

EBOLA SURVIVORS & CHAMPIONS!

A Facilitator's Guide

**Ebola Survivors and Champions
A Facilitator's Guide**

2014

EBOLA SURVIVOR

“

I was the last link
in the Ebola chain

”



ALHASSAN

Name: Alhassan

Job: NGO Staff

Hometown: Kenema

When my mum got sick we thought she was suffering from her arthritis, we did not realize that she was infected with Ebola. I cared for my mum and helped her to move around because she was very weak, this was when I got Ebola from her. About a week after my mum died I began to feel a fever and started to suspect Ebola. I told my wife and child not to come near me, touch me, share food, or use the same toilet as me because I did not want to pass on the Ebola to them. I slept in a separate room from them.

I chose to walk to the hospital so that I did not infect any taxi or motorbike drivers. I avoided contact with people along the way. At the hospital they tested me and the test showed that I had Ebola so I was sent to the treatment centre. I was very scared in the treatment centre because lots of people were sick and sometimes people died around me. I didn't really understand who the people in the white suits were, and I even thought that they might be angels who had come to take me to heaven.

After several days I started to feel stronger. I was able to stand and walk around inside the centre. I helped the nurses to care for the other patients. After 12 days I was discharged from the treatment centre and now I feel healthy and strong. The days after my discharge were difficult as I have lost family members, and many of my belongings had to be destroyed, but I was happy to be well. I was also happy that my wife and son did not get Ebola from me because I broke the Ebola chain. When you meet a Survivor, please embrace him or her as your brother or sister. It is safe to be around us and we need you to give us courage.

1. How did Alhassan break the Ebola chain and protect his wife and son?

When Alhassan was sick he told his wife and child:

- not to come near him
- not to touch him
- not to share food with him
- not to use the same toilet as him

He also slept in a separate room from them.

When people are sick with Ebola, their body fluids (saliva, sweat, blood, vomit, stools) are infectious. If someone else touches them they will get sick. Alhassan made sure his wife and child did not get Ebola by making sure they did not have any contact with his body fluids.

2. Why was it a good thing that Alhassan did not take an ocada to the health facility?

If Alhassan had taken an ocada to the hospital, the ocada driver might have come into contact with some of Alhassan's infectious body fluids and been infected with Ebola. When people are sick with Ebola they should avoid using public transport and either walk to the health facility, or call for an ambulance to come and pick them up.

3. Who were the people in white suits that Alhassan thought were angels?

These people were healthcare workers wearing white protective suits. All nurses, doctors, and other staff inside the treatment centres have to wear protective suits, masks, gloves and boots so that they do not have contact with the Ebola patients' infectious body fluids. Their protective gear is important as it keeps the healthcare workers safe and healthy so they can continue to care for Ebola and non-Ebola patients.

EBOLA SURVIVOR

“

I am one of the
safest people to
be around!

”



JULIANA

Name: Juliana

Job: Student

Hometown: Bo

I did not believe that Ebola was a real disease at first. Everyone was saying that it came from the government and that hospital staff were killing people in the hospital. Then one of my relatives got sick and died, and then my brother got sick and was admitted to the hospital. When they tested him the test showed he had Ebola. When I started to suffer from vomiting and diarrhoea, I realised Ebola was a real disease and I needed to see a doctor or I would die. I went to the hospital and the test showed I had Ebola so I was admitted to the treatment centre.

After some time in the treatment centre, I started to get better until one day they did the test and it showed I no longer had Ebola and could be discharged. Now I feel healthy in my body but my mind is struggling because I lost my cousin, my fiancé and my 11-month old son to Ebola. In the community people are scared to come close to me, but they are happy I am alive. People are surprised. They say hello, but they don't touch me or want to share meals with me. This is difficult for me. I hope that soon people will realize that Survivors no longer have Ebola, and are immune. In this way, Survivors are actually the safest people to be around!

If you feel anything unusual in your body, report early to the nearest health facility to get treatment. Even if you don't think that it's Ebola, it is better to go to the health facility to be tested rather than wait at home. The longer you wait the more risky it is, for you, and your family.

1. Why would people in the community be surprised to see Juliana now?

Many people still don't realise that you can survive Ebola. People in the community are probably surprised to see Juliana now because when they heard that she had Ebola, they assumed that she would die. It is important to spread the message that people who are sick, even if they have Ebola, can survive if they get early treatment.

2. Why does Juliana say that Survivors are the safest people to be around?

Survivors are people who have had Ebola but recovered. When their test shows that they no longer have Ebola in their body, they are discharged from the treatment centre. It is safe to be around Survivors because they no longer have Ebola and so cannot pass it on, and because they are now immune. Being immune means that they cannot get Ebola again. This is why Juliana says they are the safest people to be around. Survivors are invaluable to Sierra Leone in the fight against Ebola.

3. If you are sick, why is it risky to wait before going to a hospital?

If you are sick with Ebola, the longer you wait the more sick you will get, and the less likely it is you will survive. Also, people who have Ebola are contagious, this means that they can pass Ebola to others through their infectious body fluids, and so they can put their family at risk. People sick with Ebola or suspected Ebola should go to a health facility as soon as possible, and their families should avoid any direct, unprotected contact with them or their body fluids.

EBOLA SURVIVOR

“ I feel 100% healthy! ”



SULLIAMAN

Name: Sulliaman

Job: Student

Hometown: Kenema

I did not believe in Ebola at first. Even after my mum died and I began to feel sick, I did not believe it was Ebola. I thought it could be Malaria, because I usually get Malaria, and because when the symptoms started, it felt similar. I had a fever, headache, and bad vomiting and diarrhea. I was scared to go to hospital, I hid from my family and from healthcare workers because I knew they would suspect Ebola. I was reluctant to go to the hospital because I had heard that the doctors would kill me.

But after four days I couldn't hide anymore, I was too sick. My older brother who works for the Red Cross convinced me to go to the hospital. An Ebola ambulance collected me to take me there. When I got to the treatment centre I was very sick. I was not eating anything but the doctors encouraged me to eat and drink. I did not think I would live, but after some days I began to feel better.

When I was released from the treatment centre I felt ok but I had some stiffness in my joints. I exercised and stretched daily and felt stronger every day. Now I feel 100% healthy. My message to others is do not fear the hospital, it is there to help you not hurt you. Go early for treatment. The nurses and doctors are all working very hard to help people survive.

1. Why did Sulliaman think he had Malaria?

Sulliaman thought he had Malaria because Sulliaman usually gets Malaria and the symptoms he felt – fever, headache, vomiting and diarrhea – are the same kind of symptoms he feels when he has Malaria. Ebola is hard to identify because at the beginning, it looks almost the same as other sicknesses. This is why it is important that anyone who is sick is encouraged to go to the health facility early, even if they don't think they have Ebola, so that a test can be done and they can know for sure. In the meantime people should not touch or share food or a toilet with that person.

2. Why was Sulliaman scared to go to hospital?

Sulliaman was scared to go to the hospital because he had heard that the doctors would kill him. There are many rumours like this which make people afraid of health facilities and healthcare workers there to help them. We can all help to stop these rumours and give the right information that can save lives.

3. What would have happened if Sulliaman's brother hadn't convinced him to go to the hospital?

Sulliaman left it very late before going to the hospital, and was already very sick by the time his brother convinced him to get treatment. If he had left it any longer he probably would not have survived Ebola and would not be around today to tell his story.

EBOLA CHAMPIONS



VICTORIA

Name: Victoria

Job: Nurse

Hometown: Freetown

I chose to work in an Ebola treatment centre because I saw the need to take a bold step to help my country fight against Ebola. Safety comes first. To keep myself and those around me safe, I take all the necessary precautions. I wear a protective suit, mask, gloves and boots every time I go into a ward. Before I go into a ward, I ask a colleague to check my protective gear.

You don't need to be scared of healthcare workers wearing the protective gear. We are humans just like you. At the treatment centre we make sure the patients can see us changing in and out of our protective suits so they know that it is just normal men and women inside. We are just trying to prevent ourselves from getting sick.

I want people to go to a health facility as soon as they start to show symptoms. It's better if people go to a health facility immediately as then we healthcare workers can treat them and it is more likely that they will get better. If they leave it until they are really sick, it may be too late.

My mission is to help the patients and promote life.

1. Why do you think it's good that Victoria asks a colleague to check her protective gear?

Because of healthcare workers like Victoria, there are health facilities where people sick with Ebola can get treatment. With this treatment people are much more likely to recover from Ebola, and their families are less likely to get infected. Without health facilities, people sick with Ebola would stay at home and because Ebola is so contagious, the Ebola chain would continue and more people would get sick and die.

2. Why do you think it's important to find out how patients became infected?

The body fluids (saliva, sweat, blood, vomit, stools) of Ebola patients are infectious and anyone who comes into direct contact with them will get sick. Healthcare workers wear protective gear so that they can care for patients without coming into direct contact with their body fluids. The protective gear has to be put on correctly and checked for any gaps or holes where fluids could reach the healthcare worker's skin. If there are gaps or holes the healthcare worker is not safe. It is good that Victoria asks a colleague to check this as it would be hard for her to see everything and any mistakes could lead to her getting sick.

ÉBOLA CHAMPIONS



MOHAMED & JOYCE

Name: Mohamed & Joyce

Job: Ambulance Drivers

Hometown: Freetown

We are drivers who volunteered to help in the Ebola response because there were not enough ambulance drivers. We were both a bit scared at first, but we have undergone training and now know how to put on, wear, and take off the protective gear safely. We follow the procedures very strictly to keep ourselves, our families and others safe.

When there is a sick person who might have Ebola, we get called to go and pick that person up and transport them to a health facility. When we reach the person we explain to the people around why we are there, and what we will do. Sometimes people are afraid of us and so we explain to them that we are there to help, and not hurt, the patient. Before touching or approaching the patient, we put on our protective suits, masks, gloves and boots.

We let the bystanders watch us so they understand that we are just normal people inside the suits. Next we ask the patient to get into the ambulance. If the person is very sick sometimes we need to lift them in, but this is safe because we are wearing the protective gear.

Once the patient is in the ambulance we drive them to the health facility. There we advise the doctors about the patient and help the patient out of the ambulance and into the ward. Finally we have to disinfect ourselves and the ambulance according to strict procedures and then safely remove our protective gear.

1. Why might Mohamed and Joyce have been a bit scared when they first started their jobs?

It is natural that Mohamed and Joyce were a bit scared when they first started their jobs. Ebola is a serious disease which spreads from person-to-person. Healthcare workers, ambulance drivers and everyone else engaged in the fight against Ebola are Champions because they are putting themselves at risk to help others. Being a little bit scared helps these Champions to be extra careful as they carry out their work so that they keep themselves safe and protected.

2. Why do ambulance drivers put on the protective gear even before they know if the patient is sick with Ebola?

Ambulance drivers put on protective gear before going near or touching any patient. Until the patient has been seen by a doctor and had an Ebola test to show whether they have Ebola or not, they should be treated carefully. Patients should be not be touched by anyone who is not wearing protective gear, and others should be careful not to come into direct contact with their body fluids.

EBOLA CHAMPIONS



Constable
SALIM KARGBO

Name: Constable Salim
Kargbo

Job: Policeman

Hometown: Freetown

I have been a policeman for four years now, I work at the Youyi Government Building in Freetown. To help in the fight against Ebola, I check temperatures and look for Ebola symptoms among those entering government buildings. I am not scared of Ebola because I follow all the precautionary measures. My colleagues and I listen to the radio and follow the advice given by the government such as washing hands, and not touching people. I believe that if I follow this advice I will be safe from Ebola.

People should not be afraid of the police. If you see police officers working at a roadblock and checking temperatures you should not worry. They are just working alongside their medical colleagues to help make sure that any sick people are advised to go to a health facility where they will have better chances of survival.

1. Why do police officers take people's temperatures?

One of the first symptoms of Ebola is a sudden fever. By taking people's temperatures, police officers can see if they have a normal or a high temperature. If they have a high temperature, the police officer can see that they are sick and advise them to go to a health facility. Lots of sicknesses can give you a high temperature, so if you have a high temperature it does not mean you have Ebola. But to be on the safe side, anyone with a high temperature should go immediately to a health facility for advice.

2. Why are sick people advised to go to health facilities?

Sick people are advised to go to health facilities so that they can get advice, and if necessary get tested for Ebola. Often sick people don't think they have Ebola but the only way to know for sure is to get tested. If the test is negative the patient is reassured and can focus on getting treatment for whatever is causing their problem, and if the test is positive, the patient can be referred to an isolation or treatment centre. In this case, the patient's chances of survival are much higher if they get to a treatment centre early.

