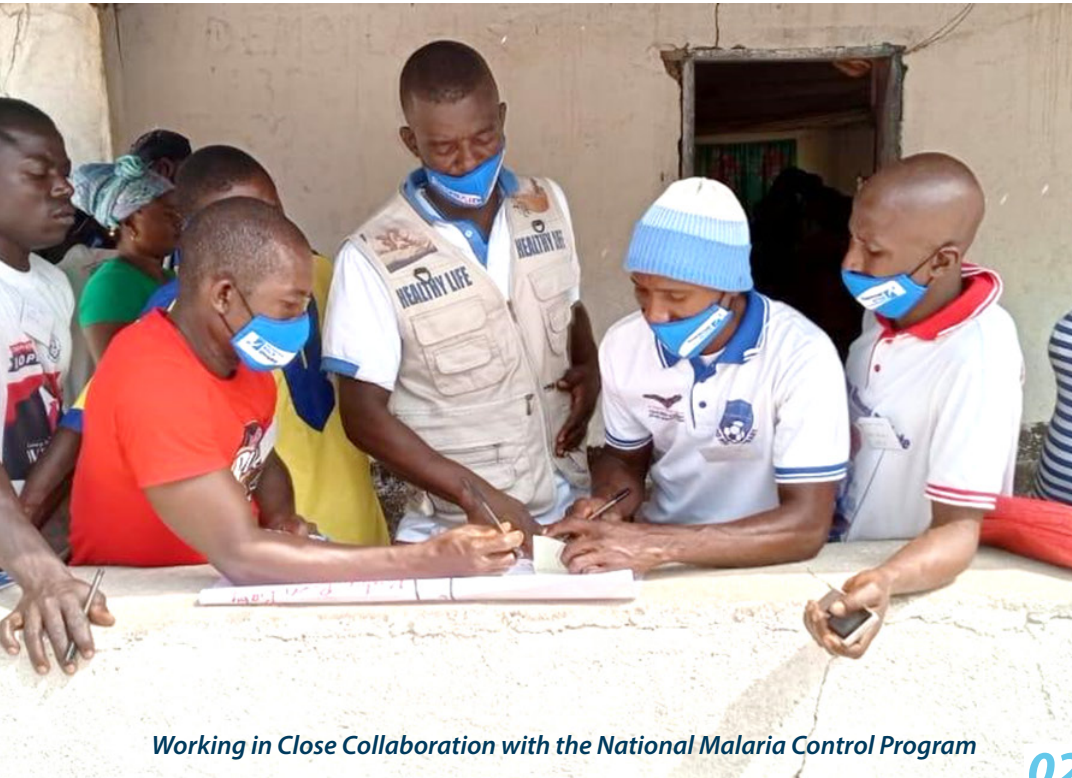


# Breakthrough ACTION Liberia

# NEWSLETTER

October 2021 - March 2022



*Working in Close Collaboration with the National Malaria Control Program*

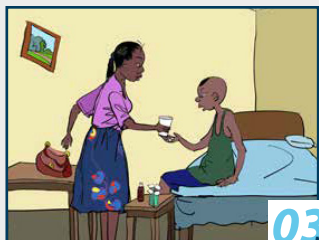
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## Introduction

Breakthrough ACTION is the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) flagship integrated social and behavior change (SBC) project led by Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (CCP). In Liberia, the project aims to improve the effectiveness of SBC activities to (1) improve demand and use of health services for malaria; maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH), family planning/reproductive health (FP/RH), adolescent health, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and (2) increase communities engaging in behaviors to prevent zoonotic and non-zoonotic infections, in line with the Global Health Security Agenda (GHS). Project counties include: Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Bomi, Grand Bassa, Margibi, Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Maryland, and Grand Kru. The project is also using SBC to increase COVID-19 uptake in select project counties, including Bomi, Bong, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Margibi, and Maryland.

From October 2012 to March 2022, Breakthrough ACTION Liberia worked closely with the Government of Liberia, donors, and other implementing partners on the activities outlined in this newsletter. In addition, the project supported the County Health Teams (CHTs) to develop and incorporate SBC activities into their county operational plans across several thematic areas.

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# Malaria

## Working in Close Collaboration with the National Malaria Control Program



A malaria SBC specialist monitors MBS data collection in Bong County

### Identifying Behavioral Barriers to Malaria Prevention and Treatment Behaviors

**B**reakthrough ACTION completed data collection for the Malaria Behavior Survey (MBS) in March 2022. Breakthrough ACTION worked closely with the University of Liberia-Pacific Institute of Research and Evaluation, to collect data from three study regions between December 2021 and March 2022.

Findings from the study will provide a better understanding of the socio-demographic, ideational, socio-economic, household, and normative factors associated with malaria-related behavioral outcomes in Liberia.

## Launching a National Malaria SBC Strategy (2021-2025)



NMCP program manager making remarks during the NMCP SBC strategy launch at the Ministry of Health.

**B**reakthrough ACTION launched and disseminated the five-year National Malaria SBC Strategy 2021-2025. The Malaria SBC strategy is aligned to the National Malaria Control Program (NMCP) Strategic Plan 2021-

2025 and will guide implementation of SBC activities to eliminate malaria across Liberia. In March 2022, the project began providing technical support to the NMCP to draft a five-year costed implementation plan

which will be used as a resource mobilization tool to support and guide operations of the Malaria SBC strategy across the 15 counties in Liberia.

Read more about the National Malaria SBC strategy 2021 - 2025:

<https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/project-examples/liberia-national-malaria-social-and-behavior-change-strategy>



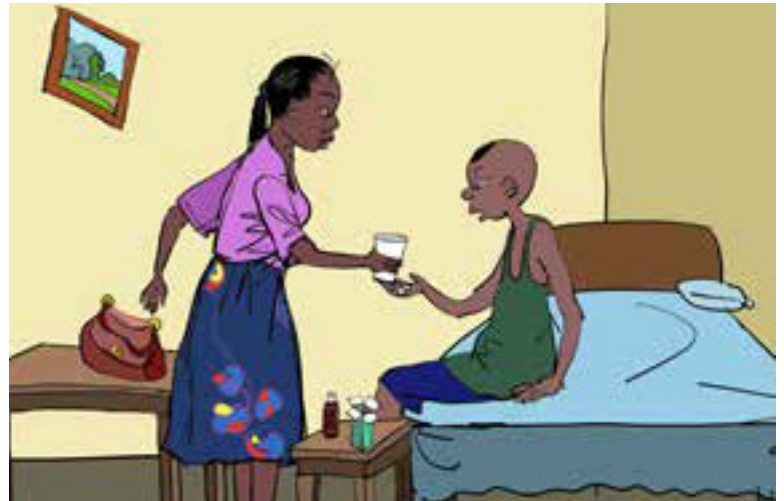
## Increasing Access and Demand for bed-nets Among School Children in Bong and Montserrado



The project collaborated with NMCP, READ Liberia, the National Health Promotion Unit (NHPU), Ministry of Education, to conduct school-based insecticide-treated net (ITN) distribution stakeholders' orientation meetings. Breakthrough ACTION Liberia led the SBC activities of the school ITN distribution.

Breakthrough ACTION held orientation sessions in December 2021 in Montserrado County for 106 schools within 26 school districts. Orientation sessions were held in Bong County in February 2022 for 95 schools within nine school districts. Breakthrough ACTION Liberia worked through school administrators, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), and coaches to share relevant ITN use and care information and disseminate posters and learning material to guide dissemination to students. The project also provided teachers copies of a pledge for students to memorize as a commitment to daily net use.

## Standardizing Malaria Talking Points for Use by Facility and Community Providers



In February 2022, at the national level, Breakthrough ACTION worked closely with the NMCP, NHPU, National Community Health Program, CHTs, and key malaria partners to review, update, and validate existing malaria talking points focused on priority behaviors for malaria. The talking points will be developed

into a tool that will help ensure consistency in delivering malaria messages during health promotion activities under the integrated healthy life campaign to create demand and promote the control and prevention of malaria in Liberia.

## What are the effects of malaria at family and community level?

When someone is affected by malaria, it has an effect on the individual, family and community. Some of the effects are as follows:

1. *Individual – becomes sick (weak), restless, they miss work or school.*
2. *Family – spends the family savings on treatment, transport and the family is worried about the outcome.*
3. *Farmers / worker – will be unable to work, absent from work thus lost time and unproductive.*
4. *School children – absent from school, leading to low performance.*
5. *Community – Overall money for household use spent on treatment, hospitalization, lost income from missed work, risk of increased transmission to others.*
6. *Death – If malaria is not treated on time, it may lead to death.*

# Maternal and Child Health

## Promoting Respectful Maternity Care



Service providers brainstorming during the user testing workshop

**B**reakthrough ACTION developed and shared a comprehensive report on the outcome of the three respectful maternal care (RMC) interventions piloted at Charles Burgees (C. B.) Dunbar Hospital Jorquelleh district and Funitoli and Zeasue Clinics in Suakoko Districts, Bong County. The interventions include a pain management toolkit, a provider-client promise to be administered during labor intake, and a feedback box where clients share their experience at health facilities.

Initial results from the use of these solutions showed providers' interest in implementing the RMC

activities within their facilities as they were seen to help build provider-client relationship and trust, improve communication between client and provider, remove fears, and reduce power dynamics. This improved client cooperation especially during labor. "Many times, clients could refuse to adhere to providers during labor, but with this new approach, especially with the promise signed by both sides, they are now cooperating with us," one service provider from CB Dunbar Hospital said.

The findings and final report will inform the development of a National RMC Strategy for Liberia.



## Improved Demand for Facility-Based Deliveries

**T**o address findings from assessment conducted in Grand Cape Mount County, Breakthrough ACTION Liberia collaborated with Grand Cape Mount and Bong County Health Teams, to co-design and user test a set of prototypes aimed at addressing identified barriers to facility-based delivery (FBD) uptake. Based on feedback during the co-design, solutions were designed to be community-driven and intended for sustainability.

Components of the solutions include: (1) assist pregnant women to plan and save for delivery, (2) elicit family and community support in mobilizing transportation, (3) support delivery logistics planning and (4) promote saving for a daughter's future pregnancy. With further feedback from the end users, the Ministry of Health (MOH) Family Health Program (FHP) and partners, the solutions will be refined and ready for implementation.

Importantly, this solution set will complement the RMC solution set recently adapted for Liberia by Breakthrough ACTION, which targets other demand-side barriers to FBD by ensuring that health care workers systematically provide respectful and supportive care to women in their facilities.

The Ministry of Health says we should continue to:





# WASH

## Disseminating Key Findings from the WASH Study

In October 2021 Breakthrough ACTION conducted three dissemination events (in Montserrado on October 20, Nimba on October 22, and Lofa County on October 26), to discuss the findings of the rural sanitation and urban water component of the WASH study with key stakeholders. Key findings from the rural sanitation component showed that the practice of open defecation has increased significantly in all three groups, which had been previously open defecation free (ODF) at 59.2%, currently ODF at 60% and never ODF at 67% and for Nimba and Lofa Counties when compared to the 2019 DHS data. Based on these findings, the programmatic implications include a need to focus on SBC issues that promote consistent toilet use, cleanliness of the toilet, and immediate troubleshooting to prevent an unhappy toilet user from being a dropout. The focus of a new rural sanitation program in the counties will have to shift emphasis from fostering motivation to



A group photo after the WASH Dissemination event at Cape Hotel in Monrovia

build toilets to building motivation for sustained toilet use.

The key findings from the water access component of the WASH study highlight challenges households faced in securing the minimum quantity of water for daily use as outlined by the World Health Organization's 20L/ person/ day minimum. About 63% of the study sample reported having this challenge. Another key finding includes household access to safe and sufficient water resources being hampered by cost, convenience, and reliability of water systems. Based on these findings, a few programmatic implications from the water access component of the study include supporting establishment and continuation of community-based water management

committees, which was associated with reduced water collection travel, and an approach to design and test accountability mechanisms that empower community members to report water system deficiencies and assisting governments in holding service providers accountable for providing safe, reliable, and affordable water services.

Link to the reports:

<https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/project-examples/liberia-national-malaria-social-and-behavior-change-strategy>

<https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/project-examples/breakthrough-action-liberia-rural-sanitation-report-2021-0>

## Applying WASH Findings to Develop WASH SBC Materials

Using the findings with the water study, Breakthrough ACTION Liberia conducted a three-day WASH design workshop to develop key messages related to three priority WASH behaviors: handwashing at critical times, safe water consumption, and proper food hygiene. For each behavior, a situational analysis and audience analysis was presented by WASH stakeholders. This background data informed the development of draft key messages for priority audiences. Following the workshop, participants used key messages to develop SBC materials (audio and print SBC materials). The draft materials will be tested in multiple counties before being finalized and disseminated in all project counties.

## Commemorating World Water Day 2022



A group of students commemorating World Water Day 2022

On March 22, 2022, Liberia joined in a global celebration of World Water Day. Under the theme "Groundwater: Making the Invisible Visible", Breakthrough ACTION supported a joint effort (led by the WASH commission) to bring attention to the importance of protecting groundwater. Breakthrough ACTION provided support for radio talk shows, a commemoration event featuring speakers from the WASH commission, and key partners discussing the importance of water and social media content related to World Water Day 2022.

# Adolescent Health

## Improving Adolescent Access to Reproductive Health Information Through Community Dialogue

Improving Adolescent Access to Reproductive Health Information Through Community Dialogue Breakthrough ACTION conducted a two-day review session of the adolescent health campaign materials (concept note and discussion guide) with 12 reproductive health supervisors from project supported counties and six technical supervisors from FHP, National Community Health Program, and NHPU. Based on their

recommendations, additional topics were added to the guide (e. g., substance abuse, early initiation of sexual practices, menstrual hygiene), and it was adapted as a roadmap for the implementation of the campaign for Year III.

As Breakthrough ACTION Liberia finalizes its first cycle of the adolescent health clubs, 450 adolescents from 30 adolescent health clubs from several

communities across eight of the project counties graduated and received certificates, including: Bong, Nimba, Grand Cape Mount, Lofa, Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Maryland, and Grand Kru. To sustain these adolescent health clubs, Breakthrough ACTION, is working in collaboration with the county and district health teams and these communities to recruit new members to begin a new cycle of club activities.

# Global Health Security Agenda

## Strengthening Capacity and Coordination for Risk Communication and Community Engagement at the National and Subnational Level

To strengthen the capacity of the county, district, and community level actors supporting risk communication and community engagement efforts on priority zoonotic diseases, Breakthrough ACTION Liberia collaborated with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and conducted Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) training of trainers (ToT) for 74 One Health stakeholders at national and sub-national levels from, MOH, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Environmental Protection Agency, and National Public Health Institute of Liberia. The ToT sessions took place December 2-4, 2021, in Zwedru, December 7-9, 2021, in Bong, and December 13-15, 2021 in Bong. The training focused on several topics, including the basics of RCCE, understanding priority zoonotic disease in Liberia, reviewing a One Health approach, working with media officials, message development, and addressing rumors. By working with FAO,

the ToT reached One Health stakeholders across 15 counties and each participant received a copy of the revised One Health Governance Manual. Those trained have initiated RCCE step down training in their home counties (with support from the national RCCE Technical Working Group (TWG)). From February - March 2022, the project also collaborated with the National One Health platform RCCE TWG to conduct step down trainings for approximately 529 (421 male, 108 female) participants across the following counties: Maryland, Grand Kru, Nimba, Lofa, Bong, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Montserrado, Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh, and River Gee. The trainings taught RCCE county-level One Health platform stakeholders, including the county superintendents, inspectors, surveillance officers, district health officers, and district commissioners on the concept of risk communication in public health emergencies, the revised

One Health governance manual, elements of sustained positive behavior change, SBC rumor management, and media engagement. Following the trainings, county-level RCCE TWGs held inaugural meetings to activate cross-sectoral collaboration for RCCE.



Hanging a Lassa fever prevention poster in Bong County

## Developing a One Health Message Guide Focused on 10 Priority Zoonotic Diseases



National and county RCCE TWG stakeholders in Ganta for the One Health Message Guide Review Session

Breakthrough ACTION supported the National RCCE TWG to conduct a five-day message guide workshop focused on a technical review of existing zero-draft messages for ten PZDs (anthrax, brucellosis, bovine tuberculosis (TB), Ebola virus disease, highly pathogenic avian influenza, Lassa fever, Marburg, monkey pox, rabies, and Rift Valley Fever). A total of 41 participants attended the session, including RCCE TWG members from the national level, RCCE TWG members from ten counties, and topical experts. The final message guide will provide a standard, validated messaging reference for presenting accurate, standardized, and basic health information in simple language when engaging in risk communication efforts in Liberia.

## Increasing Uptake of COVID-19 Vaccines



Vaccine ambassadors receiving certificates in Maryland County

Breakthrough ACTION collaborated with CHTs and trained 180 influential leaders on how to address vaccine hesitancy in their own communities. The leaders were recruited from Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Maryland, Grand Gedeh, River Gee, and Grand Kru. The training oriented the influential leaders on the use of both interpersonal communication and rumor management. Of the influential leaders who were trained, 86 leaders successfully carried out at least three community engagement sessions between December 1, 2022 and January 20, 2021. For their dedication, 86 leaders were recognized as vaccine ambassadors by their County Health Officers. Their efforts helped lead to 1,788 persons getting vaccinated against COVID-19.

To address vaccine hesitancy and motivate Liberians to get vaccinated, Breakthrough ACTION Liberia captured several testimonials and packaged them into audio and video recordings to encourage Liberians to get vaccinated for COVID-19. Watch the video testimonials: <https://fb.watch/c32zeEFcfb/>



# Integrated Activities

## Promoting High Impact Behaviors Through Advocacy

Breakthrough ACTION Liberia introduced the SMART Advocacy approach across 12 counties to effectively engage key stakeholders at the community level thereby increasing demand, access, and use of health services towards improving health outcomes. As a result of the engagements of health advocacy committees with local stakeholders, a total of 16 advocacy issues on WASH, malaria, MNCH, FP/RH, and PZDs were identified; communities addressed eight of these issues through community driven initiatives in 11 counties.

A few notable achievements recorded during this period include:

1. *Constructed 16 public and private latrines across the three counties in the following communities:*

**Lofa:** three latrines in Malamai community in Voinjama district

**River Gee:** five latrines in Slepiken community of Teinpo district

**Maryland:** three latrines in Sagloken community and five latrines in Martukan community

2. *Repaired and/or constructed 29 hand pumps across eight counties:*

**Grand Bassa:** Mensah Camp and Kolta Town: two hand pumps were repaired

**Nimba:** Beoyoolar and Goagortuo and Kamplay: two

hand pumps were constructed while seven others were repaired  
**Lofa:** Malamai community: two damaged hand pumps were repaired

**Grand Gedeh:** Telecon community, Zwedru district: three hand pumps were repaired

**Grand Cape Mount:** Bendaja, Benson and Koinkor: six hand pumps were repaired

**Maryland:** Martuken and Waken communities: two hand pumps were repaired

**Grand Kru:** Barclayvillie and Wateken communities, two hand pumps were repaired and one was constructed respectively

**River Gee:** Sagloken community in River Gee County: three hand pumps were constructed

3. *Reconstructed and reopened the Duoplay health facility that was destroyed by a heavy storm in March 2021 by generating funds both locally and internationally. In October 2021, the clinic reopened and turned over to the community for normal operations, catering to patients from its five catchment communities and Côte d'Ivoire.*

- *Set up and reinforced community laws on hygiene promotion in Joe Blow Town in Margibi County, Pennoken in Tienpo River Gee, Tuglor, and Ziah in Grand Gedeh, and Samay in Bong County.*



Rehabilitated Duoplay Health Clinic before and after the storm



# Amplifying the “Healthy Life” Brand to Improve Health Outcomes



CHT using a Healthy Life banner to engage community about positive health behavior

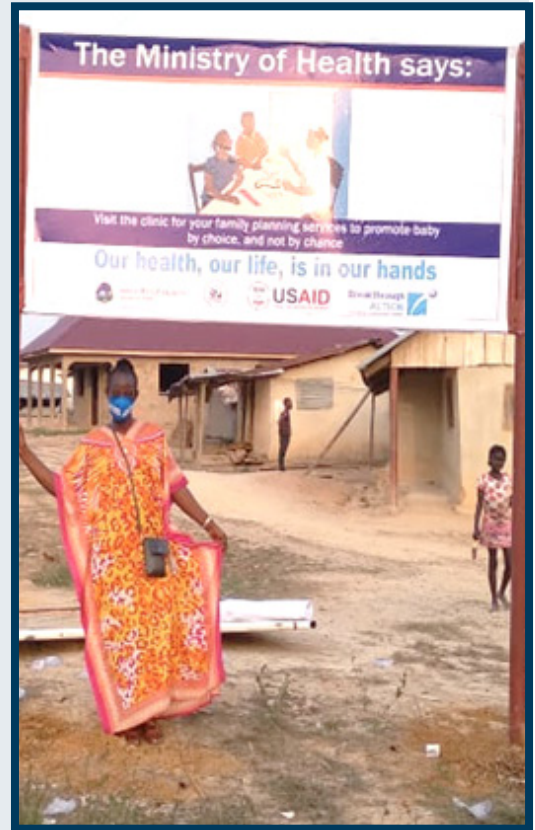
Breakthrough ACTION designed and produced 525 Healthy Life banners in close collaboration with MOH, focused on visually emphasizing priority behaviors across five thematic areas: malaria, MNCH, FP/RH, WASH, and PZDs. The banners highlight behaviors community members can take to improve their health, with simple text for each image.

These banners were distributed in collaboration with the CHTs based on the prevalence rate of each health area at 96 high-volume health facilities across the project’s 12 counties.

Starting in November 2021, Breakthrough ACTION Liberia also distributed an additional 5,240 print materials on Lassa fever (1,283), rabies (918), and bovine TB (5,240) to the Bong, Montserrado, Margibi, Nimba, Lofa, Grand Bassa, and Grand Cape Mount Counties based on the CHTs’ emergent needs. These materials were disseminated at clinics, hospitals, pharmacies, places of worship, markets, main roads/ junctions, and checkpoints to increase awareness on the prevention and control of Lassa fever, rabies, and bovine TB.

Breakthrough ACTION Liberia is working closely with the MOH

and CHTs to plant 36 Healthy Life billboards in high-traffic locations in all 12 project counties. The billboards are designed to reflect actions community members can take to live a “Healthy Life.” The 36 billboards cover several thematic areas, including malaria, family planning, WASH, zoonotic diseases, and maternal health. To date, three billboards have been planted in Nimba county: Ganta check point, Sehyikimpa junction, and Yekepa junction.



A family planning-focused billboard in Ganta, Nimba

## Airing Healthy Life Radio Messages

To complement print materials and interpersonal communication approaches, Breakthrough ACTION Liberia aired radio messages on 53 stations (nine national and 44 community radio stations across all 12 project counties).

Working closely with the MOH National Health Promotion Unit and the Communications Unit, the project aired radio messages related to the following topics during the past six-month period (October 2021-March 2022):

**MNCH:** *One spot;*  
**Focus:** *Male Involvement*  
**Family Planning:** *One spot;*  
**Focus:** *Baby by choice - (adolescent Focus)*  
**Malaria:** *Two radio spots;*  
**Focus:** *ITN use and intermittent treatment during pregnancy uptake during antenatal care visits*

**Lassa Fever:** *One spot;*  
**Focus:** *Prevention of Lassa Fever*  
**Rabies:** *One spot;*  
**Focus:** *Awareness and prevention*  
**COVID-19:** *One spot;*  
**Focus:** *Vaccine Promotion*

# Strengthening capacity of community structures to use SBC and address health issues

Breakthrough ACTION conducted 12 county level inception meetings and 12 district level trainings on community mobilization and SBC.

Following the district training meetings, district and facility level staff led ((health facility development committee and community health committee)) members through a series of practical

exercises focused on conducting community engagement, exploring health problems, identifying community-driven interventions, and generating sustainable solutions to health challenges. During these discussions, community participants engaged in key steps to explore health problems and develop community action plans, outline supervision and monitoring support,

and enable health facility development committees and community health committees to take action in addressing health-related issues at the level of the community.

Counties	No. of Districts involved	Facilities with completed action plans
Lofa	3	5: Fanguda, Nyandemoilahun, Barkedu, Foya Tengia, and Porluma
Montserrado	4	3: Kingsville, Johnsonville and Mount Barclay
Bong	7	3: Palala, Shankpallai and Gbatala
Cape Mount	5	4: BamBalla, Jundu, Dmaballa and Bomboja
Maryland	5	1: Gbloken
Grand Kru	5	1:Gbaken
Grand Gedeh	4	1: Toffoi
River Gee	4	1: Gbeapo Health center
Grand Bassa	5	1: Garduor
Nimba	7	1: Duotaiyee
Bomi	3	1: Zordee

As of March 31, 2022, 22 community action plans are completed. Each action plan is linked to a supported health facility and the surrounding catchment areas (as shown in the table).

These community generated plans reflect co-created solutions that will help to improve health outcomes. For

example, a community in Bong (Glangalee community) is using proceeds from bean farming to provide medical treatment for a community member at CB Dunbar hospital.



A family planning-focused billboard in Ganta, Nimba



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