



Snapshot of Accomplishments Liberia

October 2022 to March 2023

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase private sector engagement to strengthen a network of private health providers to improve the quality of services and access for vulnerable populations. 2. Increase COVID-19 vaccine access and coverage through the private sector through optimizing and integrating the COVID-19 vaccine into routine immunization. 3. Operationalize the John F. Kennedy Medical Center's (JHKMC) health management information system through critical information technology equipment and training.
GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS AREAS	National
HEALTH AREAS	COVID-19; Family Planning
TECHNICAL AREAS	Financing; Rules, Regulations, and Norms; Stewardship
REPORTING PERIOD	October 2022 to March 2023

Key Results

- Trained county health team staff in private sector engagement strategy across four counties (31)
- Oriented private sector facility representatives to the public sector's private sector engagement strategy (59)
- Grew HFL membership in 2023 (to date) (4%)

Key Accomplishments

Actioned the MOH's private sector engagement strategy

FHM Engage is following an evidenced-based approach to bring together a core group of public and private leaders to build trust and foster genuine collaboration, and to coach them to lead a joint technical working group (TWG). In Liberia, with the Ministry of Health (MOH)'s Private Sector Engagement (PSE) Unit, now called External AID, and the Healthcare Federation of Liberia, an association of private health actors, FHM Engage supported the PSE TWG to co-develop and validate terms of reference with public and private health sector representatives. The goals of the TWG, which is tasked with leading activities under the MOH's PSE implementation plan, are to: 1) expand access and choice of health services, 2) improve quality of care by private sector providers, 3) enhance financial protection, and 4) create an enabling environment for PSE. This national TWG additionally developed and disseminated a joint PSE strategy action plan to three counties outside of Montserrado (Bong, Marbigi, and Nimba). In these counties, county-level TWGs were established with joint action plans co-developed by public and private sector representatives to integrate private facilities into county health team priorities, address gaps in health service coverage, collaborate around quality service standards to meet the needs of private sector, government, and customers.

Described the family planning market

Through FHM Engage's market development approach, market descriptions are used to document the interactions between core supply and demand, understand the influence of rules and supporting functions, and identify the key market actors. Using a market description, we can further the analysis to diagnose potential market challenges and opportunities for jointly designed, sustainable solutions.

FHM Engage analyzed components of Liberia's family planning (FP) market, including public and private sectors, consumers, donors, and implementing partners to provide a holistic view the market, including FP trends, client profiles, and the role of the private sector. The FP market description shows a small but vibrant market for family planning in Liberia. The total FP market in Liberia is only 470,000 women of reproductive age who do not want to become pregnant. Yet despite free FP commodities from the public sector, over half of those women (57 percent) are not yet using a modern contraceptive method. Our analysis found ample opportunity for the private sector to potentially close



REPRESENTATIVES OF THE USAID AOR STAND WITH MEMBERS OF THE LIBERIA MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FHM ENGAGE DURING THEIR TRIP TO LIBERIA FEBRUARY 2023. CREDIT: FHM ENGAGE.

these gaps. Data show that private sector FP sourcing is increasing, with 37 percent of women using contraception going to the private sector for their method in 2020 – the highest rate in the past 15 years. Despite high unmet need and some strong indications of demand, private sector actors in Liberia encounter a range of difficulties in offering FP including competition with the heavily subsidized public sector. The large number of private pharmacies has also proved a challenge for regulators, and quality control in the private sector is uneven. In addition, private sector providers often do not have the ability to participate in capacity development opportunities that are available to public sector providers, thereby hindering the quality of important FP services, such as adolescent-friendly counseling. Many FP stakeholders in Liberia are aware of the challenges facing the private sector, but efforts to address these challenges are hindered by fragmented data and an overall weakness in stewardship of the private sector.

Through this exercise, we created a shared baseline understanding of the FP situation, including challenges and opportunities to increase access and use through the private sector, revealed where further information/data gathering may be needed, and initiated dialogue to validate and inform the design of market interventions alongside local partners.

Built capacity of the MOH Private Sector Engagement Unit

FHM Engage, through regional partner Insight Health Advisors, provided technical assistance to the MOH PSE Unit Director and staff through a series of four virtual trainings with case studies, resources, and tools for building effective public private collaboration in the health sector. These sessions provided a definition and context to what private sector engagement (PSE) is, and reviewed the best approaches to PSE, supported by looking at models used to deepen engagement between public and private sectors. The team identified different PSE frameworks at the national-level and an “ideal” engagement framework and discussed contracting mechanisms for public private partnerships (PPPs) as well as characteristics of a contract. The training culminated in analyzing the functions and competencies of an “ideal” PSE Unit, which leverages private sector expertise and infrastructure to fill gaps in service coverage, improves efficiencies and quality of services, and thereby improves access to health services and products.

FHM Engage is also supporting the strengthening of the MOH/PSE unit with tangible commodities to improve the day-to-day functioning of the PSE unit office. A competitive procurement was completed, and the office equipment will be delivered in the next few month (during quarter three).

Cover banner photo: FHM Engage's Erin Seiler (left) speaks with Irene Nekar-Livingstone, former Immunization Specialist on FHM Engage Liberia (in blue), and a representative of the AfroMed Clinic (center), a small private clinic in Montserrado county, during a scoping trip in November 2022. Credit: FHM Engage.

Frontier Health Markets (FHM) Engage is a five-year cooperative agreement (7200AA21CA00027) funded by the United States Agency for International Development. We work to improve the market environment for greater private sector participation in the delivery of health products and services and to improve equal access to and uptake of high-quality consumer driven health products, services, and information. For more information, email fhm-engage@fhm-engage.org.