Scaling Up Mental Health Services:  
The Carter Center in Liberia

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Liberia in Context

- 111,370 square kilometers – roughly the size of Tennessee.
  - Fifteen administrative counties.

- Low life expectancy (male: 56.56 years; female: 59.9 years)

- Almost half of Liberians live in urban areas

- A military coup in 1980 sparked civil unrest and a period of war, resulting in approx. 250,000 dead and a torn economy.

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf – first female president in Africa

- 4.294 million population (estimated July 2014)
  - 1 psychiatrist, 36 in-patient Mental Health beds
  - Only 41% of the population has access to health services
Genesis of the Liberia Mental Health Initiative

The Carter Center has a long history of relations with Liberia through other Center programs that includes:

- Peace mediation
- Conflict Resolution
- Election monitoring
- Access to Justice
- Access to Information

Lancet Series

Liberia’s need for a functioning mental health system
To work with the Liberian government in implementing 3 key components of its Strategic Plan:

1) Training a sustainable mental health workforce

2) Implementing the national mental health policy and plan

3) Reducing stigma and empowering Liberians with mental illness and family caregivers
Mental Health Workforce Prior to 2010

One psychiatrist for the entire country
Distribution of Credentialed 144 Mental Health Clinicians after 7 cohorts (August 2014)

MONROVIA

42 Mental Health Clinicians in Montserrado, where ~40% of population resides

= 1 Mental Health Clinician

= 10 Mental Health Clinicians