



**GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE  
NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY  
(NPHA)**

Address: 42A Main Motor Road, Wilberforce, Freetown

Contact: (+232) 78 787878/77 777777

Email: [info@npha.gov.sl](mailto:info@npha.gov.sl) – Website: [www.npha.gov.sl](http://www.npha.gov.sl)



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## **Strengthening the Public Health Workforce: A Call to Action for a Healthier Sierra Leone**

### **Introduction**

Sierra Leone's National Public Health Agency (NPHA) has forged a robust public health workforce, a testament to our successful collaborations with United Nations (UN) agencies and bilateral governments and organizations. As of March 2024, we have celebrated the graduation of sixty public health officers from the advanced infection prevention and control course, a significant milestone. Moreover, ninety-one public health officers have successfully completed the intermediate-level Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP), and over three hundred from the frontline-level FETP. The intermediate level has earned accreditation from the Training Programs in Epidemiology & Field Practice (TEPHINET), a testament to our unwavering commitment to excellence. The advanced FETP training, offered in partnership with the University of Ghana, has produced graduates who are instrumental in disease surveillance and epidemiology across our health system.

### **The Challenge**

However, despite these commendable achievements, our public health professionals are grappling with a significant challenge. The limited access to specialized training in critical areas such as health informatics, laboratory diagnostics, and advanced FETP is posing a serious hindrance to their ability to respond effectively to complex threats and keep their skills up to date. This challenge is not just a concern, it's a pressing issue that demands immediate attention to ensure the continued effectiveness of our public health workforce.

### **The Solution**

The NPHA is dedicated to fostering a competent and prepared public health workforce. We propose a comprehensive approach that holds immense potential:



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Our proposed solution is a comprehensive approach that will significantly enhance the capabilities of our public health workforce. We envision the establishment of a National Public Health Training Unit, a dedicated unit that will offer specialized training programs in health informatics and laboratory diagnostics, and sustain the existing FETP. This unit will not only continue to partner with the University of Ghana to expand our existing advanced FETP program but also explore the establishment of the same course in-country with local universities in the future. By providing ongoing training opportunities, this unit will not only enhance the skills of our public health professionals but also equip them to address current and future health threats, thereby ensuring the health security of Sierra Leone.

**Develop Online Training Modules:** Complementing the training unit, we plan to develop online modules for flexible and accessible learning. These modules will cover a broad range of public health topics, allowing professionals to expand their knowledge and skills at their own pace.

**Strengthen Partnerships with National, Regional, and International Institutions:** We seek to strengthen our collaboration with international entities, academic institutions, and other stakeholders. These partnerships will facilitate knowledge exchange through guest lectures, workshops, and mentorship programs, enriching the expertise of our workforce.

**Invest in Training Scholarships:** We plan to establish scholarship programs to support public health professionals pursuing advanced degrees in critical fields. This will contribute to a long-term pool of highly skilled public health leaders.

The Estimated Cost is approximately USD 5.2 million.

## **Conclusion**

Investing in public health workforce development is an investment in Sierra Leone's health security. By equipping our public health professionals with the necessary knowledge and skills, we empower them to effectively safeguard the health of our communities. We deeply appreciate our current partners and your potential support in sustaining the existing in-service training programs, establishing additional training programs, fostering international partnerships, and offering scholarships. Your



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contribution is not just important, it is vital in building a robust public health workforce for Sierra Leone.

Together, let's build a healthier future.