

Restore Hope: Liberia An Invitation • 2021

RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA

Health. Education. Opportunity.

RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA provides relief and empowerment to the most vulnerable in post-emergency communities through an innovative integration of health, education, and economic development, creating opportunity, changing lives and building resilient communities. We provide direct support to over 600 of the most disadvantaged/vulnerable women & children in Kolahun, Lofa County, Liberia. Our reach extends to Kolahun District at large, a population of approximately 75,000, by supporting schools throughout the District, and Kolahun Hospital, a Ministry of Health District Referral Hospital.

The first two decades of this century have been particularly cruel to the people of Liberia. In 2014–2016, while still struggling to recover from 14 years of civil war, the country experienced the largest, most deadly outbreak of Ebola in history.

The result: the collapse of health systems and services and the near-total devastation of the economy. All of Liberia’s schools closed. At least 8,000 children lost at least one parent to the disease. Thousands of children are the only surviving members of their families.

Then, only four years into the recovery from Ebola, Liberia was rocked by the COVID-19 pandemic, closing schools once again, putting further strain on the economy, and taking healthcare to the verge of another collapse.

Today Liberia is moving slowly in a prolonged, post-Ebola recovery period, and the consequences of the pandemic remain unknown. **In a country where 50% of the population (67% of the girls) is illiterate and 64% is under the age of 25, the challenge of rebuilding is daunting.**

Exacerbating this challenge is the silent epidemic of mental illness due to consecutive traumas. A majority of adult women in Liberia are survivors of gender-based violence. The trauma women and girls live with, manifesting as PTSD and/or major depressive disorders, is debilitating and yet another barrier to achieving social and economic empowerment. **More than 40% of Liberians suffer from post-traumatic**

stress and/or a major depressive disorder (WHO, 2017). Yet fewer than 1% of Liberians have access to mental health services, according to WHO (2017).

This is where RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA comes in. Working in Kolahun, a large rural district in Northern Liberia especially hard hit by Ebola, we are filling the post-emergency aid gap through an innovative, integrated approach.

THE RHL PYRAMID OF HOPE

Our model is driven by community needs, building leadership and strengthening civic society as we empower the most vulnerable. It is based on a three-tiered Pyramid of Hope—**Health, Education,** and economic **Opportunity**—providing the individuals we serve with coordinated support. While meeting the community’s most pressing needs, we are also investing in its future.



PYRAMID OF HOPE



VISION

Communities living in absolute poverty, who have survived complex emergencies, are able to thrive, rebuild their communities and lead healthy, productive and peaceful lives.

MISSION

To improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities in post-emergency settings by providing basic health, education and income generating activities in order to alleviate extreme poverty and empower communities to become their own agents of change.

VALUES

As a humanitarian development organization, we aspire to work at the highest level possible of personal, professional and organizational values; we are inspired and guided by the shared principles, commitments and vision for global development as expressed in the 2015 UN plan of action, *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. (<https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>)

- We believe that every human being should have the opportunity to thrive and maximize their potential.
- We believe in the empowerment of all people, equity for the most vulnerable, and opportunity that is not limited by any class or status.
- We believe that it is possible to alleviate suffering in communities that have been devastated by complex emergencies and extreme poverty by providing tools to empower the most vulnerable and marginalized.
- We believe in community development that is transformative, holistic, fosters agency, strengthens collaborative capacity and is sustainable.
- We believe in an organization that fosters interpersonal respect, exhibits integrity, and is relationship-centered.

An individual or community cannot develop without physical and mental well-being, so at the base of this pyramid is a foundation of good **Health**—access to care, nutritional support, and treatment for mental illness. Whenever possible, RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA works within the existing system of health care services; we partner, strengthen and augment, never supplant. In the absence of health systems strengthening, no results will be long-term, no efforts will be sustainable.

We have partnered with the Kolahun Hospital, Liberian diaspora groups, and Liberian nationals to create the Kolahun Hospital Revolving Drug Fund. Once a profitable, sustainable and effective innovation to solve the on-going problem of drug shortages, the Revolving Drug Fund disintegrated during the war years. We are proud to partner with Liberians to restart this grassroots initiative to improve health care across the District.

To address the debilitating effects of mental illness, RHL launched a community-based treatment option utilizing the evidence-based, WHO-endorsed Interpersonal Group Therapy model. RHL is the first organization to bring IPT to Liberia. This intervention is having much success in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

“We had the most beautiful supervision session today. Everyone is so committed, so engaged and fully participating, learning and growing as IPT providers. I want to take this opportunity to thank our amazing RHL team who have stepped up to this challenge and despite all possible difficulties are making this project a success!”

~ Ana Claudia Andrade, Certified Master IPT Trainer

The first cohort of community members are participating in an extensive training to provide 12-week group therapy to clinically depressed women across the District. **Initial outreach for patients was done and 88% of women screened met the threshold for clinical depression.**



This program is integrated into existing women's groups, such as the Women's Weaving Cooperative RHL supports, to build an on-going, sustainable platform for support. By integrating a mental health intervention with women's empowerment activities and providing inter-program referrals, the likelihood of success increases significantly.

MOVING FORWARD DURING COVID

RHL made the decision to remain actively engaged in Kolahun during COVID. Culturally appropriate readers were provided to children and tutors made home visits while schools were closed. RHL increased household support during COVID in an effort to sustain nutrition/health and launched a mental health program. As other organizations pulled back, RHL moved forward, demonstrating ongoing commitment and adaptability.

Upon this foundation of **Health**, we invest in **Education**—schooling for children and adult literacy classes, as well as skills-based training for young adults. A healthy, educated population can then be the driving force of economic **Opportunity** and development.

Our approach is a continuum of care and opportunity, whereby RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA works on a day-to-day, child-by-child, village-by-village basis.

HOW IT WORKS

When RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA enrolls a child, we assess the needs of both the child and the household. Our staff nurse ensures that medical care is coordinated with local health care providers, and makes regular home visits to assess the physical, mental and social well-being of the child. Upon enrollment, we learn of her academic abilities, her reading skills in particular. We follow her progress at school and in our after-school tutoring program. Upon graduation, we offer her scholarships to community college or vocational education programs, ensuring she attains the education needed to pursue her aspirations.

We invest not only in the individual, but in the web of relationships that serve as their social capital, their safety net, by strengthening connections between public institutions, community leaders, and neighbors.



The depth of our support for the vulnerable and the importance we place on strengthening the fabric of the community is what sets RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA apart.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA is there every step of the way. The children enrolled in the program receive individual attention from a community that is resilient and growing stronger, more self-reliant. We provide an effective and self-sustaining pathway for communities to grow beyond the need for ongoing international humanitarian assistance.



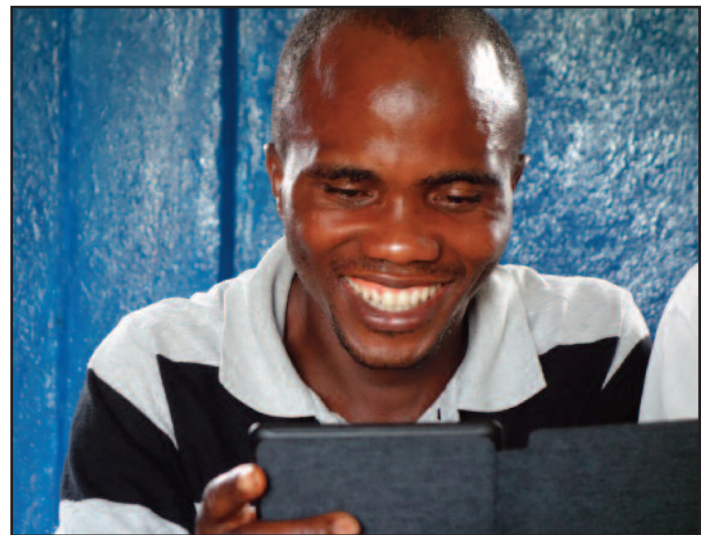


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UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA addresses several key understandings reflected in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

1. At the root of the problem is poverty, with its many related aspects—food insecurity, lack of basic services (health care, education, clean water and sanitation), gender inequality, lack of economic opportunity.
2. Education of boys *and girls* is a critical factor in overcoming poverty.
3. Long-term humanitarian support, based solely on philanthropy, is unsustainable without accompanying development of the health, education, and economic sectors.



RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA'S MODEL HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL

HEALTH

- The children in the program are healthy, well-nourished, growing and engaged. Many of them are overcoming the sequelae of Ebola, chronic illness, and loss. In spite of so much physical and emotional trauma in their young lives, they are resilient and happy. Our staff nurse follows their health carefully with regular home visits.
- We have partnered with the local health care system which provides secondary health care when needed. We support the local hospital to improve their capacity in an era of diminishing resources.
- We have trained a cadre of young leaders as health educators. They provide health talks at their school as a means of peer education with a focus on sexual and reproductive health.

- RHL is a partner of the Kolahun Revolving Drug Fund, providing a sustainable solution to the critical shortage of drugs.
- Interpersonal Group Therapy providers are currently being trained to facilitate 12-week group therapy sessions for clinically depressed women.

EDUCATION

- 100% of our enrolled children have remained in school, and 95% have done well enough to progress to the next grade. This contrasts dramatically with Liberia's nationwide primary school net enrollment rate of just 44%.
- Our after-school program has focused on developing and improving the reading skills that are so essential to the students' future success.



- A scholarship fund has been established for post-secondary education, including college and vocational training. To date, almost two dozen students are being supported to attend local community colleges and vocational schools.
- A new RHL Vocational Education & Training (VET) Center building has been completed, supported by a generous grant from the German Embassy and the German people.
- A community library is being established which includes culturally relevant reading material and e-readers.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & OPPORTUNITY

- The RHL Women’s Weaving Cooperative is into its fourth year and the 3rd cohort of apprentices are completing their training in this ancient, indigenous craft, bringing West African Country Cloth to the world’s attention. They are learning business skills and microfinance and have proudly moved into their new space in the VET Center. 96% of the weavers have chosen to take out a microloan and 80% of borrowers are repaying their loans on time.

RHL has continued its programming through the COVID-19 pandemic despite unprecedented challenges. We attribute this achievement to our committed Liberian staff and our deep roots in Kolahun, serving this remote community for over 6 continuous years.

Current ongoing needs are basic for our children: two meals a day, access to healthcare and clean water, medication, vaccinations, clothing, school fees, and after-school tutoring.

The critical next step is to strengthen literacy education, introduce STEM education, train community health workers, and develop the rural economy.

We understand the value in collective initiatives and look to support community owned cooperatives through microfinance and public-private partnerships. Our Vocational Education & Training program will be structured strategically to ensure graduates are equipped to launch successful enterprises with the ability to scale.

RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA is in the unique position to execute this expansive vision as we are the only organization “on the ground” in Kolahun. RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA has earned tremendous local support.

WOMEN’S WEAVING COOPERATIVE

RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA is currently investing in its first economic development pilot project. The Women’s Weaving Cooperative was established by our beneficiaries’ caregivers themselves. With RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA’s support, the Women’s Weaving Cooperative generates income from the members’ traditional, artisanal weaving.



Members of the Women’s Weaving Cooperative



Our success with the Women's Weaving Cooperative demonstrates tremendous potential to ease the burden of poverty for Kolahun, empowering a community of women in the process.

RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA will further develop its holistic, replicable and **sustainable** program, as we look to expand to other post-emergency communities in Liberia and other parts of Africa.

RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA. An innovative integration of health, education, and economic development, creating opportunity, changing lives and building communities. We invite you to join us in partnership and with investment.

ABOUT THE COVER

In Kolahun, every house, school, clinic, and even the Kolahun Hospital is built one brick at a time. Every brick is hand-crafted from onsite clay and local grasses. Just as every individual brick is a part of the greater whole, every donor, funder and partner is a part of the whole, a sustainable effort that will help ensure that these children are able to stay in school and have access to food, clean water, and basic health care.



Please visit our website to learn more:
RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA
www.restorehopeliberia.org

RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA donations are administered by **FISCAL SPONSORSHIP ALLIES**.

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THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS:

- Anything Is Everything
- Elmo Foundation
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- Together Women Rise
- StrongMinds



RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA

HEALTH • EDUCATION • OPPORTUNITY

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