

“Channels of Hope gave us the opportunity to prove what we could do as religious leaders for this country. The program is unique because it is based on the divine scriptures of the Koran and the Bible.”

Imam Alhaji Mustapha Alpha Koker



Channels of Hope graduates: Following the CoH workshop they attended on Ebola, Reverend Peter Kainwo (left), Pastor of a United Brethren in Christ church, and Alhaji Mustapha Alpha Koker, Chief Imam of Bo District, Sierra Leone, swapped pulpits to emphasize the urgency of Ebola prevention measures to their congregations early in the epidemic.

Channels of Hope: Mobilizing faith leaders to help save lives, stop stigma in Ebola-stricken Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is unique in today's conflicted world. Muslims and Christians here transcend mere interfaith tolerance; they celebrate solidarity and respect each other's beliefs in harmonious dedication to their country.

Faith leaders in Sierra Leone are highly trusted and esteemed. Their peace-building efforts with rebel and government forces helped halt the country's bitter 10-year civil war in 2002. They have continued to promote unity and foster

development in one of the world's poorest countries that faces unrelenting social and economic challenges.

For almost 20 years, World Vision Sierra Leone has partnered with faith leaders and their communities—both Christian and Muslim—as well as government ministries and fellow development organizations to improve health, education, food security and protection for children.

To support and enhance the pioneering work of faith leaders in Sierra Leone, World Vision introduced Channels of Hope (CoH) in 2003. CoH is a catalyst that transforms and motivates

faith leaders and their congregations to respond to tough development issues that affect their communities. The CoH process directly addresses faith leaders' perceptions about especially volatile or taboo community issues. It mobilizes them to break down walls of stigma and discrimination and respond with compassion, particularly to issues related to children's well-being. Since the start of CoH for HIV in 2005, some 400,000 faith leaders and their community members have participated in more than 17,700 workshops, reaching every region where World Vision operates.

Game Changers: CoH Graduates' Faith in Action

2003	HIV/AIDS: Ministers and imams spread life-saving messages about prevention and positively influenced attitudes about people living with AIDS.
2012	Peace building: Faith leaders mitigated potential election violence. Some Muslim/Christian leaders even swapped pulpits for the first time to demonstrate unity.
	Gender: Christian/Muslim leaders raised gender awareness issues among their faithful.
	Cholera: Faith leaders combatted Sierra Leone's worst cholera outbreak in more than a decade that killed almost 400 people.
2013	Child protection: Clerics promoted immunization and advocated on issues such as early marriage, teen pregnancy and FGM.
	Malaria: Working with the Ministry of Health, faith leaders deliver messages about malaria and malnutrition using materials specially produced by World Vision.
2014	Ebola Virus Disease: Faith leaders implemented special CoH training on Ebola awareness and prevention, effectively combatting ignorance, myths, stigma and discrimination. They responded with compassion and practical care. They helped revise the WHO protocol on safe burial practices. The first noticeable decline in the Ebola pandemic coincided with their involvement.

PARTNERS

- Caritas
- Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
- Catholic Relief Services
- Catholic Churches
- Council of Churches Sierra Leone
- Evangelical Fellowship of Sierra Leone
- Focus 1000
- Independent Churches
- Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone
- Mission 4 Salone
- Muslim Councils and Associations
- Pentecostal Fellowship of Sierra Leone
- Protestant Denominations
- Traditional chiefs, healers

CoH by the Numbers

371,580	Community members reached by faith leaders (Christian, Muslim, Traditional chiefs and healers) trained in CoH workshops about Ebola prevention and anti-stigmatization of survivors
18,840	Community focus groups conducted by faith leaders
2,117	Faith leaders trained to conduct services during safe and dignified burials and in Ebola prevention through CoH workshops
20	Facilitators from partner organizations trained (CRS, CAFOD and others)
130	CoH training workshops held
8	West African countries benefitting from CoH training
0	Percentage of 58,000 World Vision-sponsored children in Sierra Leone who contracted Ebola

“When faith leaders got involved in the fight against Ebola, it was a turning point. They convinced people in churches and mosques to stop touching and burying Ebola victims, who remain highly infectious.”

Dr. Alhaji Sanyi Turay, District Medical Officer, Bo



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Dignity in the time of Ebola

Three FBOs collaborate to conduct 24,000 safe burials in Sierra Leone



Maseray Kamara is the first woman Ebola survivor to join World Vision's burial team in Bo, Sierra Leone.

Maseray Kamara is an Ebola survivor. Her husband and sister are not. However, this 53-year-old grandmother is unbowed in her determination to protect her community from the disease. She is the first woman Ebola survivor to join World Vision's burial team in Bo, a city in south-central Sierra Leone.

“For me, surviving Ebola is a miracle of God,” says Maseray. “I joined the burial team as a way of giving thanks to him.”

Today Maseray is proud to serve with World Vision, which leads SMART (Social Mobilisation And Respectful Burials Through faith-based alliance), a UK government-

funded consortium, in partnership with Catholic Relief Services and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development. Together, they have trained and equipped 803 workers (including 86 women) to conduct safe, dignified burials for Ebola victims and others that preserve sacred faith traditions, while preventing contamination of family members. Since November 2014, SMART's 57 teams have buried more than 24,000 people, in 10 districts across Sierra Leone (as of July 2).

Faith leaders have played a critical role in changing the knowledge, attitudes and practices about Ebola prevention during the year-long crisis. They contributed to the development of the revised WHO safe and dignified burial protocol, and then put it into action. World Vision organized extensive training for Christian and Muslim leaders on Ebola awareness and prevention. They convinced their communities to adjust their burial traditions, even temporarily, and the majority agreed. The SMART burial teams then provided the means for families to arrange a safe and dignified burial for their loved ones. This awareness raising and practical burial support has proven to be a best practice in the fight against Ebola.

The SMART burial teams won the 2015 Bond International Humanitarian Award in recognition for their courageous work in service to their country.