

## Ebola Response Case Study 5 'Ebola training for CHWs'

Mohamed Dauda and Nancy Seisay, two experienced Concern Health programme staff, working with the EU-funded Sustainable Health Actions through People's Empowerment (SHAPE) project in Tonkolili District, Sierra Leone, have conducted many trainings on health and hygiene promotion.

Today Dauda and Nancy are training 28 Community Health Workers (CHWs) on Ebola prevention and control. CHWs are community based workers that help fellow community members access health and social services, and educate community members on health issues. They have an important and complementary role to play in health promotion and counselling of care givers in the community to improve health status and to improve access to care.

### Ebola in Sierra Leone

An outbreak of the Ebola virus disease (EVD) was initially identified in Guinea in March and has spread to Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. EVD is a severe, often fatal illness. The outbreak was declared by the Sierra Leone Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

On 8<sup>th</sup> August, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa a global health emergency. The Ebola outbreak in West Africa is unprecedented in scale and in the response required. No previous outbreak has had as many confirmed cases, as wide of a geographic spread, or major hot spots in urban areas.

As of October 31st, the cumulative number of laboratory confirmed EVD cases is 3,843 (including 208 in Tonkolili District). The number of confirmed (recorded) EVD deaths is 1,064 with 811 survivors. The epidemiological curve has a steep incline, indicating accelerated and intense transmission.

The two-day training covers the EVD case definition, modes of transmissions, signs and symptoms, handling and reporting cases, relevant byelaws, community surveillance strategies and the roles and responsibilities of the CHWs. In total Concern is training 124 CHWs (88 men and 36 women) in Tonkolili District on Ebola prevention and control.

One of the CHWs being trained today is **Jariatu C. Fornah** (35 years old), a teacher and mother of four (two boys and two girls) from the village of Mabang in Malal Mara chiefdom. She



CHW training in Mile 91. October 2014, photo by Renee Zandvliet

explains her role as a Community Health Worker: *“We advise people in our communities about how to keep their environment clear, to wash their hands after going to the toilet, to cover food, to dry clothes well and to sleep under a mosquito net. We went to prevent cholera and other diseases in our community.”*

Although there have not been any cases of Ebola in her community, Jariatu says she is worried. *“That’s why I came to the training today. I want to know how to share information with my people and how to change their attitudes. The knowledge of Ebola is very limited in my village. We can only tackle this Ebola outbreak through information: people need to go down to the villages to sensitise all the people and observe their practices.”*



Jariatu C. Fornah. October 2014, photo by Renee Zandvliet

Fellow CHW **James. A. Sankoh** (52 years old), a father of four who has been giving health messages in his community, Makoba Bana, for over 10 years, agrees with Jariatu. He says that in Malal Mara chiefdom there have been two Ebola cases. They were quarantined, referred to a treatment centre but sadly both died.

James was actively involved in the three-day house to house sensitisation campaign in September. *“Sensitisation needs to be strengthened”* he says. *“It is not easy to tell people to change their cultural practices, like touching and washing a dead body. You really need to take time to talk to people and explain to them why they shouldn’t do that.”*



James A. Sankoh. October 2014, photo by Renee Zandvliet

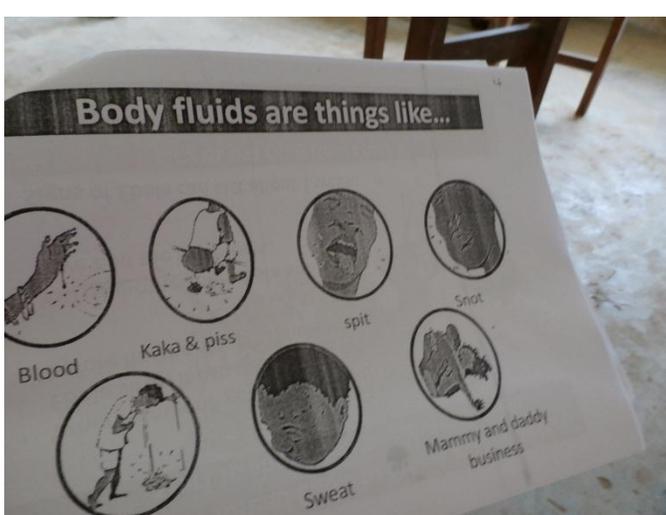
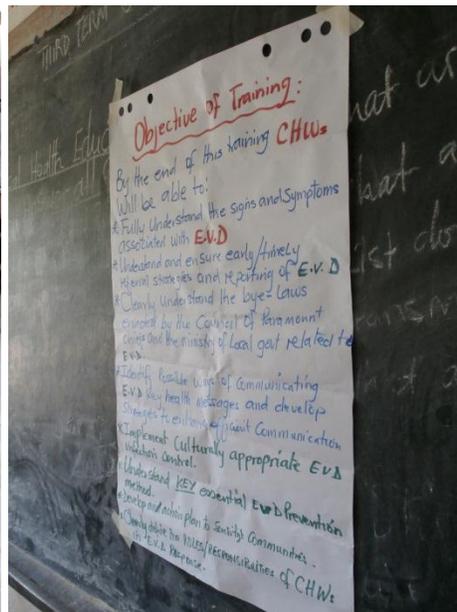
He explains that there are many misconceptions: *“People are afraid to go to the health centre because of the ‘torch light’<sup>1</sup>. They think that even when it is just malaria they will be captured and taken to Kailahun<sup>2</sup>. People are saying that there people will inject you with chlorine and you will die immediately. So I try to talk to them and explain for example that the ‘torch light’ is just like other thermometers.”*

He says he is worried more people, particularly children, are dying as many people are afraid to seek healthcare.

<sup>1</sup> This is how people often refer to the infrared thermometers, which are new to many Sierra Leoneans.

<sup>2</sup> Kailahun is where the MSF Ebola treatment facility, one of the main treatment facilities in the country, is located.

"I am here today I want to learn about Ebola prevention and control and I want to know how to report cases for referral" James says.



CHW training in Mile 91. October 2014, photo by Renee Zandvliet

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