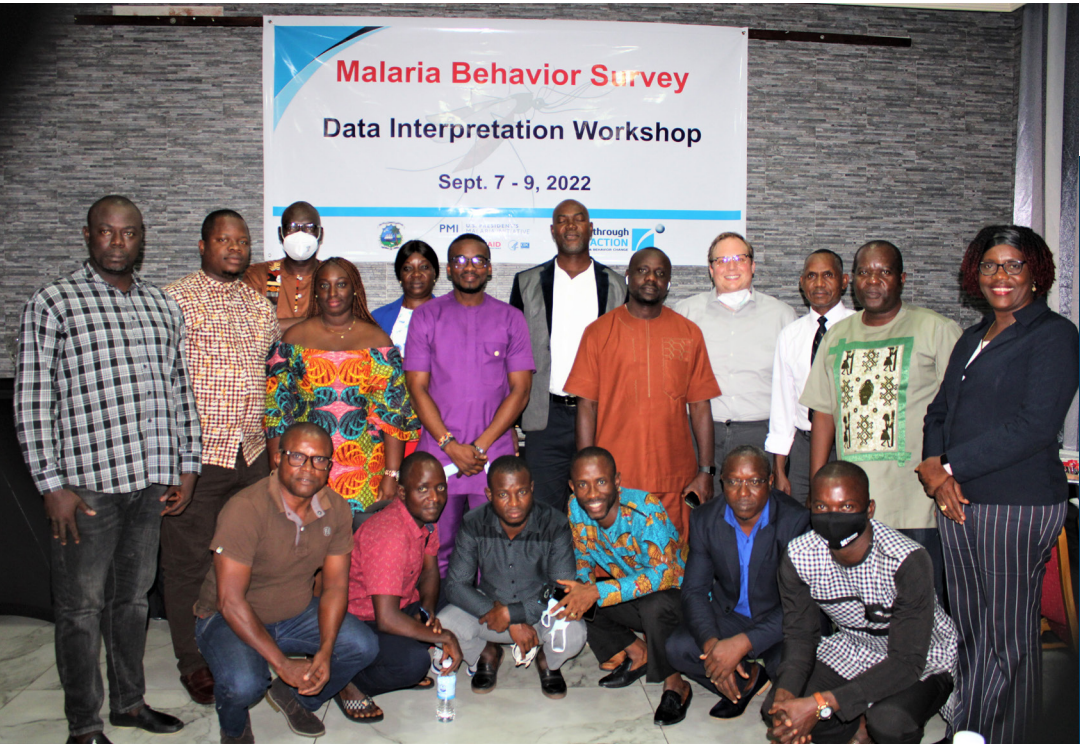


Breakthrough ACTION Liberia

NEWSLETTER

April to September 2022



Malaria behavior survey data interpretation workshop partners and stakeholders pose for photo.

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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 and to implement quality 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 (GHSA). 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 April to September 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

Data Interpretation Session for Improved Learning



Malaria Behavior Survey (MBS) data interpretation workshop.

In collaboration with the National Malaria Control Program (NMCP), Breakthrough ACTION conducted the malaria behavior survey (MBS) that was followed by a technical data interpretation workshop involving

malaria partners, stakeholders and donors in Liberia. The workshop created the space for key technical persons to collaboratively interpret and analyze the results generated from the MBS.

Breakthrough ACTION has identified data interpretation workshops as a best practice to increase data relevance, quality, ownership, and utilization.

Malaria Costed SBC Strategy

Breakthrough ACTION Liberia provided financial and technical support to NMCP to carry out a series of activities leading to the finalization of a five-year costed malaria operational plan (2022-2026). This was done to sustain gains made toward progress, which serves as a guide for the implementation of the national malaria SBC strategy. The process included the drafting and sharing of

the operational plan with relevant stakeholders for review and input and hosting a two-day working session to finalize activities and cost-planned activities, held from May 23-24, 2022, at the Ministry of Health (MoH). The NMCP led the budget costing through its finance team and was guided by their technical team leads and the Breakthrough ACTION Liberia malaria team. Participants gained an

appreciation for the importance of SBC, linking it to activities that cut across malaria intervention areas, including malaria in pregnancy, case management, and integrated vector management. The operational plan is expected to serve as a resource mobilization tool for unfunded SBC activities.

Supported Validation of School-based ITN Distribution Strategy



Participants at the malaria school-based ITN stakeholder validation meeting.

Breakthrough ACTION malaria team members in a two-day stakeholders' meeting held from August 1-2, 2022, validated the first-ever NMCP school-based ITN distribution strategy based on lessons learned from a successful implementation pilot in Montserrado County. This is consistent with the Ministry of Health (MoH) plan, through NMCP, to continue school-based ITN

distribution intended to increase net access through the school-based distribution channel. The validation exercise brought together stakeholders from the MoH including NMCP and the National Health Promotion Unit (NHPU), and the Ministry of Education's school health division, as well as USAID PMI, WHO, Peace Corps, READ Liberia, Chemonics, and Plan International.

Breakthrough ACTION will continue to support SBC efforts for malaria by working in close coordination with NMCP and school-based net partners, in addition to the finalized implementation plan, to guide gradual scale-up of ITN distribution across all counties, starting with Bong and Nimba counties.

Malaria SBC Job Aid

Collaborated with STAIP to develop SBC tools addressing service provider behavior



Malaria in pregnancy job aid.

Breakthrough ACTION Liberia, on August 16-19, 2022, supported thematic leads from NMCP, NHPU, CHT representatives, and a creative team (writer and graphic artist), to collaboratively work and develop SBC tools seeking to address gaps in service provider behavior toward clients, as well as adherence to NMCP's malaria treatment guidelines. The session was held for four days in Monrovia, with an outcome that produced prototypes for two job aid posters, and two testimonial video scripts focused on malaria

case management and malaria in pregnancy (MIP). At the end of the working session, prototypes were pretested at pre-selected health facilities in rural Montserrado at four selected health districts. Based on the collaborative agreement, STAIP is expected to print and disseminate the final job aid across the project counties, while NMCP will print and disseminate the final job aid in three non-project counties within health facilities for the intended use.

MNCH

Facility-based Delivery Pilot Activities

Breakthrough ACTION Liberia continues building on findings generated from facility-based delivery (FBD) assessments to understand negative behavior influencing FBD. The assessments were done in Tewor and Gola Konneh districts, Grand Cape Mount County, seeking to improve uptake of FBD, for which a two-day co-design workshop was held for prototypes expected to be used in addressing barriers surfacing from the assessment. Immediately after the co-design workshop came

multiple rounds of user-testing of the prototypes in Grand Cape Mount, Montserrado, and Bong counties. The user testing sought to solicit feedback from end users to refine, eliminate, and make additions to the prototypes. Feedback from the user testing was incorporated into the solution, and it was refined for piloting being done by AmeriCares, which was identified for the solution piloting in Grand Bassa County. The pilot is expected to assess the effectiveness of the implementation solution set, collect

evidence on the appropriateness of the solution, and understand the challenges associated with it, thus refining the solutions for scale-up and integration.



Training for TTM to highlight FBD efforts.

Respectful Maternal Care Strategy Technical Assistance

Breakthrough ACTION supported the Ministry of Health and partners in finalizing the first-ever respectful maternal care (RMC) strategy for Liberia, which was launched during the recent Universal Health Coverage (UHC) event held on December 12, 2022. The strategy details various approaches intended to better RMC for Liberia, which the MoH and partners would use to better client and providers relationships across the 15 counties, inclusive of four facility-based delivery (FBD) solutions which are Mobilizing Community Transportation, Mothers First Facility Commitment, Delivery Logistics Planner, and Big Belly Savings Tracker. The process of finalizing the RMC strategy is wrapped around a set of solutions that were piloted at C.B. Dunbar Hospital, and Zeansue and Fenutoli clinics, in Suakoko and Jorquellah districts, Bong County. Later, an outline was developed showing evidence-based interventions and best practices that are needed to improve RMC in Liberia. Also, a two-day writing workshop with key partners and stakeholders was held from August 22-23, 2022. The RMC charter elements were also reviewed prioritizing partners and various stakeholders for inclusion in the national RMC strategy, and the associated interventions of the prioritized elements were developed including the language of implementation considering three levels: policy, health facility, and community.

Please see link: <https://thecompassforsbc.org/project-examples/liberia-national-respectful-maternity-care-strategy>



Participants of IPCC training pose for photo.

Adoption of IPCC Program from Breakthrough ACTION Nigeria

Breakthrough ACTION Liberia collaborated with the MoH, FHP, and partners to adapt and adopt an Interpersonal Communication and Counseling (IPCC) curriculum from Breakthrough ACTION Nigeria. A two-day review meeting was held to adapt documents that address issues of local context. After the review meeting, the document was cleaned up, compiled, and later validated. The final version

was adopted by FHP as a national curriculum for training healthcare service providers in IPCC, to improve interactions with clients, and support having a client-centered environment at health facilities. After finalizing the IPCC training curriculum, a six-day training-of-trainers (ToT) stepdown was held for national and subnational MoH staff. Breakthrough ACTION Liberia later collaborated with CHTs and MoH national, to plan and finalize IPCC scale-down training in seven counties, including Montserrado, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Margibi, River Gee, Lofa, and Nimba, focused

on presenting all five sessions of the IPCC manual, dealing with client-center approaches, understanding IPC, counseling, empathetic communication, and empathy building, which characterized role play, exercise, group work, presentation, demonstration, and interactive discussions. Ninety-two of the total 276 individuals trained were FP service providers. The training included a Breakthrough ACTION-developed empathy building activity called Empathways, which uses interactive prompts and one-on-one conversations between service providers and young people to build empathy and help service providers understand their young clients.

FP/RH

Increasing Demand for Modern Family Planning



Nimba County Adolescent Health Club during one of their session.

Breakthrough ACTION Liberia finalized the first cycle of 80 adolescent health clubs and led graduation and certification activities for 1,050 adolescents in Bong, Nimba, Grand Cape Mount, Lofa, Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Maryland, and Grand Kru counties. Graduates were transitioned to becoming family planning (FP) ambassadors for their peers, families, and the community. This led to the establishment of 250 clubs, 25 per county with 25 members, in 80 communities with existing clubs, and 170 new communities. Each county has 15 adolescent girls' clubs and 10 adolescent boys' clubs. The

clubs are divided by sex due to the sensitive nature of the reproductive health lessons within the discussion guide. The second cycle began with expansion to new communities and counties, so the club discussion guide was upgraded to include new topics on reproductive health and social issues. In addition to the eight old counties, the activity was expanded to two new counties, Montserrado and Grand Bassa, based on the teenage pregnancy rates mentioned in the LDHS 2019/2020. Furthermore, Breakthrough ACTION Liberia launched recruitment for family planning consultants and conducted a two-day orientation

session for them in February 2022. Thirty FP consultants formed part of the initiative, to strengthen SBC capacity in community engagement and social mobilization, participatory facilitation techniques, and integrated gender approaches. Supported by district reproductive health supervisors (DRHS), FP consultants began to follow up with club activities, to ensure meetings and other activities planned were held, which includes awareness in communities focused on adolescent reproductive health issues and utilizing club discussion guides during themed days.

Recruitment of Family Planning Consultants



Group photo of FP consultants recruitment.

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WASH

Applying WASH Data to Develop WASH SBC Materials

Practice Proper Food Hygiene



1
WASH YOUR HANDS WITH SOAP AND CLEAN WATER



2
SEPARATE FOOD BEFORE YOU COOK



3
KEEP YOUR POTS AND SURROUNDINGS CLEAN BEFORE YOU COOK



4
COVER FOOD PROPERLY AND PUT IN A CLEAN PLACE



SBC Material on Food Hygiene

Breakthrough ACTION Liberia finalized the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) study in October 2021, and disseminated findings focused on behavioral determinants of urban and rural WASH behaviors. In March 2022, the findings were applied to the design of six SBC WASH-focused materials (three audio and three print). The materials were developed in close consultation with the WASH commission, NPHIL, Ministry of Health, and CHTs of Grand Gedeh, Nimba, Grand Cape Mount, and Montserrado. Since being developed the materials have been disseminated across the country. Three audio materials were disseminated on 45 national and subnational radio stations across the 12 project-supported counties. NPHIL printed a poster focused on Food Hygiene.

Launched Hygiene for Health Campaign

Breakthrough ACTION provided technical assistance to NPHIL on the hygiene for health strategy 2022–2027. The strategy outlines key strategies the Government of Liberia and its implementing partners will use to improve WASH outcomes over the next five years. It is a costed strategy with an implementation timeframe that defines the next steps for improved infrastructure, and objectives for communication programming, including monitoring framework. Breakthrough ACTION provided technical inputs on the background section and introduced findings from recent Breakthrough ACTION WASH and sanitation studies completed in 2021, for key audiences, behaviors, communication channels, and projected timelines.

Findings were related to behavioral drivers of slippage and recommendations for building social norms around toilet use. In preparation for the launch of the Hygiene for Health Campaign Strategy on June 30, 2022, Breakthrough ACTION provided financial support for print materials, including printing 150 copies of the strategy itself.

See WASH study links on rural sanitation (<https://thecompassforsbc.org/project-examples/breakthrough-action-liberia-rural-sanitation-report-2021-0>) and peri-urban water (<https://thecompassforsbc.org/project-examples/breakthrough-action-liberia-peri-urban-water-study-report-2021>).

GHSA

RCCE Step-down Training Strengthens Stakeholder Engagement



A photo scene from RCCE Step-down training in Margibi.

Breakthrough ACTION Liberia conducted one Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) step-down training in Margibi, from May 9–10,

2022. At the training, there were 40 persons, all of whom were One Health stakeholders at the county, district, and community levels. The training was led and supported by the newly

formed county-level RCCE technical working groups (TWG), with additional technical support from the national RCCE TWG and Breakthrough ACTION. The training focused on information on risk communication and community engagement, One Health, rumor management, and the roles and responsibilities of the RCCE TWG. The completion of said training in Margibi brings to completion Breakthrough ACTION's step-down training in 12 counties, reaching a total of 569 One Health stakeholders trained. Ten of the 12 Breakthrough ACTION counties held their inaugural county-level RCCE TWG coordination meetings, with the exception of Lofa and Bong, as they continued to hold regular monthly coordination meetings and community engagement activities.

HAC Members Benefit from RCCE Training

Breakthrough ACTION customized a RCCE training for health advocacy committee (HAC) members in the three regions. The training covered all 12 Breakthrough ACTION project counties, excluding Gbapolu, Sinoe, and River Cess. The two-day training session reached a total of 141 total beneficiaries, of which 123 HAC members are influential community and opinion leaders, 11 CSO representatives, drawn from health districts, and seven county-level RCCE TWG members (animal and human health surveillance officers who facilitated the training). The training content includes the following topics the concept of PZDs, its background, host, and means through which it can be spread and prevented with a particular focus on Lassa fever, rabies, and bovine TB; introduction to the One Health platform, an overview of the RCCE TWG and its stakeholders, and their roles and responsibilities; reinforcing knowledge and skills in SBC communication, outbreak response, and review and practice of strategies for effective risk communication, including the identification and management of misinformation, rumor identification, information of the three selected PZDs (Lassa fever, rabies, and Bovine TB) relating it to advocacy issues.

One Health Message Guide Validated



Participants at a two-day technical review for the draft One Health message guide.

Breakthrough ACTION Liberia provided technical and financial support to hold a two-day technical review session held on the draft national One Health Message Guide for PZDs. The session brought together technical One Health stakeholders, including communication experts and One Health NGO partners such as UNICEF, IRC, AIFO, PIH, and STOP Spillover. The review session was spent collaboratively editing the document and making inputs that will inform the technical design of activities and materials tailored to raising awareness, promoting healthy behaviors, and engaging communities in the prevention and management of zoonotic diseases in the message guide.

Support National-Level RCCE TWG to Finalizing Monkeypox Response Plan

Breakthrough ACTION provided technical support to the national-level RCCE TWG to finalize an RCCE response plan for Monkeypox. The plan, among other things, solicits from One Health RCCE partner's collaborative support to RCCE activities in two counties that reported cases of monkeypox illness,

including would-be counties with the outbreak, and to tighten surveillance across the country, especially in bordering counties. The director of the National Health Promotion Unit of MoH, and the national chairman of the RCCE TWG thanked Breakthrough ACTION and other One Health RCCE

partners and rallied stakeholders to tackle outbreaks. Breakthrough ACTION later continued providing technical and capacity-strengthening support to the RCCE TWG at both the national and subnational levels.

Utilizing CHWs for Prevention of Zoonotic Diseases



Rabies awareness session held with community members.

Breakthrough ACTION Liberia printed and disseminated 180 copies of the revised One Health governance manual, 180 Healthy Life jackets, and 40 USB flash drives to active RCCE TWGs during their initial meetings as part of the capacity-strengthening support. The flash drives are loaded with awareness audio messages on the prevention of Lassa fever, rabies, and bovine TB. They can be used by CHWs via megaphones for community engagement across project communities.

RCCE Rumor Tracking and Management Tool Validated

As part of efforts to improve RCCE by reducing rumors and misinformation, Breakthrough ACTION Liberia provided technical and financial support to validate the developed One Health rumor tracking and management tool log and Terms of Reference. The developed log reflected aspects of both

the NPHU's rumor monitoring tool and NPHIL's surveillance tool. The two-day validation workshop brought together 18 participants, from NPHIL, MoH, MOA, and the Montserrado CHT to review and validate the National One Health Rumor Tracking and Management Tool. The validated tool will be used by all

One Health stakeholders and partners involved in risk communication. The workshop also reviewed and finalized criteria for rumor management task force members, institutions, and positions.

COVID-19

Ensuring CHTs and Media Report Responsibly During Public Health Emergencies



Participants during the media professionals orientation training working session.

Breakthrough ACTION Liberia held an orientation session for 37 radio professionals from seven counties: Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Grand Kru, Margibi, and Bong, from August 17-18, 2022, to provide an overview of COVID-19 vaccine, and discuss the role played by media professionals in supporting public health emergencies, risk communication and rumor monitoring efforts. By the end of the training, all participants were added to the national rumor-monitoring WhatsApp chatroom by the NHPU rumor-monitoring coordinator.

Additionally, Breakthrough ACTION Liberia held an orientation session for malaria focal persons to strengthen their skills in rumor monitoring and reporting, especially as it relates to the negative impact of COVID-19-related rumors on ITN use. A rapid assessment showed that negative perceptions held against COVID-19 affected net distribution in an estimated 34 health districts in eight out of fifteen counties during the mass net distribution in 2022.

During the orientation, emphasis on the importance of integrating the malaria focal persons into existing rumor management systems at the central and county levels was highlighted, as well as outlining their role in ensuring adequate follow-up in close collaboration with other units (e.g., health promotion, community health, EPI, etc) to address and debunk all misinformation and rumors.

Using Incentives to Increase COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake



Breakthrough ACTION Liberia leveraged upon the existing work of other Breakthrough ACTION projects in Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon, to design and test approaches contributing to increased uptake of COVID-19 vaccine that utilizes small incentives, lotteries, or raffles. The activity sought ways to leverage healthcare workers in the promotion of incentives, and referral of individuals to get vaccinated and receive their vaccination cards.

Breakthrough ACTION developed the appropriate approach to incentivize COVID-19 vaccine uptake with significant input from key stakeholders and end users over a three-month rapid rollout held in 12 districts in three counties, Bong, Margibi, and Bomi (i.e., pens in Bong County, keychains in Bomi County, and keychains with mirrors in Margibi county).

The distribution in Bong and Margibi, coincided with the COVID-19 social mobilization and mobile vaccination activities, while in Bomi, distribution was done at health facilities, as the county prepared for the integration of the COVID-19 vaccine into routine immunization. A total of 16,500 incentives were procured, of which 3,750 were mirrors, 3,750 keychains, and 9,000 pens.

Integrated SBC Activities

Communities are an important source of social connection as research has shown that having stronger social ties influence multiple and interrelated health outcomes, including health behaviors. Additionally, community leaders have been shown to inspire change among their community members, making them a critical resource for sustaining SBC efforts for improved health outcomes.

Recognizing this importance, Breakthrough ACTION Liberia used an integrated participatory SBC approach to identify, prioritize, and address community health issues by bringing together key stakeholders from all levels to identify the most critical health issues within their communities, develop community action plans that outlined the root causes of these prioritized health problems, and develop community-driven solutions to address these problems. The problems surface from all thematic health areas,

which are malaria, RMNCH, WASH, and prevention of priority zoonotic diseases (PZDs). Breakthrough ACTION Liberia worked with existing health structures, including CHTs, DHTs, facility-based staff, community health structures such as CHAs, Community Health Volunteers (CHV), Community Health Committees (CHC), HFDCs, and local government, and the media to train 300 members of community health structures on SBC and community mobilization. Participants were from the county, district, and health facility levels, and represented 435 catchment communities where 62 health facility catchment area action plans were rolled out to improve outcomes related to malaria, MNCH, FP, WASH, and PZDs.

The implementation of the community action plans across the selected catchment communities contributed to:

1. Construction of 70 latrines,
2. Repair of 16 handpumps, and
3. Building of 16 dish racks.

Furthermore, Breakthrough ACTION Liberia continued to use the SMART Advocacy approach to work with influential community leaders to change social norms, reduce harmful practices that negatively affect health, and increase investment in community health. Since January 2021, Breakthrough ACTION Liberia worked with the Governance and Decentralization Unit (within MoH) to establish Health Advocacy Committees (HACs) across project counties. As of August 2022, HACs are present in 46 districts across 12 project counties. Each HAC brings together traditional leaders, religious leaders, and influential leaders at the county and district levels to discuss and promote health-related issues affecting communities.

The approach involves orienting community structures and civil society organizations to develop advocacy plans, identify advocacy issues, gather evidence, map-out key stakeholders responsible to make the change, and engage and resolve health issues while advocating for better funding and policies through relevant stakeholders and authorities. Using the SMART Advocacy approach, the HAC engagements resulted in the following achievements:



Repair work done on a damaged handpump.

1. Constructed 85 public and private latrines across 12 counties.
2. Repaired 83 handpumps.
3. Constructed 30 new handpumps in Grand Kru, Grand Bassa, and Maryland.
4. Constructed 15 landfills for proper waste disposal in Grand Cape Mount and Bong Counties.
5. Repaired and fenced nine handpumps in River Gee, Grand Cape Mount, and Bomi counties.



A handpump repaired and fenced.

Additionally, the Duoplay Health Facility was renovated while the Bahn Health Center ambulance was repaired, along with a revolving fund being established to support the purchasing of fuel for ambulance services. Also, 50 outstanding HAC members were identified and orientated as advocacy champions in key topics of MNCH, GHSA, and WASH from Maryland, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, River Gee, and Nimba counties.



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