



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/amid-crisis-liberia-staying-course-support-food-security-and-nutrition>

# Amid Crisis in Liberia, Staying the Course to Support Food Security and Nutrition



PCI

In Nimba Country, Liberia, women learn how to prepare micronutrient-rich porridge.

When the history books are written about what stemmed the tide of Ebola in Liberia, the first chapters will describe the concerted efforts to equip communities with the tools and information they needed to stop an epidemic in its tracks. Working side by side with these communities, local-level projects funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) played a key role in protecting thousands of Liberians from the greatest public health emergency in a generation.

One of these projects, funded by USAID's Office of Food for Peace, helped ensure that 90 percent of its 400 target communities in Liberia's Bong and Nimba counties remained Ebola-free, continuing implementation even as the epidemic took hold and ravaged other parts of the country. Through a network of more than 5,000 community volunteers, project staff bravely stayed on the job, delivering lifesaving Ebola prevention and control messages, and using innovative strategies to address food security and nutrition during a national emergency.

Among the biggest challenges in controlling the Ebola outbreak was the need to prevent people from gathering in large groups that might expose them to the virus. This prohibition meant that families could not easily access U.S. Government emergency food commodities, so the Food for Peace project increased its focus on training women to cook nutritious porridge made from readily available local produce. The new strategy helped support the economy as well as ensure vulnerable populations – such as pregnant and lactating women and children under the age of two – had reliable access to healthy food.

Farmers in the area were concerned about how to maintain their food source without being able to tend to their fields using traditional shared group labor, but they overcame this challenge by identifying new avenues of weeding and harvesting crops. Smaller groups ultimately farmed smaller areas over a longer period of time, working alongside Food for Peace-supported agricultural extension agents who provided key nutrition and Ebola prevention information. Individuals in households that were quarantined but who were not symptomatic were permitted to work in their field when no other farmers were present.

Hygiene and sanitation were also critical in stopping Ebola transmission in Liberia. Food for Peace established hand-washing stations with provisions of chlorine and bleach in every community, while a local network of community water, sanitation and hygiene and disaster management committees managed training and distribution efforts. These committees also ensured that the hand-washing stations were functioning, that visitors' temperatures were checked and that community surveillance continued throughout the epidemic.

The Ebola crisis in West Africa emphasized the dual need for effective emergency response and long-term food security and nutrition that can stabilize communities and prevent an outbreak from escalating. As the international community approaches its goal of "getting to zero" on Ebola cases, Food for Peace and Feed the Future programs are strengthening the systems that enable Liberians to continue the fight against Ebola and pave the way toward Liberia's recovery and resilience.

The [Liberian Agricultural Upgrading, Nutrition and Child Health \(LAUNCH\) program](#) is managed by USAID's Office of Food for Peace and implemented by ACDI/VOCA, [Project Concern International](#) (PCI), John Snow Incorporated, and Making Cents International. This story was submitted by PCI Liberia Country Director and LAUNCH Health and Nutrition Manager Jolene Mullins.