

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW: SIERRA LEONE, LIBERIA, & GUINEA

SEPTEMBER 2016



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**A**dvancing Partners & Communities is a United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded project implemented by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. and partner FHI 360. The project supports community programs to improve the overall health of individuals and communities and strengthen health-related indicators. Advancing Partners & Communities provides global leadership for community health systems and community-based programming; manages small and medium grants; and builds the capacity of organizations to manage and implement effective programs through direct technical assistance.

Advancing Partners & Communities has received funding from USAID's Ebola Response and Preparedness funds, which were authorized by Congress in December 2014 to mitigate the Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak in West Africa. The Ebola Transmission Prevention and Survivor Services Program (ETP & SS) launched in July 2016 and is operating under the umbrella of priorities set by USAID's Global Health Ebola Team. The program works with ministries of health and nongovernmental organizations in regions of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea that are most affected by the Ebola outbreak.

In recent months, the viral persistence of Ebola in survivors has become a new concern. The virus has been found in the eyes, breast milk, spinal column, semen, and other bodily fluids of survivors. More research is needed to determine how long Ebola will be present in a survivor, how large a health risk survivors are to their families and/or communities, potential triggers for Ebola to resurface in a survivor, and steps to mitigate further transmission.

In addition to the physical remnants of the Ebola virus, survivors experience psychological consequences, such as depression and suicidality, which require specialized medical attention. They also have difficulty accessing routine and specialized medical services, because health care providers lack experience treating sequelae and complications of Ebola, and are often reluctant to provide services because of the risk of transmission. Furthermore, much

of the specialty health care required by survivors—such as neurology, psychiatry, and ophthalmology—is not available in West Africa.

In response, the ETP & SS program will work with the Governments of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea and other stakeholders to prevent further EVD transmission and to reduce the risk of resurgence from Ebola viral persistence in survivors; and to reduce stigma and other barriers that keep survivors from accessing health care services. Due to the time-sensitive nature of the work, Advancing Partners & Communities will work with in-country partners to sub-grant as appropriate. The program will also convene stakeholders from each country to discuss research findings and best practices related to EVD transmission and prevention strategies.

In addition, the ETP & SS programs will develop and implement guidelines and tools for Ebola transmission prevention and provision of critical survivor services; train health care providers, traditional and local government leaders, survivor associations and networks, survivor advocates, and survivors themselves; renovate health facilities in high-volume districts, including provision of specialty care equipment; conduct supportive supervision and mentoring for health care workers in high-volume districts; and collect and transport semen samples for testing.



Photos: top left, Dominic Chavez, World Bank; top center, Joshua Yospy; top right and bottom, Advancing Partners & Communities

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