

# Christian Health Association of Liberia (CHAL) Organizational Strengthening: Final Report

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Christian Health Association of Liberia (CHAL) is a faith-based health organization that provides advocacy, facilitation and assistance to improve quality of health care services from members' facilities to their local communities throughout Liberia. The member institutions of CHAL provide approximately 15% of health care in Liberia. Prior to the civil wars (1989-1997 and 2000-2003), CHAL played a significant role in improving the health of Liberia both through direct service delivery by its member institutions as well as community-based programs through the Churches and outreaches.

However, since the end of the civil war, CHAL has not been able to provide effective support to its members. It has faced many problems including a lack of governance/management. The declining of financial support from its members, and dwindling revenues have impacted CHAL's capacity to be an effective partner with the MoH&SW and in providing leadership to the faith-based sector and the primary health care for the poor people in Liberia.

With USAID Liberia Field Support, in Year 5 (October 2013 to May 2014), CapacityPlus through IMA World Health (IMA) provided technical assistance and oversight to CHAL in strengthening its organizational capacity. Total funding in the amount of \$50,000 supported the implementation of activities over a short period of eight months.

IMA applied its three-pronged integrated approach to capacity building from long-term experience working with Christian Health Associations in Africa. This approach focuses on leadership strengthening to effectively drive the organization's strategic agenda; institutional strengthening that includes enhancing organizational sustainability, visibility, systems and structures to become effective and staff capacity building to develop new knowledge and skills to function more efficiently and effectively. At the core of this approach are principles of partnership that include tailored mentoring and coaching to support our partner organizations' commitments and determination to succeed. IMA recognizes that organizational capacity-building is a process that requires longer term support, usually both financial and in technical assistance, for organizational sustainability to be realized.

Specifically, IMA supported CHAL to achieve the following objectives:

- Strengthen CHAL's leadership;
- Improve CHAL's organizational sustainability;
- Improve CHAL's organizational visibility and external communications capacity/strategies;
- Build staff capacity; and
- Provide direct organizational support for office operations.

## ACTIVITY ONE: Strengthening CHAL Leadership

Leadership and governance are cornerstones for managing an effective and efficient organization. This activity was designed to support CHAL's effort to establish the bylaws and governing structures to inform CHAL's strategic direction and to also ensure an Executive Director was elected to lead CHAL's mandate.

### Annual General Meeting

The supreme body of CHAL is the Annual General Meeting (AGM) that comprises representation from all categories of membership. The AGM meets once a year. IMA assisted CHAL in planning for the Annual General Meeting with the aim of supporting the organization to approve the draft Strategic Plan, which serves as a roadmap and revises the constitution and bylaws for adoption; thereby serving as the fundamental law of the organization and election of new board members.

### Results

In December 2013, CHAL successfully hosted the AGM for the first time in six years. Instead of 74 participants (as planned), a total of 85 members consisting of 48 individual members and 37 institutional members attended the meeting with all coming from 12 of the 15 counties of Liberia. Key accomplishments included board members revision/revised and adoption of CHAL's Constitutions and Bylaws, thereby serving as the organic law of

*"The successful election of new board members with the return of a formal Executive Director as the new Board President backed by very committed members is a rare plus. They have already met thrice and taken some strong decisions including the employment of the Executive Director and an Accountant who is now the acting Finance Manager."*

**Patricia Kamara, CHAL Executive Director**

the Organization. During the AGM, an election and induction ceremony of new Executive Board of Directors consisting of 13 members was held. The elected positions within the Board comprises the President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer, eight other voting members, and two Ex-Officio members from the CHAL Secretariat (Executive Director and Financial Manager) and a representative from the Ministry of Health.

In addition, four Standing Committees ( Administration, Finance, Program and Liaison) were set up to assist in the operation of CHAL. Members recommitted themselves to the institution and an evidence of this was the partial payment of their dues and registration fees with promise to complete payment by March 2014. However, the time has been extended to August 2014, due to the far distance of some of the members. The Minister of Health & Social Welfare was in attendance to increase engagement with CHAL as a critical supporter to health service delivery in Liberia. This activity was a crucial step in officially re-establishing organizational accountability and ownership of CHAL's long-term vision.

### **Human Resources Management (HRM) Support**

In order to sustain the gains CHAL has made in recent times, a competent and motivated work force that is committed to the vision and values of the organization is critical. Per CHAL's request, IMA conducted a skill assesment for CHAL secretariat staff so as to determine the skills required to achieve an acceptable standard of performance at the CHAL secretariat and to meet CHAL secretariat's new goals, structure and directions. In addition IMA supported the set up of a performance management system which includes annual performance appraisals for all staff. CHAL's vision is to roll out this system to all its 58 member facilities funds permitting.

### **Results**

A summary of skill gaps identified through the skill assesment was reported to CHAL Executive Director . CHAL has developed an action plan and began implementing recommendations. One key activity under this is the recruitment of a Human Resource Officer to take full responsibility of setting up HRM system within CHAL and this has been successfully excuted. However due to financial constraints this is a volunteer position. CHAL is engaged in resource mobilization to change it to a paid position so as to retain the staff and this critical function.

## ACTIVITY TWO: Improving Organizational Sustainability

### Three year Sustainability Plan Development

A Sustainability Plan is one of the most important aspects of an organization's strengthening process, because it allows management to thoroughly analyze all parts of the organization. Per CHAL's Strategic Plan Goal 8: *Develop a framework to sustain CHAL operations and development*, the sustainability plan was developed to formally address structural issues in the areas of organizational strategy, finances and operations, human resource management, communications, resource mobilization and governance. The plan includes key objectives and indicators to keep the organization on track as it continues to grow.

IMA provided both technical and financial support for a three-day workshop to develop a 3-year sustainability plan. The workshop was conducted for 20 participants consisting of Board members and staffed by a consultant. The plan sets out CHAL's vision, commitments and targets to maintain it as an organization in the medium term.

### Results



A Sustainability plan was developed and validated by the CHAL Board of Directors. CHAL has begun to use the sustainability plan as a guide for targeted interventions in building a stronger and more resilient organization.

### Supply Chain Assessment

Supply chain assessments are important to assess the quality and functionality of a supply chain/logistics system and ultimately inform decisions of targeted intervention and investment. Prior to the Liberian Civil War, CHAL operated one of the most important supply chains for essential drugs and health commodities in Liberia. However, this system was destroyed during the civil war and CHAL was unable to rebuild it due to financial constraints. With the Ebola outbreak in March 2014, the need for CHAL to operate an efficient supply chain system for its 45 member health facilities resurfaced. CHAL received a significant amount of donated medicines and medical supplies such as Personal Protective Equipment and Essential medicines, from international donors. These were distributed through an emergency supply chain to ensure timely delivery of the commodities to member facilities. The supply chain assessment enabled CHAL to review this operation for sustainability post the Ebola crisis.

IMA engaged with the USAID | DELIVER Project in Liberia to conduct an assessment of key components of the system such as quantification, logistics management information system, storage, transport, organization and staffing. Specific activities included central level interviews

with CHAL, MOH and JSI/Liberia supply chain staff; physical assessment of the CHAL warehouse ; field assessment of CHAL supply chain performance at selected CHAL health facilities and County depots in Montserrado, Bong and Grand Bassa counties as well as the World Food Program (WFP) SKD warehouse and forward logistics base (FLB) in Buchanan and a logistics workshop for CHAL staff and CHAL partner staff



### **Results**

A detailed technical report was published with a discussion on the description, strengths and challenges of the CHAL current supply chain system. It also maps the way forward for the CHAL's supply chain by presenting key considerations and options to inform CHAL's decisions for future investments in the system. CHAL has since engaged with other donors on rebuilding the supply chain system based on this report.

## **ACTIVITY THREE: Improving Organizational Visibility and External Communication Capacity**

Improvements in CHAL's organizational visibility and external communication capacity are intended to ensure that information about CHAL and its services is effectively shared with members and with potential partners. This activity was intended to assist CHAL raise public awareness about its organization. As a larger community becomes aware of CHAL's strategic role in health service delivery in Liberia, the organization will attract funding opportunities and strategic partnerships. In the long run, this is a key component of CHAL's sustainability.

### **Website Development**

IMA provided both technical and financial assistance in contracting a local website development consultant and providing content review for the CHAL website.

### **Results**

In June 2014, CHAL successfully launched its organization's website <http://www.challiberia.org/>. Two staff were trained in the management of the website to be responsible for content updates. CHAL's website presence will improve the organization's visibility and credibility as an effective organization and also allow the organization to more effectively share information with members and other external stakeholders.

## **ACTIVITY FOUR: Building Staff Capacity**

Human resources are a key asset of any organization. Maintaining a well-trained, well-qualified staff is a critical condition of an organization's high performance and success. This activity was designed to build CHAL staff capacity in 3 critical areas of program operations – Finance, Procurement and Administration. Building staff capacity improves productivity, motivates staff and creates an opportunity for continuous organizational improvement and innovation.

### **Financial and Procurement Management**

IMA supported the training of three staff; Finance Manager in QuickBooks, Procurement officer in procurement management and Office Attendant in office procedures to ensure sound financial and operational management. The training courses were provided by a private educational institution. The staff took the training over a period of three months on a part-time basis.

### **Results**

Staff successfully completed their training and were awarded certificates. The staff are tasked to apply the training in to their routine work including revision of the procurement guidelines in the operational manual.

*"As result of the procurement training, I have improved greatly in my work. This training has enabled me [to] speedily carry out the standard procurement procedures as required by donors and CHAL administration. The training has made me to conduct a complete bid analysis and select a prefer vendor for the purchase of goods and services."*

*"I understand the various monetary thresholds that require verbal quotes and written quotes and also public bidding process."*

**George Phocole, CHAL Procurement Officer**

## **ACTIVITY FIVE: Providing Direct Organizational Support**

Office equipment such as laptops and computer are essential basics for functional organizational operations. In addition a conducive work environment that has reliable electricity power and a decent office building improves an organization's operations and image. This activity was designed to support these elements for CHAL's organizational strengthening.

### **Procurement of Office IT Equipment**

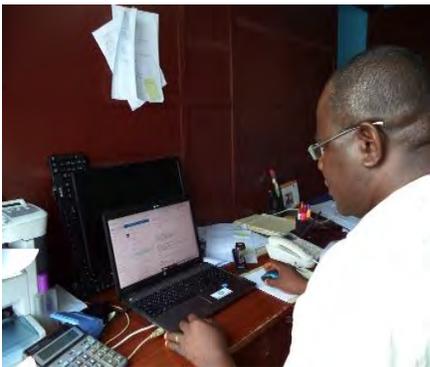
IMA supported the procurement of office equipment to support office operations. These included 2 laptops, 1 desktop , 1 photocopier, 1 projector and 1 camera.

### **Results**

The availability of the office equipment has facilitated smooth operations including effective communication as well as implementation of day-to-day activities.

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*Acting Finance Manager using one of the Laptop computers*



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*Projector set up in the conference room*



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*Logistics Officer using the photocopier*



### **Infrastructure Improvements**

IMA supported minor renovation work on the interior and exterior of the CHAL office building including painting, paving and repairs of the office premises and reconnection of city-power to enable CHAL's visibility and communication capacity. The building was damaged during the civil war and had not been renovated since then.

### **Results**

CHAL now has an office location that better represents the professional capacity of the organization. It is also more conducive for meetings with partners and for staff to be able to complete their work, in particular now that CHAL is connected to city-power.

The table below present the before and after of the office premises:

	BEFORE	AFTER	
Partial view of the drive way			
Partial view of the soffit of the office building			
Front view of CHAL Office			

<p>The back and front of the gate after renovation and repainting</p>			
<p>Interior and Exterior after repainting</p>			
<p>Electrician installing safety switch and other cables in preparation of city power</p>			

## CONCLUSION

CHAL has strong potential to revert to its pre-civil war state of an effective implementor of health programs and coordinating agency of its 58 member institutions in 12 of the 15 counties. It has a long term experience working in partnership with MoH&SW and presently as a member of the Liberia Coordinating Mechanism for the Global Fund projects in Liberia and also member of the Health Sector Group. Interventions under the CapacityPlus project produced positive results and are first crucial steps towards strengthening CHAL to reclaim its unique role in health service delivery in Liberia.

Effective organizational capacity-building requires a long term investment. Limited funding restricted IMA to address all of CHAL's organizational gaps and hence the full implementation of the capacity building model. Consequently more financial and technical support is required to strengthen CHAL's organizational capacity to reach the next level of functionality and sustainability. Ultimately, this means strengthening CHAL's capacity as a platform to support health care delivery from its approximately 58 health facilities – 50% of which are in underserved rural areas where increased access is most needed.

### Recommendations include:

- **Sustain the commitment.** CHAL is at a critical point of establishing its sustainability to make sure it is and will continue to be effective in health service delivery in Liberia. Thanks to the USAID funding through this project, CHAL is poised with effective leadership in place, improved visibility and strengthened human and capital capacity to make impact. For these reasons, USAID should maintain support for CHAL through the implementation of the sustainability plan whilst working closely with the MoHSW to have maximum impact on Liberia's health sector.
- **Invest in human resources for health (HRH).** HRH are the backbone of a health system. CHAL member institutions experience critical challenges of shortage of skilled health workers, poor human resources management, retention, productivity and data on health workers. There was a mass exodus of qualified health workers from the member institutions and Liberia as a whole because of the war. This situation has been worsened by the Ebola epidemic, which has severely affected health workers. The high death toll from contracting the virus and increased absenteeism of health workers due to the fear of contracting the virus has revealed major weaknesses in HR Policy and Human Resource Management to guide HRH response in epidemics. USAID should consider investing in these areas in order to strengthen the health workforce in Liberia.

The CapacityPlus project has developed tools that can be adapted to address these issues. Some of the tools have been applied in Faith Based Network such as Human Resource Management and integrated Human Resource Information Systems in Christian Health Association of Ghana, Human Resource Policy in Christian Health Association of Kenya and Retention in Christian Health Association of Zambia. These tools have made positive impact on HRH issues and broader health outcomes in those

countries as reported in a soon to be published CapacityPlus Technical Brief: Working with Faith-Based Organizations to Strengthen Human Resources for Health in Africa.

- **Engage the Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) more effectively in Country and County-based planning and operations.** CHAL's member institutions provide approximately 15% of health care in Liberia. However, this contribution needs be systematically defined, tracked and mapped. CHAL facilities are often located in remote, underserved, rural areas where the public sector has difficulty attracting and retaining health workers. Increasing health care access and retaining health professionals in underserved areas is where CHAL's contribution could be better recognized and developed. USAID should encourage the MOHSW and leadership at County level to work more consistently and creatively with FBOs such as CHAL in order to energize its progress toward Universal Health Care coverage.



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## The CapacityPlus Partnership



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