

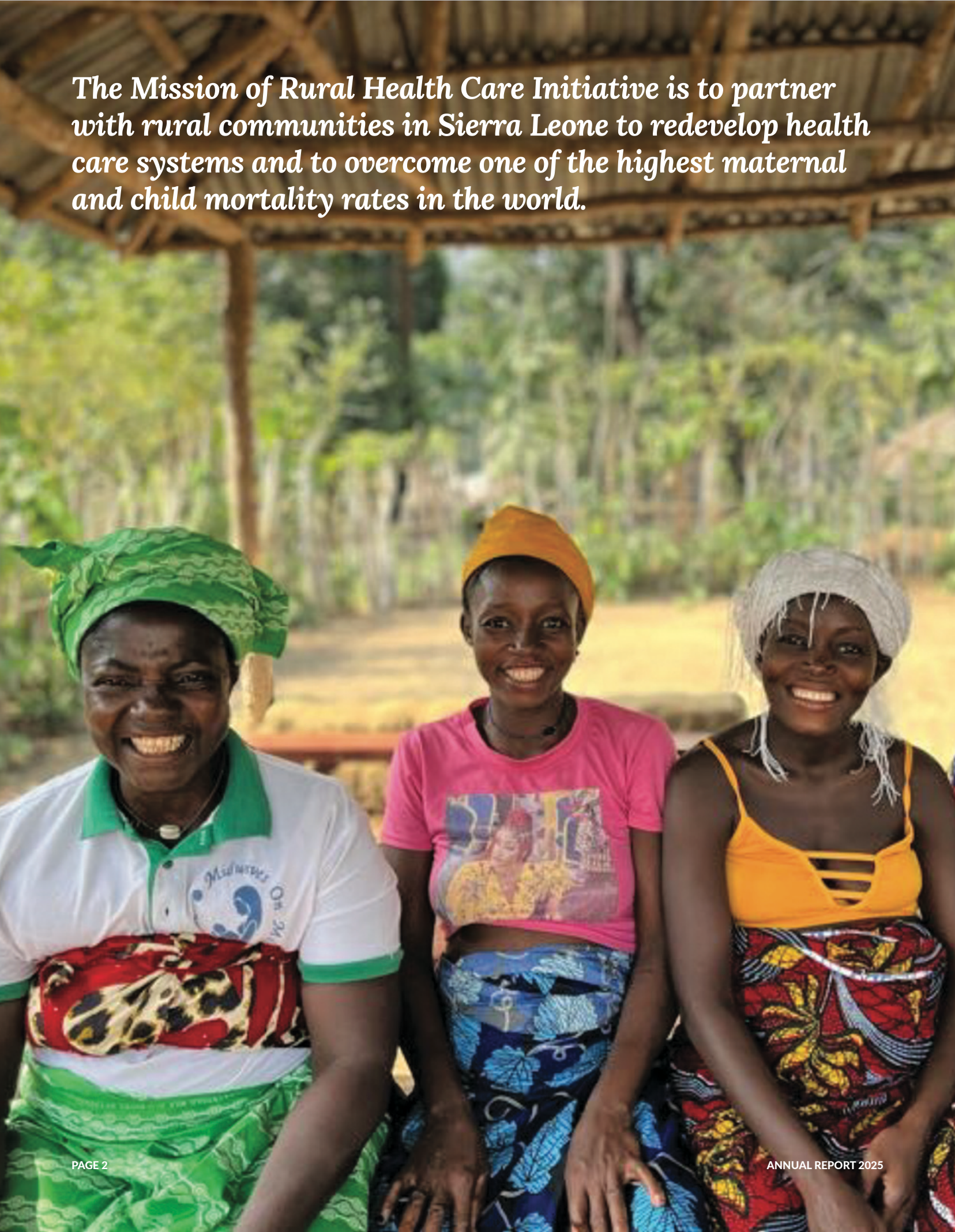
Annual Impact Report

July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026

Rural Health Care Initiative

Improving health & nutrition for women & children in Sierra Leone

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.



About Sierra Leone



Located in West Africa, Sierra Leone continues its journey toward a healthier future for mothers and children. While significant maternal and child health challenges remain, the country has made remarkable progress in recent years. Maternal mortality has declined from 1,682 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 354 in 2023, demonstrating what is possible when communities, healthcare workers, governments, and nonprofit organizations work together toward a common goal.

Despite this progress, far too many women and children continue to face barriers to accessing quality healthcare, particularly in rural communities. Yet there is reason for hope. Increased access to care, strengthened health systems, and dedicated local leadership are improving outcomes and creating brighter futures for families across the country. Rural Health Care Initiative (RHCI) is proud to partner with Sierra Leonean healthcare professionals and community leaders to help expand access to lifesaving maternal and child health services, empowering communities and advancing lasting change for generations to come.

Dear Partners

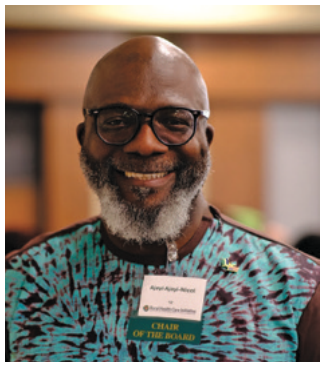


As I begin my service as Board Chair of RHCI, I want to thank you for the generosity and commitment that make our work possible. Because of your support, RHCI continues to improve the health and well-being of women and children in rural Sierra Leone through maternal health services, community outreach, nutrition programs, family planning, vaccinations, and lifesaving referrals.

This year brought significant progress as we continued to support mothers through our Birth Waiting Homes, deliver critical healthcare services in underserved communities, and strengthen local health systems through collaboration with hospitals, clinics, and Community Health Workers.

We are especially excited about the award of a major global malaria grant through Rotary International and the Rotary Clubs of White Bear Lake, MN and Bo, Sierra Leone. Over the next two years, this funding will allow RHCI (as the implementing partner) to expand malaria testing and treatment services, increase access to malaria vaccines in more than 113 villages, and implement community-wide prevention efforts that will reach thousands of children and families.

As we celebrate these accomplishments, we also recognize the leadership of our outgoing Board Chair, Ajayi Ajayi-Nicol. Ajayi's dedication to RHCI has been invaluable — his partnership with our incountry staff and his deep understanding of Sierra Leone's laws, customs, and culture have helped guide RHCI's growth and strengthen our relationships throughout the communities we serve.



"I have always believed that it is better to serve than to be served. It has been my honor and privilege to serve RHCI, and I look forward to continuing to support its mission in the years ahead." — Ajayi

As we thank Ajayi for his years of leadership, we are also excited to welcome Lamin Foray as RHCI's new Board Co-Chair. Lamin has been a dedicated member of the RHCI Board and a passionate advocate for our mission, and his knowledge, leadership, and commitment to improving the lives of women and children in Sierra Leone will be tremendous assets as RHCI continues to grow.

Most importantly, thank you to all of our donors, partners, volunteers, and supporters. Because of you, mothers have safer pregnancies, children receive lifesaving care, and communities are building healthier futures. We look forward to continuing this important work together.

With gratitude,

Marie Stodolka
Board Chair
Rural Health Care Initiative (RHCI)

Maternal Health Programs

Jeneba's Story: A Safe Place to Wait



In Sorgbehun village — four miles from Tikonko, a walk that can take two to three hours over rough terrain — Jeneba knew she couldn't risk waiting for labor to begin at home. So she came to stay at RHCI's Birth Waiting Home, arriving weeks ahead of her due date and staying more than a month under the care of RHCI's nursing staff.

Every day, she was fed three meals and tea, and had nurses close by who checked on her and her growing baby. "The nurses were so caring," she said. "I felt safe knowing help was right there if anything went wrong."

Today, Jeneba's baby Elizabeth is four months old and healthy. Looking back, she says the weeks she spent at the Birth Waiting Home gave her something she couldn't have found at home: peace of mind during one of the most vulnerable times of her life.

"Thank you to everyone who supports RHCI," she said. "Because of you, mothers like me have a safe place to go."

Maternal mortality in Sierra Leone remains among the highest in the world. The lifetime risk of a woman dying during pregnancy or childbirth improved from approximately 1 in 20 in 2010 to roughly 1 in 74 in 2025, remaining among the highest globally. Many mothers die from causes that are treatable and preventable: severe bleeding, infection, and high blood pressure. RHCI's system of care, including birth waiting homes, prenatal services, mobile outreach clinics, and family planning, continues working toward a future where no woman fears childbirth.

In the past year, we've celebrated:

339 Pregnant and postpartum women stays at RHCI Birth Waiting Homes

190 High risk pregnant women referred to and supported at Bo Maternity Hospital

3,968 Family Planning consultations and care

553 Basic OB Ultrasound scans





Children's Health

Child health outcomes in Sierra Leone remain among the worst in the world. Roughly 1 in 11 children still do not survive to their fifth birthday— a rate 18 times higher than in the United States (UNICEF). Malaria, malnutrition, preventable infections, and surgical conditions are among the leading causes of death. RHCI provides essential services including vaccinations, early malaria treatment, outreach clinics, hospital referrals, nutrition support, and community health education.

RHCI's children's health initiatives continue to reach families across the Tikonko Chiefdom:

2,618 Child visits for malnutrition

223 Critically ill children hospitalized with transportation and hospital expenses covered

3,098 Newborn home visits by trained nurses

13,296 Visits for immunizations catch up, malaria vaccine, vitamin A, and deworming medication

12,141 Child medical visits at Outreach Clinics



Joseph's Story: A Race Against Time



During a routine outreach stop in Lembema village, RHCI's team came across a child in the middle of a medical emergency. Joseph Sam, just 8 years old, was doubled over in pain. His parents explained that he'd suddenly developed severe abdominal pain and vomiting, and when RHCI's outreach nurses examined him, they found the cause: a swollen, painful hernia in his groin that would not push back into place. Left untreated, an incarcerated hernia like Joseph's can cut off blood supply within hours and quickly become fatal.

There was no time to lose. RHCI referred Joseph immediately to Dasse Hospital, where he underwent emergency surgery. The operation was a success. Joseph recovered fully and was discharged home safely, with RHCI supporting his family through every step of his care and recovery.

Today, Joseph is back home in Lembema — healthy, active, and surrounded by his family. Without RHCI's outreach team on the ground that day, and the swift referral that followed, his life would have been in serious danger. His story is a powerful reminder of why RHCI's Mobile Outreach Clinics matter: they reach children exactly when — and where — they need care most.



Empowering Communities

Kai Jigba's Story: Ready to Answer the Call



Kai Jigba has spent years as a Community Health Worker, walking miles between homes across her catchment area. This May, alongside 156 fellow CHWs from Mattru, Kassama, Gondama, and Tikonko, she gained new tools for the job: how to trace children who've missed their immunizations, recognize the earliest danger signs in a newborn or a pregnant mother, and know exactly when a family needs to be referred for care.

As the CHWs' lead representative, Kai stood before her colleagues at the training's close and spoke on their behalf—thanking RHCI for the investment and asking for more opportunities like it. Her request reflects something RHCI hears again and again: CHWs like Kai aren't just willing to do this work. They're asking for the chance to do more of it.

In the remote villages of the Tikonko Chiefdom, RHCI works alongside communities to strengthen the health systems already taking root—not just deliver care, but build the local capacity to sustain it. RHCI provides hands-on training for Community Health Workers (CHWs) and health facility staff, collaborating with local stakeholders. This ensures even the most isolated communities have access to care.

This past year, our training included:

23 Health facility staff trained in Helping Babies Breathe and Essential Newborn Care

110 CHWs trained in immunizations and preventive treatment

116 CHWs trained in essential newborn care

88 CHWs trained to support nutrition through cooking demonstrations

45 Farmers trained in agriculture practices and nutrition



Grants Expand the Fight Against Malaria

In February 2026, RHCI began implementing a two-year Rotary Global Grant in **partnership with the Rotary Clubs of White Bear Lake, Minnesota, and Bo, Sierra Leone**. Together, the project is expanding access to malaria prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and vaccination for families across the rural Tikonko Chiefdom. Funding was provided by over 75 Rotary Clubs, five Rotary Districts across the USA, and Rotary International Foundation, plus Malaria Partners International (MPI), and Rotarians Against Malaria Global.



CHW administering malaria vaccine

With the **goal of reducing childhood malaria, hospitalizations and deaths, one of the grant's programs is training Community Health Workers** (CHWs) to diagnose and treat malaria in their own villages. By June 2026, twelve CHWs had completed training and were providing testing and treatment in their villages. Six additional CHWs are scheduled for training in December. Early reports show that malaria remains a major health challenge, with some communities reporting positive test rates of up to 95% among patients with malaria symptoms.

The grant is also increasing **access to the RTS malaria vaccine for children** in more than 100 villages and RHCI's 16 outreach clinics. In addition to protecting children against malaria, nurse visits provide routine childhood immunizations, Vitamin A supplementation, and deworming treatment— bringing multiple life-saving services to families who otherwise have limited access to health care.



2 year old child with malaria



Nurse Saffie preparing malaria vaccine

The grant also emphasizes **strong community partnerships**. Meetings with village leaders, community members, and the Rotary Club of Bo have helped build local ownership and support for the program, laying the foundation for long-term success. A malaria testing and treatment campaign is underway in four remote villages. The goal of the campaign is to **reduce the overall burden of malaria** in each village by including treatment for all people who test positive, including those without symptoms.

Although still in its early stages, this Rotary Global Grant is already strengthening community-based health care and bringing life-saving malaria services closer to thousands of families in rural Sierra Leone. RHCI extends its gratitude to the many Rotarians and clubs involved in funding this life-saving grant which will benefit over 9300 children in Tikonko Chiefdom.

Christopher Foday Samking, a motorbike rider for RHCI's malaria and Newborn Home Visit programs, passed away in April 2026 at age 36. Known throughout Tikonko as a warm, energetic youth leader, he helped build the Mbao-mi Mothers' Home and touched countless lives during his years with RHCI. He leaves behind his wife and five children, and will be deeply missed.



Strengthening Partnerships, Saving Lives



Crossing the Tabe river

In January, three members of the RHCI's team in the US—Julie Hoffer, Carol Nelson, and Lamin Foray—traveled to Sierra Leone to reconnect with staff, strengthen partnerships, evaluate programs and witness firsthand the life-changing impact of RHCI's work.

The team spent time in the villages of Tikonko Chiefdom, accompanying staff on newborn home visits, observing the rollout of the recently introduced malaria vaccine, meeting with Bo District health officials, and providing training for local health workers. They also visited partner organizations, including Dasse Hospital in Bo, the Sickle Cell Disease Clinic at Mercy Hospital, and the Infant Care Center, sharing ideas and building relationships that will improve care for families across the region.

A major goal of the trip was launching activities for RHCI's new Rotary Global Malaria Grant. Working alongside the Rotary Club of Bo, the team visited rural health centers that will participate in this ambitious effort to expand malaria testing, treatment, prevention, and education throughout Tikonko Chiefdom.

While the meetings and planning were important, it was the people who made the greatest impression.

Parents spoke with heartfelt gratitude about children who had recovered from severe illness. Mothers staying at RHCI's Birth Waiting Homes shared how having a safe place near skilled medical care gave them hope and peace of mind as they awaited the birth of their babies.

One unforgettable day took the team deep into a remote village along the Tabe River. After crossing the river in a narrow dugout canoe, they accompanied RHCI's newborn home visit nurse from house to house. During the visit, they discovered a three-year-old boy lying unresponsive with severe malaria. The nurse immediately recognized the emergency and began lifesaving treatment. Without that timely intervention, he would not have survived.

Another memorable moment came while watching young children receive the newly available malaria vaccine. As one child after another was immunized, dozens of other children watched curiously. It was a powerful reminder that every vaccine, every home visit, and every partnership brings Sierra Leone one step closer to a generation protected from one of its deadliest diseases.

The journey reaffirmed why RHCI's work matters: lives are being saved not only through medical care, but through trusted relationships, dedicated local staff, and partnerships that make lasting change possible.



Collaboration with volunteer, Julie Hoffer, at Kassama Health Center

One Day's Wages Partnership

The nonprofit One Day's Wages has partnered with RHCI in two grants spanning four years of program activity. Grant activities provided health care in remote rural hard to reach locations. Village Community Health Workers have been trained and supported in newborn care, immunizations, preventative treatments, nutrition, and in treatment for malaria and common illnesses. Capacity building and quality improvement activities were expanded to include skilled healthcare providers who support these rural communities.



Two new educational programs were implemented this year for licensed health care workers.

Helping Babies Breathe and Essential Newborn Care Training



Early infant deaths contribute to the high infant mortality in Sierra Leone. In an effort to reduce these deaths, One Day's Wages funded a training program for midwives and nurses responsible for labor and delivery, and early newborn care. Five health facilities and two Birth Waiting Homes participated. Training was conducted by a national training team. Objectives included strengthening knowledge and clinical skills in safe delivery practices, neonatal resuscitation, and essential newborn care. The participants engage in weekly skills practice and monthly on-site visits to reinforce skills.

Aminata Kabba, Senior Midwife from the Gondama Community Health Clinic expressed gratitude, noting that the training has enhanced their ability to ensure more mothers and newborns have a safe and successful delivery. Steven Massaquoi, the Tikonko Chiefdom Medical Supervisor, expressed appreciation to RHCI for its continued support to the Ministry of Health.

Certificates were awarded to participants after the successful completion of the Helping Babies Breathe and Essential Newborn Care course.

Outreach Clinic Training

RHCI supports motorbike outreach clinics to sixteen sites from four healthcare facilities. Ministry of Health staff and RHCI clinical specialists provide the clinical care. Services include evaluation and management of common childhood illness, prenatal and postnatal care, malnutrition evaluation and management, and family planning services.

The outreach training was implemented to strengthen the capacity of 23 health care workers to provide safe, standardized, high-quality care in outreach settings. Topics included: protocols for diagnosis and management of illnesses, improving prescribing and treatment practices, and monitoring health care worker performance.

Post-training supervision visits provide technical support to ensure continuous improvement in the delivery of quality outreach services.

Aminata Koronko from Kassama expressed gratitude for the training. She highlighted the sessions have strengthened their capacity in planning and delivering effective outreach clinic services and appealed for more capacity building opportunities to support ongoing improvements in health care delivery.



Collaborations Expand RHCI's Impact

Sickle Cell Disease Clinic Opens in Bo, Sierra Leone

In August 2025, the Hawa Daphne Stevens Memorial Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) Clinic opened at Mercy Methodist Hospital in Bo, Sierra Leone. Developed through a year-long collaboration among healthcare professionals and organizations in Sierra Leone, the United States, and Europe, the clinic is the first dedicated SCD clinic serving Sierra Leone's Southern Province. RHCI is proud to be a partner in this team.

Sickle Cell Disease is a serious inherited blood disorder affecting 1–2% of newborns in Sierra Leone. Without treatment, most children die before age five. Until now, specialized care for these patients has been extremely limited in Sierra Leone.

Under the leadership of Dr. Morie Vandi, the clinic provides ongoing care, treatment, and education for families and children living with SCD. RHCI supports the program by transporting 20 patients each month from Tikonko Chiefdom to receive services. Currently, 66 children are enrolled in the clinic and are receiving regular care. Many more are on the waiting list to enroll.



Staff at SCD clinic with volunteer, Dr Carol Nelson



Fatmata, age 10, was a patient at the new SCD Clinic. Her mother shared with us, "I am really grateful. Now I am aware and know what to do and not do. Thank you to God for this clinic."

A key component of treatment is hydroxyurea (HU), a medication proven to reduce pain crises, infections, and complications while improving quality of life and reducing mortality. Combined with preventive medications, immunizations, and caregiver education, the program has led to fewer pain episodes, improved hemoglobin levels, and increased energy among participating children. Though available to all people with SCD in the USA and Europe, access to hydroxyurea is very limited in Sierra Leone and is being shipped from India for the clinic.

RHCI is proud to partner with Mercy Methodist Hospital and an international team of SCD experts to bring life-saving care to children who previously had little access to treatment. Together, we are creating a brighter future for children living with Sickle Cell Disease in Sierra Leone.

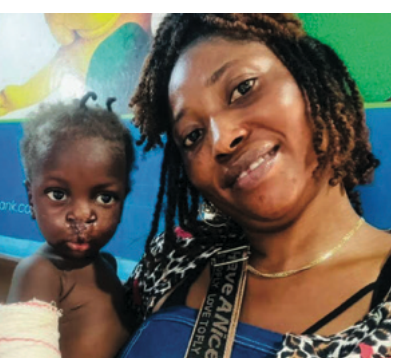
Thank YOU!

RHCI's impact this year was made possible by a community of people who believe in the health and future of Sierra Leone.

Thank you to our donors and financial supporters, whose generosity makes our work possible; our Minnesota volunteers, who packed and shipped vital medical supplies to rural clinics; and visiting volunteers, who shared their time and expertise in Sierra Leone.

We are especially grateful to Julie Hoffer for her work with the Grants and Monitoring & Evaluation teams, who make sure every dollar and every outcome is tracked with care. To the Petrie Hanson family, whose gift funded a new truck and parts. To Darin and Beth Pilacinski for hosting their Lakeside Jam for Good, which raised $75,000 for our mission. And to Carol Nelson for her continued partnership with an international team to advance sickle cell care in Sierra Leone.

We are also grateful for our many partners, including the Rotary Clubs of White Bear Lake and Bo, One Day's Wages, H2O for Life, Direct Relief, Growing the Grassroots, Njala University, the Sierra Leone Ministry of Health, Malaria Partners International, Rotarians Against Malaria Global, and Vitamin Angels.



Neneh Conteh Vandy with patient, baby Neneh

A Message from Our Country Director

It is a privilege to serve the people of Bo District, especially the communities of Tikonko Chiefdom. This year, RHCI has focused on strengthening maternal and newborn care, improving child health and nutrition, and investing in the local people and systems that make lasting change possible.

We are seeing more families engaged in their health, more children receiving immunizations, and more mothers and newborns receiving respectful, quality care. Community Health Workers, local leaders, fathers, elders, and health workers are all playing a greater role in building a health system that communities trust and own.

None of this would be possible without you.

On behalf of the RHCI team in Sierra Leone, and the mothers and children we serve, thank you for your trust, generosity, and partnership.

Because of you, more women are receiving safe and dignified care, more newborns are getting a healthy start, and more families have hope for a healthier future.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Neneh Conteh Vandy
Country Director, RHCI Sierra Leone

RHCI Financials

Revenue

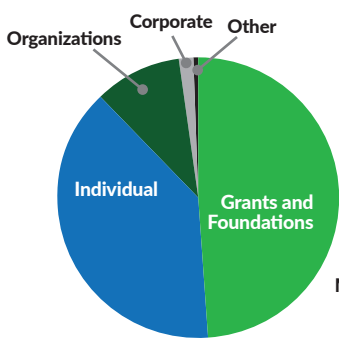
Grants and Foundations	$	243,326
Individual	$	195,044
Corporate	$	6,856
Organizations	$	48,532
Other	$	2,589
Total	**$**	**496,347**

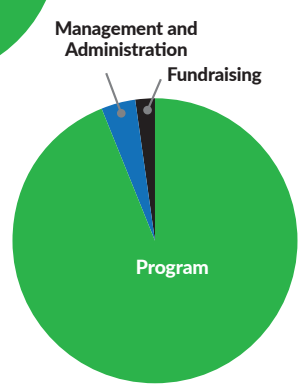
Expenses

Program	$	409,403
Management and Administration	$	16,660
Fundraising	$	8,627
Total	**$**	**434,690**
Net Income	$	61,657

This past year, RHCI made significant capital investments to improve its operations, including a new four-wheel drive truck and parts to better serve our beneficiaries.

Learn more at www.rhcimnsl.org





Rural Health Care Initiative

For updates follow us

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