



SUCCESS STORY

Sierra Leone



Rebecca Swaray, head community health nurse in-charge, Thompson Bay, Freetown.
Photo by: Princess M.

NAME: Rebecca Swaray

ROLE: Head Nurse In-Charge

LOCATION: Freetown, Sierra Leone

SUMMARY: USAID's MOMENTUM Country and Global Leadership project revitalized a key maternal community health post in Freetown, improving its ability to provide quality health services for mothers, pregnant women, and children.

SUPPORTING LOCAL S/HERO'S EFFORT TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH SERVICES

In 2017, community health nurse Rebecca Swaray used her personal funds to build the only health clinic in Thompson Bay, a neighborhood in the capital city of Freetown.

The maternal community health post (MCHP) serves vulnerable women and children within the facility's catchment population of 11,000 people—and Rebecca is the head nurse in-charge. A semi-permanent structure constructed with zinc sheets, Thompson Bay MCHP is the only clinic providing basic health and emergency services to mothers, pregnant women, and children from Thompson Bay, Cockle Bay, and other temporary settlements along a major road in Freetown.

The health post was among the first of 26 facilities selected by the U.S. Agency for International Development's MOMENTUM Country and Global Leadership project, in collaboration with the district health management team (DHMT) of Western Area Urban district, to support infection prevention control (IPC) readiness improvements and strengthen two-way communication between the community and the DHMT.

The goal of the initiative is to address community concerns about accessing health services during the pandemic.

After conducting a baseline assessment, Thompson Bay MCHP received a distribution of infection prevention and control materials and personal protective equipment, including examination gloves, soap for handwashing, disinfectant, hand sanitizer, face shields, masks, elbow gloves, cleaning kits, and a handwashing station.

During a visit to the clinic, MOMENTUM staff noticed patients and health workers were exposed to rains due to inadequate window coverings and rain seeping through the rusted ceiling.

Following the visit, MOMENTUM worked with facility staff and community members to reactivate the community-led facility management committee and mother support group. These reactivated groups developed plans to improve the facility's condition. During the two-day reactivation meeting, MOMENTUM learned that heavy rains and a leaking roof in the labor and delivery room caused patients to at times be referred to other facilities further away from their community to deliver. In some cases, patients opted to deliver at home with traditional birth attendants instead of going to facilities under those conditions. With support from community members, MOMENTUM worked with a local contractor to complete minor repairs by installing a new roof, doors, and windows with mesh and shutters; replacing all external zinc sheets; and painting external walls to protect it from rust.

"I decided to help build the clinic back in 2017 during the rainy season. Then, the clinic was a makeshift tarpaulin structure. I could not stand the sight of children, mothers, and pregnant women drenched by rain while waiting for medical checkup and treatment...I did not do this because I am rich. I am like any average nurse. I did it because I felt I should help the Thompson Bay community, especially because I knew this would benefit the children and the pregnant women."

THOMPSON BAY MATERNAL COMMUNITY HEALTH POST BEFORE MOMENTUM:



THOMPSON BAY MATERNAL COMMUNITY HEALTH POST AFTER MOMENTUM:

