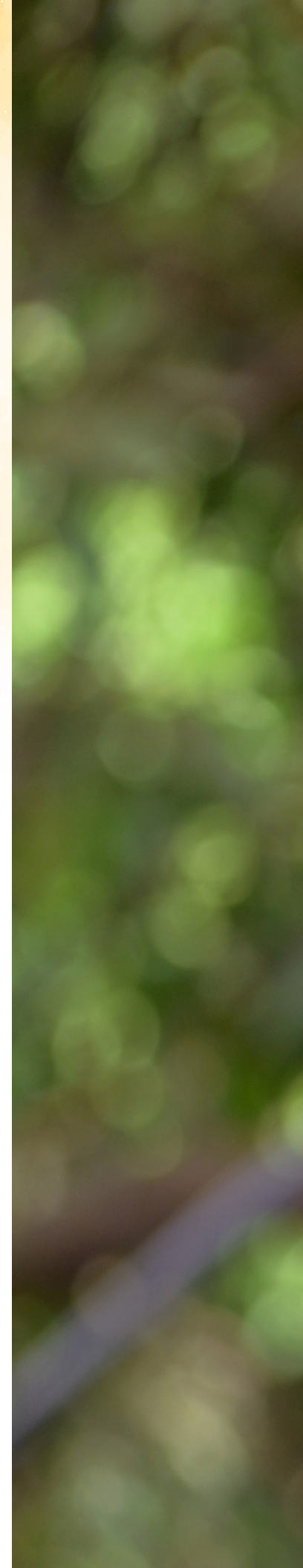
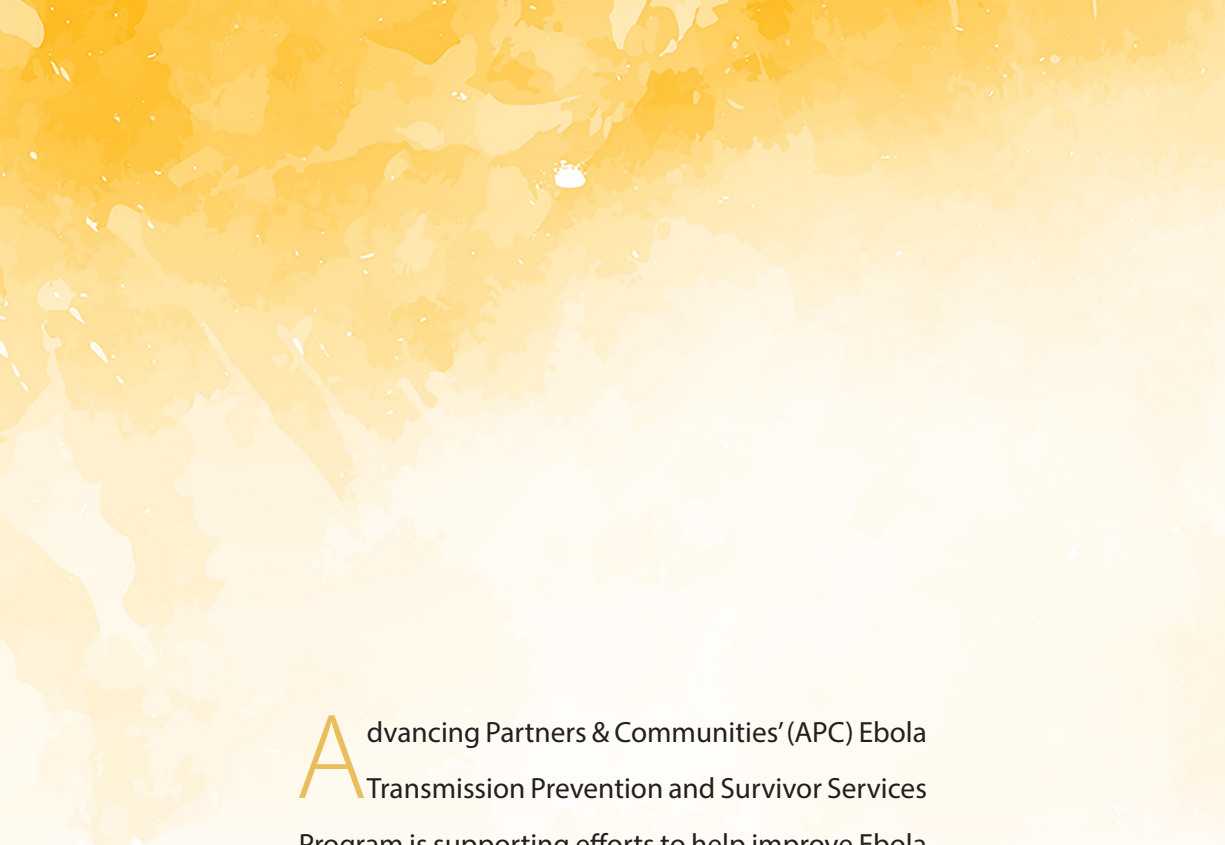


WOMEN SURVIVORS

LEADING POST-EBOLA RECOVERY IN WEST AFRICA





Advancing Partners & Communities' (APC) Ebola Transmission Prevention and Survivor Services Program is supporting efforts to help improve Ebola survivors' access to vital health services by building self-reliant survivor organizations and sustainable health systems in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. There are currently over 10,000 Ebola survivors who continue to face challenges such as stigma, discrimination and ongoing physical and mental health complications. Women leaders of these survivor organizations are stepping up across the region to address these challenges while promoting gender equality in their countries.

A close-up portrait of a Black woman with her hair in small braids, wearing a black high-necked top. She is looking slightly off-camera with a gentle expression. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting foliage.

Glenna Beckley

“I want other women in Sierra Leone to learn how to be independent. We should not have to rely on a man or anyone to give us the things or resources to survive.”



Glenna Beckley

Glenna Beckley is the finance officer for the Sierra Leone Association of Ebola Survivors (SLAES) executive team. While she was released after nine days in an Ebola treatment unit, five of her family members, including her mother and four-year-old daughter did not survive the epidemic. It is an indication of the devastation that Ebola wreaked on the region that Glenna considers herself among the lucky. "My mother died... my daughter died... but I did not die. My job helps me cope. Every day I meet people who went through tougher times than I did—my story is small compared with some others."

Through APC, Glenna and other SLAES members received technical assistance and capacity-building training to strengthen their organization, and Glenna now trains survivors on financial procedures. She is

proud of female Ebola survivors who are working together to mobilize resources and improve access to care. "A lot of the women are engaged in the Comprehensive Program for Ebola Survivors. They help other survivors access care at health facilities and provide basic psychosocial support. In several districts, they started farming groups where several female survivors reinvest the profit from selling produce to mobilize more funds for their own businesses."

Despite the challenges of being a woman on a SLAES' mostly male leadership team, Glenna urges other women to pursue leadership positions. "If you want things to be done, you have to be patient and strong. I want other women in Sierra Leone to learn to be independent. We should not have to rely on a man or anyone to give us the things or resources to survive."



Bendu Lansana

I don't want the women to feel like only men should lead all discussions. Women should give their input and advice on things that they want to see done."

Bendu Lansana

As the only woman on the national leadership team for the National Ebola Survivor Network in Liberia, treasurer Bendu Lansana is a positive example for other women. "I want county-based women network leaders to share more information about their experiences and needs. I don't want the women to feel like only men should lead all discussions. Women should give their input and advice on things that they want to see done. If you see your input put into action, you will know that you are making an impact. One person can't do everything; if we come together, we can share more ideas, and resolve problems."

Bendu advocates for mental health support for Ebola survivors, and works to end stigma and discrimination so that other survivors can reintegrate into their communities. APC has supported local hospitals, such as Eternal Love Winning Africa (ELWA) hospital to provide necessary health services to survivors. "Counseling from ELWA hospital has helped survivors manage their anger better," says Bendu. Survivors need counseling to alleviate stress and anger management issues."

Bendu hopes that more female Ebola survivors will take leadership positions in their communities. "I know that I am working for the greater good. The survivors should know that we are doing work on behalf of them."



Ivonne Loua

Female Ebola survivors in Guinea are very good at resource mobilization. We have vast experience in that area because of activities such as tie-dyeing and farming that allow women to sustain themselves."





Ivonne Loua

As Vice President of RENASEG, the national Ebola survivor association in Guinea, Ivonne Seny Loua is committed to changing the public perception of Ebola survivors in Guinea and reintegrating them into society. A medical doctor herself, Ivonne is a point of contact for survivors who need psychosocial support services in the remote forest region of eastern Guinea.

After recovering from the initial trauma of losing her husband and 10-month-old child to Ebola, Ivonne has been dedicated to improving the lives of other Ebola survivors throughout Guinea. "Through RENASEG I have been able to travel to Liberia to participate in a regional workshop for Ebola survivors. RENASEG has enabled me to meet great people and establish

relationships with national and international NGOs." She recently worked on sensitization programs, supported by APC, to improve access to care at health facilities for survivors who are denied services due to stigma and discrimination. "Ebola survivors need moral and financial support. We shouldn't be subjected to stigmatization. We need to reintegrate into our communities and professions."

Ivonne is passionate about creating revenue-generating activities for Ebola survivors, particularly women. "Female Ebola survivors in Guinea are very good at resource mobilization. We have vast experience in that area because of activities such as tie-dyeing and farming that allow women to sustain themselves." Ivonne hopes her work will help women be independent.