



# MENTORSHIP INCREASES CONFIDENCE IN HEALTH CARE WORKERS IN SIERRA LEONE

## ADVANCING PARTNERS & COMMUNITIES PHOTO JOURNAL





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## **ADVANCING PARTNERS & COMMUNITIES**

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](http://advancingpartners.org).

In Sierra Leone, the project supports the Government of Sierra Leone Comprehensive Program for Ebola Survivors (CPES), jointly led by the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS) and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA). In partnership with the government, NGOs, and other key stakeholders, the project, helps develop and implement systems and tools that establish evidence-based quality health services, and promote healthy behaviors and resiliency.

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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](http://jsi.com) 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](http://fhi360.org) 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.

**Photos:** Penelope Riseborough and Abdul Samba Brima

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**“Sierra Leone is my country and the health system was devastated by Ebola. I can see that my work is improving the quality of health services for people here, and that is motivating for me—particularly working with groups of Ebola survivors. I am proud to be doing this work.”**

**—Abubakarr Kamokai,  
Clinical Training Officer  
Kambia District, Sierra Leone**



# ON THE PATH TO A STRONGER HEALTH SYSTEM

**D**espite significant efforts by the Sierra Leone government, including the introduction of the Free Health Care Initiative (FHCI), Sierra Leone continues to have one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.

In 2015, the World Health Organization estimated that Sierra Leone had 1,165 maternal deaths per 100,000 births.

The Ebola crisis highlighted many of the inherent weaknesses of the healthcare system, including the lack of basic equipment, poor quality services, weak training programs, poor mentorship and supervision, and weak data collection systems.

Government, donors, and implementing partners have placed enormous emphasis on the need for health system strengthening to improve community health and prevent further outbreaks.





In November 2015, the Government of Sierra Leone established the Ministry of Health and Sanitation's (MOHS) Comprehensive Program for Ebola Survivors (CPES) to strengthen access to health services by Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) survivors; since then the services have become part of the FHCI.

The CPES program introduced Clinical Training Officers (CTOs) in each district to build the capacity of Peripheral Health Unit (PHU) staff for EVD survivor clinical care. Since October 2017, CTOs have been tasked with supporting the broader capacities of PHU staff, which benefit the wider population.

CTOs' capacity-building role has been widely acknowledged as essential to the improvement of quality services at PHUs, where they help staff gain confidence and put theory into practice, improving health services for their communities.

Through the USAID-funded Advancing Partners & Communities project, managed by JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc., 14 CTOs working in 14 districts have received extensive training and on-the-job support to enhance their clinical and mentorship capacities. With these new skills, the 14 CTOs have provided training and mentorship to healthcare workers in 264 PHUs across the country.



# CLINICAL TRAINING OFFICERS AT WORK

**C**TOs work to strengthen health services at the primary care level.

They provide clinical mentorship and coaching to health facility staff on a wide range of clinical areas, particularly focusing on those populations covered under the FHCI: pregnant and lactating women, children under five, and EVD survivors.

CTOs work with the District Health Management Teams (DHMTs) to identify the facilities most in need of support. They help determine the key challenges facing facility staff and design mentorship plans to address them.



**CTO Abubakarr Kamokai displays some of the tools now available to health workers at health facilities.**





Using a human body map developed by the Advancing Partners project, CTO Abubakarr Kamokai trains the officer-in-charge and midwife at the Gbalamuya community health center in Kambia.

At each PHU, the CTO mentors staff on topics relevant to FHCI populations using a range of tools and methods, including performance observation, human body chart, mentorship tool, and case study discussions.

Data management is a key component of the mentorship. The CTOs work with PHU staff to improve the accuracy of data reporting for health service utilization. They provide feedback to the DHMT, so the data can be used effectively for monitoring services and for decision-making.

The CTOs also support the monthly meetings for in-charges, lead discussions on key issues, and highlight new MOHS initiatives. These initiatives all help to strengthen the health system.

## MY ROLE AS A CLINICAL TRAINING OFFICER

“As a CTO in Kambia District, it is my job to help health facility staff to improve the quality of care at their facilities.

“I support 16 different health facilities, visiting each once a month. I help to address an issue or problem and mentor staff at each facility accordingly.”

The CTO is an important role as it provides health care workers with peer clinical support—a staff member who can assist and guide them through discussion of concerns faced at their facility and determine solutions. To these remote community health facilities these visits can make the difference between life and death for patients.

“When I first began to work with health facilities, my ideas were rejected. But then people quickly saw that I could help solve some of the issues they faced. After that I was accepted.

“I work with the DHMT and each month we meet and discuss a different health topic and how I can support the health workers.”

**“The CTOs supported the improvement of the quality of care. The DHMTs are starting to see the CTOs as an integrated part of the health system.”**

**—Dr. Sarian Kamara,  
Former Chief Medical Officer I, MOHS**



**As a mentor, Abubakarr observes health care workers as they provide services, and offers reminders of approaches and tools available.**



## SUCCESS THROUGH MENTORING

“Because I have been trained and know what to look for, I am able to help healthcare workers see when they might be making errors, either in their approach to working with patients or in tracking the data in registers. My approach as a mentor is to provide feedback so people can succeed in their work. They know that now and listen to me.


“Mentoring is different than supportive supervision. We try to really work with people to help them better understand how they can improve their processes.

“To be a mentor, the most important thing is to be patient! You have to be able to work with people to help them learn, and you must be patient with them.”



**As a Clinical Training Officer, Abubakarr Kamokai is helping strengthen health services through mentoring and assisting staff to problem-solve their own issues.**






**“Abubakarr is a good teacher,” says the In-Charge at the Gbalamuya clinic, “he doesn’t leave until he knows we all understand and get things right.”**

## REINFORCING BEST PRACTICES

“I observed that many staff were not making use of the tools available to them in their facilities. For example, when a parent brings a child in with a fever, there are clear steps to assessing the child’s health. But I found that many nurses were not using the simple Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illness (IMNCI) charts. I work to help them understand the value of the charts. I also remind them to be sure they are following the infection prevention protocols—washing their hands between patients and wearing gloves. Since Ebola, this is the most important step that health care workers can take to protect themselves. We all know that now.”

A man with short dark hair and a light beard, wearing a blue and white checkered button-down shirt, is smiling slightly and looking off-camera to the right. He is standing in front of a teal-colored building with a window and a metal frame. The background is slightly blurred, showing some greenery and a corrugated metal roof.

**“I can see that my presence has had an impact at the 16 health facilities I visit. The staff trust me, I can see that Ebola survivors also trust me. I can see the staff putting the knowledge I have shared into action.”**

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The USAID-funded Advancing Partners & Communities project, implemented by JSI Research & Training Institute Inc. (JSI), supports the institutionalization of the CTO role within the MOHS. CTOs build primary health facility staff skills through basic mentoring and are now seen as an integrated part of the health system service delivery.

The project supports the implementation of the Comprehensive Program for Ebola Survivors (CPES) at the national, district, and community levels. The CPES program was established in late 2015 to provide medical and social services to Ebola survivors across the country through health system strengthening and capacity building. Starting October 2017, CPES shifted from an implementing partner-led program to a Government-led one. With support from Advancing Partners & Communities, the MOHS and CPES were able to develop and implement systems and tools that establish evidence-based quality health services, and promote healthy behaviors and resiliency.

As part of the program, CTOs and Referral Coordinators are seconded to DHMTs and hospitals, respectively; these positions are essential to quality clinical services and referrals for EVD survivors and other vulnerable populations identified by the MOHS under the FHCI.

The Advancing Partners & Communities project supports the post-Ebola recovery of EVD survivors and health system strengthening in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia.







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