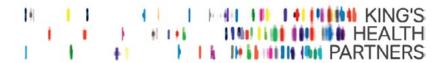






AN EBOLA SURVIVOR CARES FOR FELLOW SURVIVORS IN SIERRA LEONE

ADVANCING PARTNERS & COMMUNITIES 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 advancing partners.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, with focus on Ebola survivors, 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. SI 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.

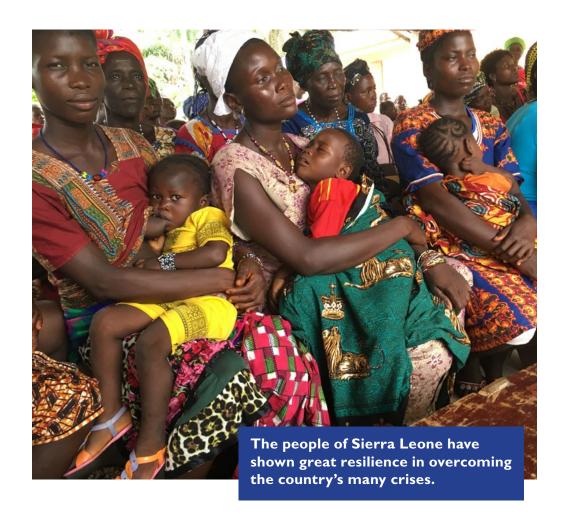
Photos: Abdul Brima (JSI), Envizage Concepts (envizage2@gmail.com)

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SORIE SAMURA'S STORY

he Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) epidemic that hit West Africa in 2014 left behind a legacy of broken health systems, traumatised communities, and the ongoing suffering of survivors in the three countries primarily affected—Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia. Sierra Leone's long-battered health sector was further devastated by the death of many health professionals¹, leaving gaps and trust issues in the country's health service provision. Many of the more than 3,000 people who survived the virus were left with ongoing medical complications related to EVD, such as neurological and mental health issues, fatigue, joint pain, eye sight problems, and fertility concerns, as well as having to face harsh economic realities related to loss of livelihoods, stigma, and discrimination.

Sierra Leone is a country of great resilience, having come back from a decade of civil war and recent tragedies, such as the EVD crisis, repeated cholera outbreaks, and this year's mudslide, with a determination to rebuild and recover. The strength and character demonstrated by its people is a testament to the country's ongoing ability to regenerate and create new opportunities from misfortune.



I The number of confirmed and probable cases among healthcare workers is reported to be at 328. Of these, 68 are confirmed survivors and 152 dead, with final outcome data missing for 109 cases. WHO, Health workers Ebola infections in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone – preliminary study, May 2015.



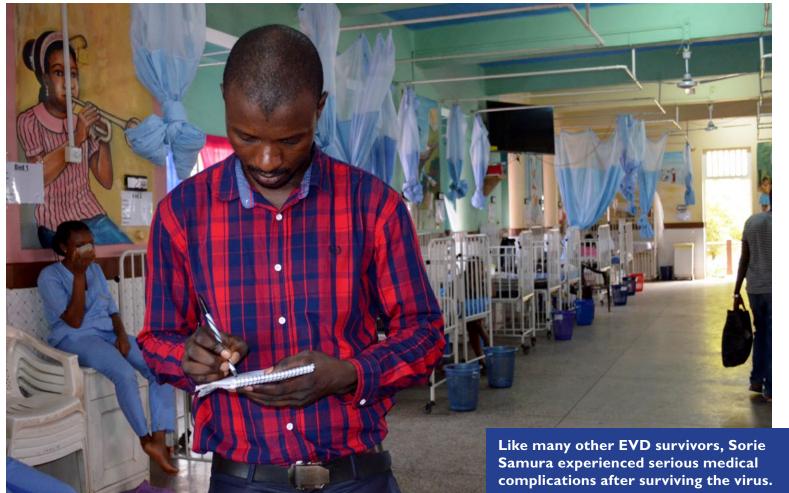
orie Samura is one of less than 70 health workers who contracted EVD and survived. He is now back in active service working as a Referral Coordinator for King's Sierra Leone Partnership (KSLP) at Connaught Hospital in Freetown, the largest government hospital in Sierra Leone and its main teaching and referral hospital.

"Life was terrible immediately after I survived. I lost my vision temporarily, suffered other side effects like headache, joint pain, but I have been receiving treatment and I'm much better now."

orie became infected with EVD while he was working in the isolation unit at Connaught Hospital. "I decided to do this directly against the advice of my family, but felt compelled to support Ebola patients during the fight even though I knew the risks. Everybody in my family disowned me; my uncle drove me out of his house because of my choice to work in the isolation unit."

This meant that when he became infected, there was no one to support him. "I was left to die," he said, adding that his family and friends abandoned him. However, Sorie is very grateful for the care he received from KSLP who were running the Ebola Holding Unit (EHU) at Connaught Hospital. The KSLP team provided him with vital personal and clinical support at his time of need.

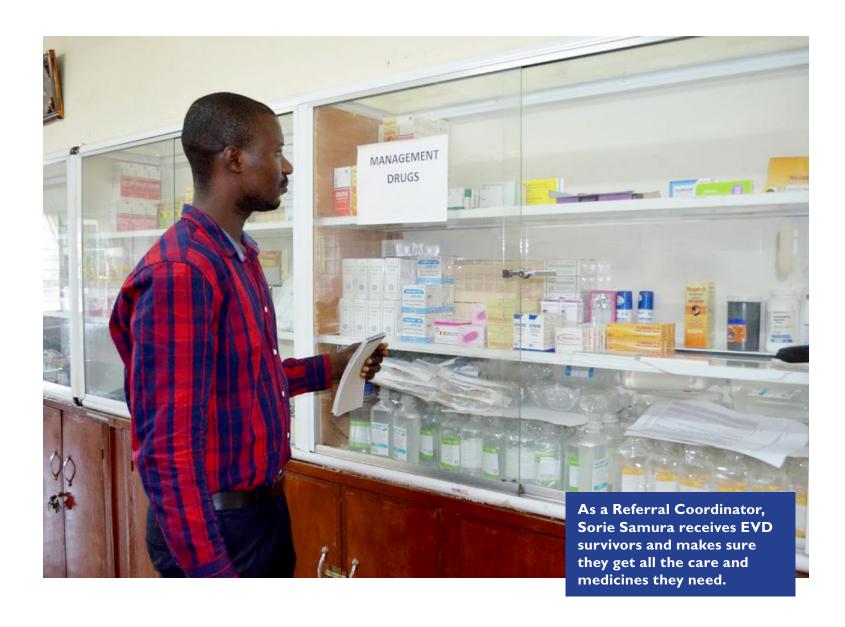


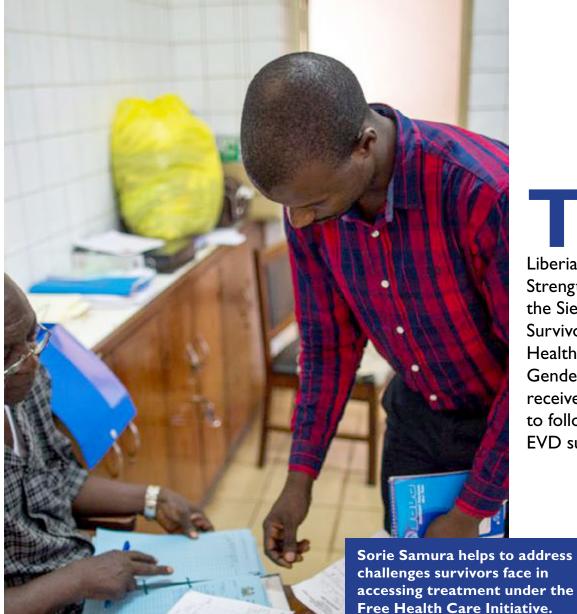


ike many other EVD survivors, Sorie experienced serious medical complications after surviving the virus. "Life was terrible immediately after I survived. I lost my vision temporarily, suffered other side effects like headache, joint pain, but I have been receiving treatment and I'm much better now."

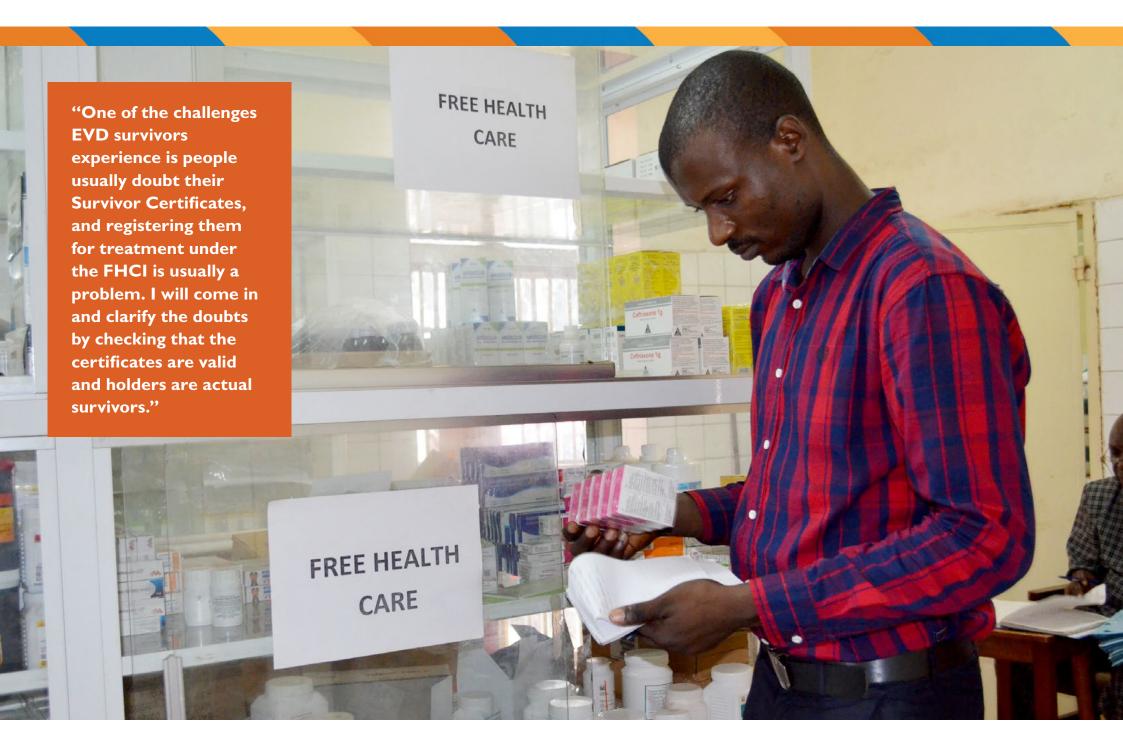


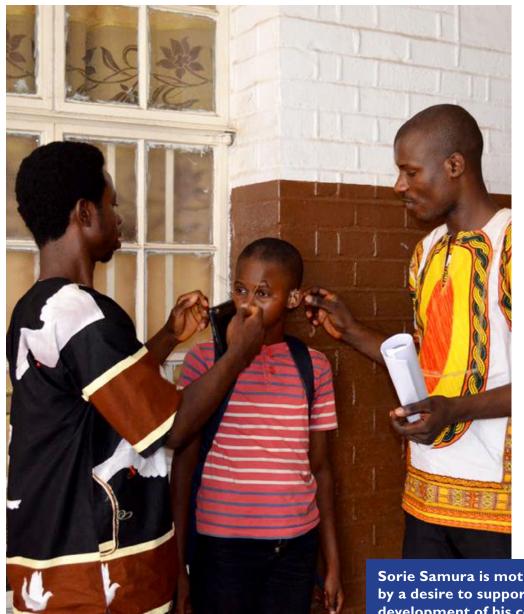
orie takes pride in coming back to work at Connaught and providing healthcare support to other EVD survivors. He says of his work, "I receive referrals from peripheral health units (PHU) and secondary and regional hospitals. One of my jobs as a Referral Coordinator is to receive EVD survivors and make sure they get all the care and medicines they need."





he Ebola Transmission Prevention and Survivor Services Program, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), works in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. In Sierra Leone, the project is called Strengthening Health Services Post-Ebola (SHSPE) and supports the Sierra Leone government's Comprehensive Program for Ebola Survivors (CPES). CPES, which is jointly led by the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS) and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, helps to ensure that EVD survivors receive the necessary social and medical services they are entitled to following the presidential mandate in 2015, which brought EVD survivors under the Free Health Care Initiative (FHCI).

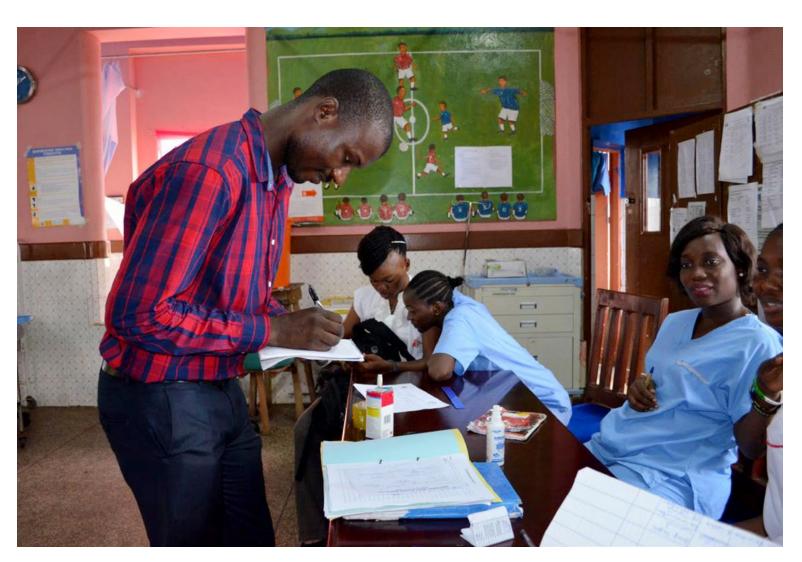




Ihrough the SHSPE project, USAID supports CPES implementation to ensure that the health system is equipped and able to respond comprehensively to the specific needs of EVD survivors and other FHCI target populations. The project has a multifaceted approach, increasing access at primary health care facilities and supporting the establishment of a referral system for specialty services, such as mental health, neurology, rheumatology, and ophthalmology. At Connaught Hospital, the SHSPE project is helping establish specialty mental health and neurology services, as well as an effective referral system that connects district hospitals and sub-specialty services. Sorie helps to address challenges the EVD survivors face in accessing FHCI services and treatment.

Sorie Samura is motivated by a desire to support the development of his country

orie returned to work at Connaught hospital in January 2015, barely three weeks after his recovery. For Sorie, the motivation to continue providing health services is rooted in a desire to support the development of his country. "I chose to do this work because I have passion to serve humanity. I grew up in a deprived rural settlement where people died of minor and treatable medical conditions. So I had the thought as a young man to help reduce the sufferings of my people. I have treated EVD patients and I have also been treated as an EVD patient so I know what it means to have survived the virus."



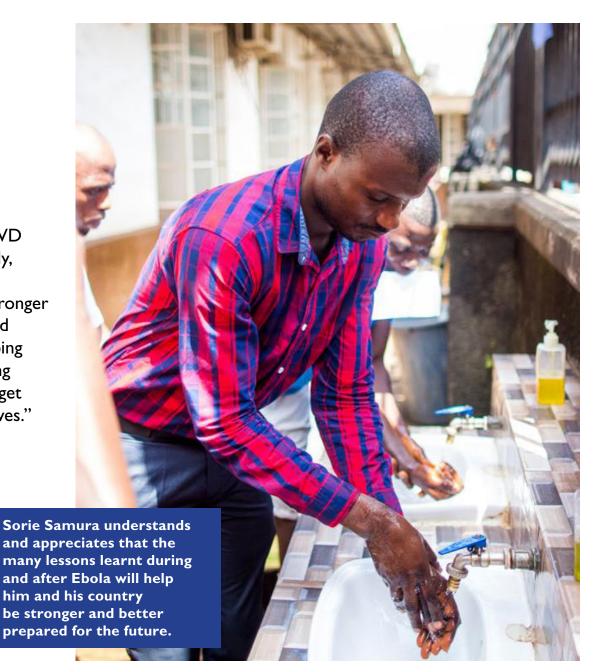


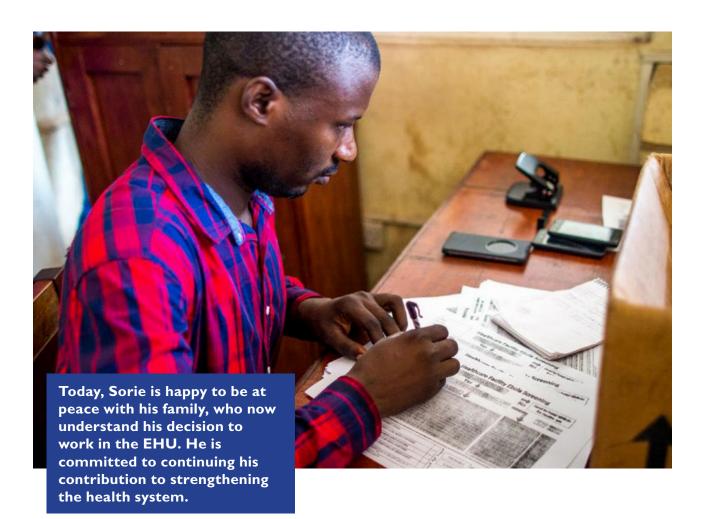
OHS data from the last 15 months indicates that the CPES programme has achieved tangible success in survivor care, supporting over 2,800 survivors in their homes and communities, facilitating over 1,600 referrals to secondary and tertiary care, and providing clinical mentorship in almost 100 PHUs.

The MOHS is keen to ensure that best practices from CPES are maintained and mainstreamed at the district level through the retention of the capacity building, mentorship, and the referral components—key elements to strengthening the health system.



outbreak in Sierra Leone and to him personally, Sorie understands and appreciates that many lessons were learnt and will help him and his country be stronger and better prepared for the future. "I learnt that we should not allow selfish desires for wealth to prevent us from helping people in need; because many people are focused on making themselves rich. We should work not because of what we get from it, but because of the impact we create on peoples' lives."





oday, Sorie is happy that he is back at peace with his family, who now understand his decision to work in the EHU. He says, "although I now live independently, I have good relationship with my family; we talk and interact like any other family does."

Sorie feels that there is only one way to sustain the gains and lessons learnt during the EVD crisis. "We need to feel ownership if we are to learn from the Ebola lessons. Partners have done their own bit, but we should not continue to rely on them forever; we must develop ownership of what we have built together, especially from the referral system. Donors can be counted on for technical advice and training, but we should take responsibility for our health activities," he points out.

Sorie looks forward to working hard every day and is committed to continuing his contribution to strengthening the health system for a healthier and more resilient Sierra Leone.

ABOUT THIS STORY

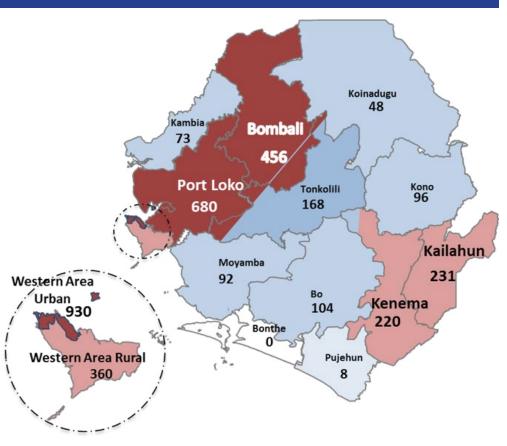
Sorie, an EVD survivor, has worked at Connaught Hospital in Freetown as a Referral Coordinator (RC) since 2016 when CPES began. He was recently promoted to RC Mentor and will share his knowledge and experience with the RCs working around the country. He is supported by JSI's SHSPE project in collaboration with implementing partner King's Sierra Leone Partnership.

The USAID-funded SHSPE project—with focus on EVD survivors, supports the implementation of CPES at the national, district, and community levels. JSI works with MOHS and other CPES stakeholders to develop and implement systems and tools that establish evidence-based quality health services, and promote healthy behaviors and resiliency. The project collaborates with a variety of development partners at national and district levels, with focus on the six districts with the highest number of EVD survivors.

The CPES program provides medical and social services to Ebola survivors across the country through health system strengthening and capacity building. As part of the program, RCs and Clinical Training Officers are seconded to each District Health Management Team as essential positions that support quality clinical services and referrals for EVD survivors and other vulnerable population groups identified by the MOHS under the FHCI.



Sierra Leone map showing number of EVD survivors per district. USAID priority districts are shown in red and pink.







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