When I became pregnant, it was like my world had crashed and could never be repaired. But when I met the nurses at the George Brook facility, their kind words gave me hope," Josephine says with a smile.

Due to USAID's intervention, the George Brook CHC, located in the heart of Freetown, is now providing improved quality services for women and children. Nearly 40 staff are serving more than 24,500 people. Outpatient visits at the George Brook CHC increased from about 1,100 visits in 2015 to more than 3,200 in 2016. Deliveries at the facility also increased from 680 in 2015 to more than 800 in 2016.



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