

## **Creative collaboration, thinking beyond biomedical care and participatory approaches within health systems strengthening: Successes of the REDRESS Intervention, Liberia**

[REDRESS](#) is a research partnership focused on reducing the burden of skin neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) in Liberia through person-centred approaches, stigma reduction, and health systems strengthening, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, informal and formal health actors, research and NGO partners. Prioritising the views of the most marginalised is central to REDRESS, working in partnership with people with lived experience as co-researchers. The intervention focused on improving early case detection for NTDs, by strengthening collaborations between formal and informal health providers, peer advocates, and community actors.

Key successes included:

**A Participatory Approach:** REDRESS utilised innovative creative research methods involving diverse stakeholders (from national to community levels) to understand current gaps from both patient and provider perspectives. Evidence generated from this phase shaped the co-creation of localised and context specific interventions for NTDs.

**Diverse Actors & Building Trust:** The community and health system involve various actors, such as traditional healers, community and health facility workers, and persons with lived experience as peer advocates. Training and support, and ensuring a robust supply chain, can significantly improve case identification and referral and maintain trust in the health system.

**Involvement of Traditional & Faith Healers:** Traditional and faith healers are trusted within communities as they offer holistic care; training them about NTDs, providing basic psychological support and referral increased case detection. However, challenges such as financial incentives and clear roles need consideration for effective collaboration.

**Cross Program Collaboration:** Integration requires a holistic approach, focusing on availability, accessibility, and acceptability of care. Collaboration across disease programs are essential. REDRESS worked together with the NTD program, mental health, community health, health promotion and laboratory health departments within the Ministry of Health.

**Essential Role of Persons Affected:** Individuals with lived experiences of NTDs are valuable advocates and support networks for challenging stigma, and encouraging care-seeking behaviours within communities through peer support groups.



REDRESS Co-researchers ranging from community health workers to peer advocates with lived experience: Wenjor, Christopher, Kebeh, Jallah, Satta, Hagar, Emmanuel with Zeela REDRESS Country Program Manager



Social Mapping in Margibi, Liberia with women affected by skin NTDs, facilitated by Research fellows and co-researchers