



**Annual  
Impact  
Report**  
July 1, 2023  
through  
June 30, 2024



**Rural  
Health Care  
Initiative**

*Improving health & nutrition for  
women & children in Sierra Leone*



## Mission

*The Mission of Rural Health Care Initiative is to partner with rural communities in Sierra Leone to redevelop health care systems and to overcome one of the highest maternal and child mortality rates in the world.*

# Dear Donors,

On behalf of RHCI, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for your unwavering support. Through your generosity, we can continue our vital work in Sierra Leone, bringing much-needed healthcare to women and children in underserved communities. Your contributions have made a significant impact, and during my recent trip to Tikonko, I witnessed this firsthand.

In Tikonko, I had the opportunity to see how RHCI's efforts are transforming lives. I met with the staff and members of our key partners: Bo Children's Hospital, Cotton Tree Pharmacy, and Bo Government Hospital. These meetings were incredibly productive, and I'm excited to share that we have signed a new memorandum of understanding with these institutions. This agreement will strengthen our collaboration, enabling us to improve the quality of care for the people we serve.

The impact of RHCI's work is clear. The women and children in Tikonko and the surrounding areas are deeply grateful for the services we provide. From reducing child mortality and preventing unwanted pregnancies to helping



*Ajayi and Neneh (right) with board members Lamin Foray and Maggie Pilacinski*

nourish young children, our work makes a real difference. The people of Tikonko, Bo, and Sierra Leone as a whole appreciate the life-changing support we can offer, thanks to your help.

Your generosity saves lives, and I cannot thank you enough for making this possible. Together, we are creating brighter futures for the people of Sierra Leone, and I look forward to continuing this journey with you.

With deepest appreciation,

Ajayi J Ajayi-Nicol  
*RHCI Board Chair*

## Meet Neneh Conteh Vandy, Country Director



*Neneh Conteh Vandy*

Neneh Conteh Vandy, RHCI's new In-Country Director, brings over a decade of healthcare experience to her role, with a focus on maternal and child health. As a registered nurse and nutritionist, her leadership positions, including Night Superintendent at the Government Hospital in Bo—a key RHCI partner—have equipped her with the skills to manage teams, mentor junior staff, and oversee patient care.

This extensive background perfectly aligns with her current work at RHCI, where she now leads efforts to expand healthcare access in underserved communities.

Neneh's passion for healthcare is deeply rooted in her upbringing: "As a child, I always felt a strong pull towards a career that would allow me to positively touch people's lives." Her work with RHCI allows her to fulfill that mission by improving healthcare in rural Sierra Leone. "Working with RHCI is like a dream come true for me," she shares. "It broadens my experience and gives me the opportunity to make a meaningful impact in underserved areas like Tikonko Chiefdom."

In her role, Neneh is focused on enhancing healthcare access through mobile outreach clinics, training local healthcare providers, and fostering community involvement. Her leadership is driven by a firm belief that improving maternal and child health outcomes is essential for a brighter future in Sierra Leone.

RHCI is proud to welcome Neneh as our new leader, and we are excited to have her on board to guide our mission forward.

# Increased Impact

## Major Expansion of Health Care Services for Mothers and Children



From 2022 to 2024, RHCI has witnessed a significant expansion of our services, reaching many more beneficiaries in the Tikonko Chiefdom. Our efforts are transforming the landscape of maternal and child health in the region, marked by extraordinary growth in several program areas. Examples of these

expansions, based on data from the 2023-24 fiscal year, include:

- **Child medical visits surged by 67.5%** driven by the introduction of additional outreach clinic services in the remote villages of Sembahun Tabema and Kassama.
- **Child hospitalizations**, fully covered by RHCI, saw an astounding **105% increase**, ensuring that 324 children received critical care.
- **Malnutrition visits** for moderate and severely malnourished children **expanded by 51.4%**, reflecting the urgent need for these services.
- **Nurse visits** to villages for vaccinations, vitamin A distribution, and deworming medication have become a vital new program, resulting in **2,944** visits this past fiscal year alone.
- Another new initiative, the **Newborn Nurse Home visits**, recorded **2,060 visits** in its first year, offering essential postnatal care.
- Our **Malaria Case Management program** provided **1,662 child visits** for diagnosis and treatment this past year.



- In maternal health, **Birth Waiting Home stays** in Tikonko and Gondama **rose by 11.4%**, offering safe, monitored environments for 323 expectant mothers.

- Our newly established **support program** for women with obstetric complications at **Bo Maternity Hospital** provided transportation and hospital supplies for **153 women**, starting in 2023.
- Most importantly, we are thrilled to report **no maternal deaths this past year**. Since the inception of our first birth waiting home in January 2018, a total of **1,541 pregnant and postpartum women** have benefited from these safe spaces.

This remarkable growth underscores both the success of our programs and the immense unmet need for maternal and child healthcare in the Tikonko Chiefdom. More families with limited resources are now aware that they can access essential medical care for their sick or malnourished children—services that were previously out of reach.



As our programs expand, so does our need for additional funding to sustain this life-saving work. While we have secured several small grants over the past two years, the demand continues to grow. With the continued support of our current partners and the engagement of new ones, we are committed to serving the Tikonko communities and beyond.

# Rural Health Redevelopment

In numerous remote villages, access to healthcare remains limited. Over the past year, our mobile outreach initiatives have delivered:



**10,977** Child medical visits at Outreach Clinics

**4,035** Family Planning consultations and care

**1,298** Prenatal care visits

**1,794** Patient visits at Peripheral Health Units

**\$12,450** in donated medical and baby supplies

**\$16,750** of Vitamin Angels supplies

Trainings for **89** Community Health Workers



## Isatu's Story: A New Beginning with RHCI



19-year-old Isatu welcomed her first baby while staying at the Birth Waiting Home. "I am so grateful for the support of RHCI," she says, reflecting on her journey. When her baby fell ill with a fever, the nurses provided the necessary medication and trained her on how to care for him properly.

Isatu is at RHCI's mobile outreach clinic for family planning. "My husband and I decided together that I would get the injection. Before, I was in school, then I got pregnant. I want my baby to grow up before I have another one. Without RHCI, I would be in a bad place. I would not have the money to support my child's health because me and my husband are just farmers and don't have an income. We are healthy now because of RHCI."



# Maternal Health Programs

## Ann's Story: A Safe Haven for Mothers



Ann, with her 2-week-old son Mathew, expressed gratitude for her time at RHCI's Birth Waiting Home. "I happily stayed here during my pregnancy," she shares. This wasn't Ann's first experience at a Birth Waiting Home. During her first pregnancy, she had stayed at one operated by Doctors Without Borders (MSF). When

MSF left the area there were no facilities for her or other mothers to stay near the clinic in the final stages of pregnancy. Women were forced to walk miles, oftentimes in labor, to the nearest health center. When RHCI opened our second Birth Waiting Home in the village of Gondama, there was joy and a sense of relief as Ann and others now had a place for to stay before giving birth.

Ann, with a voice filled with emotion, shared, "When I was referred to the Birth Waiting Home, I was sick with malaria and had swollen feet. There, I was cared for up until Mathew's birth." It was at the Birth Waiting Home that Ann received the necessary medical care, a comfortable bed, three nutritious meals a day, and, on top of that, health education on the importance of breastfeeding and taking care of her son. Ann, like many others, says, "Thank you so very much!"



In Sierra Leone, approximately one in every 31 women will lose their lives due to pregnancy or childbirth, a stark **9,700% higher** than the U.S. rate of around one in every 3,000. RHCI remains dedicated to facilitating access to expert care throughout the entire pregnancy journey, coupled with health education, nutritious food, and reliable transportation.

Pregnant and postpartum women have received care at our two Birth Waiting Homes since 2018.

**1,541** Pregnant and postpartum women stayed at our two Birth Waiting Homes since 2018



In the past year:

**323** Birth Waiting Home stays in Tikonko and Gondama

**153** Pregnant women referred to and supported at Bo Maternity Hospital

**Over 400** Basic OB ultrasound scans performed

**1,298** Prenatal Care Visits visits at Outreach Clinics



# Children's Health Programs



One out of every nine children in Sierra Leone does not survive to reach the age of 5, a staggering 17 times higher than the corresponding rate in the U.S. The prevalence of malnutrition, malaria, respiratory infections, and diarrhea significantly contributes to this distressing mortality pattern. A notable 30% of children suffer from growth stunting. Throughout the preceding year, our initiatives covered:

**2,451** Malnutrition visits for children



**324** Critically ill children with transportation and coverage of hospital expenses

**2,060** Newborn home visits performed by nurses



**2,944** Visits for immunization catch-up, Vitamin A, and deworming medication

**1,662** Malaria Case Management Visits by Community Health Workers



## Salena's Story: A Journey of Hope and Healing



Salena faced a terrifying challenge when her 6-month-old daughter became severely malnourished. "I didn't believe she would survive," Salena recalls, the fear still evident in her voice. With the support of RHCI she was enrolled in the malnutrition program. Salena received essential food, healthcare, and guidance for her daughter from Umu,

RHCI's Nutritionist. "Umu taught me how to feed her with Bennimix [supplemental food provided by RHCI], attend outreach clinics for check-ups, and get the medication she needed. Now, my daughter is healthy."

When Salena became pregnant with her third child RHCI continued to support her and her children. "I stayed at the Birth Waiting Home during my pregnancy, ensuring my baby's safe arrival. And when my 10-year old son fell ill with malaria, RHCI was there again, providing treatment during an outreach."

With a grateful heart, Salena shares, "This program is very good to me. You saved my baby's life."

# Food Security and Agriculture

## Hawa's Story: Growing More Than Crops



In the heart of the Tikonko Chiefdom, Hawa with her 4-year-old daughter Yatta, reflects on her previous harvest. Her fields yielded a bountiful crop of groundnuts, cassava, and sweet potatoes, providing much-needed sustenance for her family. Now, as the new season begins, she prepares to plant even more groundnuts, confident in the support she receives from the Farmer-Based Organization (FBO).

"I use all of RHCI's services—FBO, outreach for family planning, children's health checkups, and more," she shares with a smile. "Because of the FBO support, I grow a lot of my own food now. I grow rice, groundnut, cassava, and sweet potato. Before the FBO, each of my other children had to be in RHCI's malnutrition program. But now, Yatta is not in the program because I am growing my own food, and food with the FBO, for her and my family."

Her story is a testament to the power of RHCI's Food Security and Agriculture program, where improved techniques and collective farming efforts have led to a remarkable 300% increase in food production. Families like hers are no longer just surviving, they grow enough food to nourish their children and break the cycle of malnutrition.

Amidst stark hunger statistics, an estimated 40% of the population is undernourished in Sierra Leone. RHCI empowers rural farmers, especially women, through hands-on technical training and expert consultations, to grow nutritious foods. Furthermore, the on-site farm and garden at the Birth Waiting Home, provides food supply for patients, bridging health with agricultural prosperity. This past year we provided:



**45** Farmers with continuous agriculture training

**161** Expectant mothers with agricultural training at the on-site garden

**300%** Increase of food production on collective farming sites





# RHCI Fights Malaria

## Grants addressing malaria in the RHCI service area show strong impact



**Malaria Partners International**

Malaria Partners International along with the White Bear Lake, Minnesota and Bo Rotary clubs have supported RHCI in activities to prevent and treat malaria.

### The Tikonko Chiefdom Malaria Project

The Tikonko Malaria Project implemented a multi-pronged approach to address the high rate of malaria in the Tikonko Chiefdom. This grant blended multiple existing RHCI programs and infrastructure to develop



*Community Health Worker Training on ITNs (Insecticide Treated Nets) and knowledge and community engagement on malaria at Kassama.*

new strategies to reduce malaria cases with a target on infant, child and maternal morbidity and mortality.

The strategies included education, prevention and treatment. Community Health Workers (CHWs) were instrumental. Grant activities included: distribution of insecticide treated nets (ITNs), early diagnosis and treatment of malaria in six villages by CHWs, and education for communities to support ITN use and malaria prevention behaviors.

### Impact:

- **35,800 ITNs distributed** in ten days
- **1,662 Child visits by a Community Health Worker** in their village for early diagnosis and treatment of malaria
- **Reduced child hospitalizations** for malaria
- **0 Child deaths** from malaria in the malaria case management villages
- **89 Community Health Workers** received training to support households that received ITNs and to provide community education on malaria prevention and treatment

# RHCI Fights Malaria

## Community Health Worker comments on the CHW Malaria Case Management Program

*Translated by Joseph Sogbandi,  
RHCI Malaria Grant Manager*

The RHCI/Bo Rotary Malaria Project has had a profound personal impact on Jonathan Taika, reflecting a significant positive transformation in his life. As he was previously engaged as a Community Health Worker (CHW) the implementation of the Malaria Project provided Jonathan a new opportunity to better serve his community.

Through this project, Jonathan's capacity to fulfill his responsibilities as a father were bolstered, through the provision of a stipend for his dedicated work. The project recognized his invaluable contributions as a CHW, empowered and equipped him with the essential supplies.

By affording Jonathan with resources, the RHCI/Bo Rotary Malaria Project enabled him to continue his vital work within the community and enhanced his personal and professional well-being. Jonathan's experience serves as a testament to the positive impact and transformative potential of the RHCI/Bo Rotary Malaria Project on the lives of those it serves.



*Malaria Case Management CHW Jonathan Taika in his village, Gelehun.*



## NEW in 2024: Malaria Vaccine Project



The malaria vaccine project will incorporate activities to increase the opportunity for young children to receive the full protocol for the new RTS,S/AS01 malaria vaccine. Through this project, RHCI will support skilled nurses to visit villages where they will provide children with the four-dose series of vaccines. Existing malaria prevention (Intermittent Preventive Treatment for Infants, or IPTi) for infants will be continued along with vaccination at the village visits. RHCI will support the cold storage requirements at the eleven health posts in the Chiefdom with this project.

# One Day's Wages Three-Year Grant



RHCI's success with the one-year grant from One Day's Wages (ODW) in 2022-23 opened the door to a new three-year partnership with this remarkable organization.

ODW's vision of "creating a global grassroots movement where our collective efforts build a more just and beautiful world" aligns closely with RHCI's mission. Their support is focused on alleviating extreme poverty by investing in and amplifying the work of locally-led organizations in underserved communities around the globe, and we are proud to be one of their partners.

Each year of this grant cycle requires RHCI to match half of the funds through contributions from our generous donors. **Thank you to our many faithful donors who have generously participated to make this match possible.**



With the support of this grant, RHCI has expanded its programs for children, community health workers, and mothers into even more villages. One such initiative is the **Newborn Home Visit program**, where nurses travel to remote villages to educate families and monitor

the health of newborns and their mothers, with the aim of reducing infant mortality. Our **Vaccine Update program** has also been instrumental in improving vaccination rates in the Chiefdom, reducing the risk of diseases such as measles, polio, and tetanus. Alongside these essential vaccines, we provide Vitamin A and Albendazole (for deworming) every six months to children in remote areas and at outreach clinics.



Community Health Workers (CHWs) are crucial in these efforts. The ODW grant has allowed us to enhance training and resources for CHWs, whose close ties to their communities are key to the positive outcomes we are seeing. Additionally, thanks to this partnership, children up to age 10 are now receiving vital medical care, ensuring they have a healthier start in life.

This grant also bolsters our child hospitalization services and the expanding malnutrition program. Thanks to these efforts, more parents are bringing their children to RHCI's outreach and local clinics for lifesaving medical and malnutrition care at earlier stages of illness. The significant increase in the number of children receiving services is a powerful testament to the success of these programs and the critical need to continue them.

# Our Team

## Sierra Leone Staff



Neneh Conteh Vandy *In-Country Director*; Lamin Abu; Isata Bah; Sam Bindi; Moses Carter; Allieu Jongopie; Saffie Jusu; Mohamed Fatorma; Mohamed John; Mohamed Kabba; Abdulai David Kai; Mohamed Kalokoh; Andrew Kemokai; Bobson Koroma; Dennis Moiwo; Mohamed Momoh; Juliana Sagba; Lansana Sesay; Umu Shour; Joseph Sogbandi; Marie Songa; Margaret Sylvalie; Mariama Tarawally; Patrick Vandy

## Board of Directors



Ajayi Ajayi-Nicol *Chair*; Marie Stodolka *Vice Chair*; Peter Gogra *Treasurer*; Maggie Pilacinski *Secretary*; Rev. Dr. Neil Craigan; Riley DeLude; Dr. Beth Detlie; Komba Fayia; Lamin Foray; Julie Hoffer; Dr. Carol Nelson; Dr. David Parker

*Board of Directors with Founder, Alice Karpheh. Missing Ajayi Ajayi-Nicol and Beth Detlie*

# A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Donors



To our incredible community of 262 donors, including 67 new supporters who joined us this past year, we extend our deepest gratitude. Your unwavering generosity and commitment have been the cornerstone of every achievement highlighted in this

report. Because of you, the mothers and their children in Sierra Leone have access to improved health and nutrition services, saving countless lives and offering hope for a brighter future.

Each donation, no matter the size, has a ripple effect that reaches far and wide. You empower our dedicated team to continue their vital work. We cannot thank you enough for your support, which fuels our mission and inspires us every day. The impact of your generosity is immeasurable, and the people of Sierra Leone are forever grateful. Together, we are building a healthier, stronger community, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for being a part of this transformative journey.



## Special Thanks

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Belinda Breit, who for the past ten years has lovingly created post-partum hygiene kits ensuring that new mothers have the essentials they need, and “Days for Girls” Kits that give dignity to schoolgirls during menstruation. Belinda has collected thousands of items for the baby kits that are hugely appreciated by the mothers of newborns. Your dedication is truly inspiring, Belinda. Thank you also to the many relatives and friends, including Presbyterian Women, that support you in this project.

Additionally, a big thank you to Jenny Craigan, who plays a vital role in collecting the baby items, packing the barrels for shipment, and ensuring that all the supplies reach their destination safely. Jenny, your hard work behind the scenes is a crucial part of our success. And thanks to your support team and to First Presbyterian Church for their contributions to the barrel shipments.

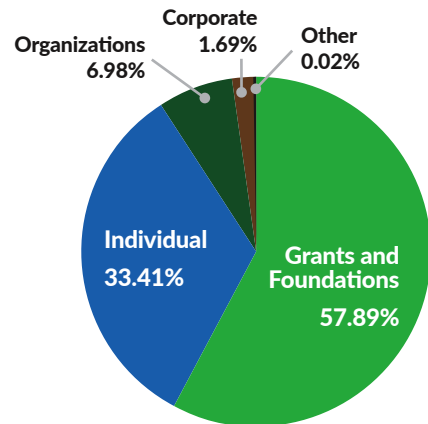
Together, with the generosity and commitment of all our supporters, we are making a lasting impact on the lives of countless families in Sierra Leone. Thank you for standing with us on this incredible journey.



# RHCI Financials

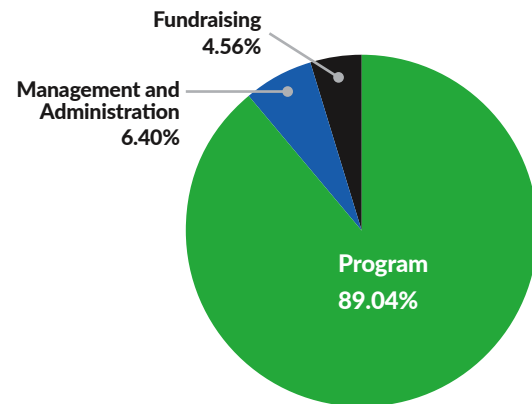
## Revenues

Grants and Foundations	\$ 215,090	57.89%
Individual	\$ 124,143	33.41%
Organizations	\$ 25,951	6.98%
Corporate	\$ 6,292	1.69%
Other	\$ 69	0.02%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 371,545</b>	



## Expenses

Program	\$ 305,474	89.04%
Management and Administration	\$ 21,957	6.40%
Fundraising	\$ 15,654	4.56%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 343,084.70</b>	



Rural Health Care Initiative

For updates follow us



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