

Working Together to Reduce Maternal Mortality in Liberia Sustainable Maternity Waiting Homes

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Honors Program

City/Country

- Monrovia, Liberia
- Liberia is a small country in West Africa. Throughout the country, there are 15 counties of varying sizes and resources. Between these 15 counties, there are over 120 different Maternity Waiting Homes (MWHs) associated with many different community health facilities.

Other Important Background

- Within Liberia, there is a high incidence of maternal mortality and near miss events, which may be attributable to delays in care-seeking due to distance from health care facilities.¹
- MWHs have been developed in order to offer women a place to stay when they are farther along in their pregnancy or experiencing a high risk pregnancy. These homes allow them to be closer to hospitals and other health clinics at the time of delivery, or should any complications arise.
- I became involved with this project through my interest in maternal and child health, and my desire to be a part of the Honors Program at the University of Michigan School of Nursing.

Experience

Date: May 19th-24th, 2018

Information

This trip included partnerships with Africare Liberia and the Liberian Ministry of Health, as well as Community Health Team members and pregnant women from the area. We held a day-long conference at Phebe MWH with all of these groups to hear different perspectives on what is going well with the MWHs, and what needs to change. Our goal was to gain insight into potential solutions to improve the sustainability of the MWHs.

Purpose of Trip:

Our intention is to collaborate with Ministry of Health officials, local community members, and global health leaders in developing interventions to enhance the functionality of the MWH model. We will use our findings from research that we have collected over the last 8 months and suggestions from our collaborative meeting at Phebe MWH to establish an approach to increase food security and overall use of MWHs across Liberia.

Outcomes

Based on insights from this meeting, we have started about agricultural interventions, resources needed at the MWHs, potential help from outside sources, and the possibility of using insects as an alternative food source for the women who stay at MWHs. We hope to integrate this with our research findings from interviews with health care providers and community members across Liberia to determine the best way to improve these facilities and promote facility based delivery.

Skills Developed/Lessons Learned

Throughout this trip, I was able to learn how to communicate and collaborate with people from all over the world with various areas of expertise. I also practiced strict time management skills, because it was crucial to make the most every day during this trip in order to leave with an idea of how to proceed in developing our project.

Career Connections

- This trip provided a lot of insight into the research process and an opportunity to learn from and collaborate with global health leaders. I was also able to see how health care is provided to pregnant women in rural communities of a developing country.

Advice

- Whether preparing for your trip or already in country, don't be afraid to ask questions and speak up!
- Be open to new experiences and unexpected opportunities that may arise.

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References

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