

A black and white photograph of a person standing in profile, looking out of a window. The person is wearing a long, patterned dress. The room is dimly lit, with light coming from the window. The person's shadow is cast on the wall to the right. The floor has some items on it, including a rolled-up object and some fabric.

WE ARE LIKE YOU

a mental healthcare project for Liberian people
www.wearelikeyou.org

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A project by:



Hermanas Hospitalarias

AITA MENNI



Sisters Hospitallers

ST. BENEDICT MENNI HEALTH CENTER



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Cover image:

Still of the
documentary “Los
olvidados de los
olvidados” by Carles
Caparros i Obiols.
AguaFlims S.L., 2011

Saint Benedict
Menni Health
Center facilities
in Monrovia
(Liberia)



Main building
of St Benedict
Menni Health
Center in
Monrovia.



and promoting community awareness to reincorporate them progressively to society.

The project is based on the collaboration of two different centers owned by Sisters

Hospitallers: **Aita Menni Hospital in Spain** –with more than 100 years of experience in the treatment of mental illnesses– and the **Saint Benedict Menni Health Center in Monrovia.**

THE PROJECT

The **WE ARE LIKE YOU** project of Sisters Hospitallers was born in 2014 with the idea of obtaining the necessary funds to develop health facilities in Liberia that allow **providing adequate treatment to women with mental illness or intellectual dissability.**

As in many other countries in Africa, people with mental illness suffer from systematic marginalization, and in many cases, abuse: confinement, ties, sexual abuse, or exile outside their community environment.

In Liberia there is no adequate or generalized attention for this group: they do not have trained health personnel and do not have the necessary drugs or the support required for their reintegration into the community.

WALY aims to fight against the stigma that persecutes these women and the continuous violation of the most basic rights to which they are subjected, providing medical care, pharmacological treatment, rehabilitation therapies

WALY has a mission: to make it possible to assist people with mental illness by obtaining resources and giving support in Liberia until the project become sustainable



Saint
Benedict
Menni Mental
Health Center
Ward.

Music therapy activity .



Training activities to the staff and students



The Team

Team displaced to Liberia:

- ✓ Psychiatrist and nurse.

Local team:

- ✓ Sisters, mental health clinicians, nurses, clinic assistants, social workers, therapists and monitors.

Support team in Spain:

- ✓ Coordination, logistics, fundraising, communication and volunteers.
- ✓ Psychology, occupational therapy and pharmacy.

Facilities

- ✓ Hospitalization unit (Step Down Unit).
- ✓ Outpatient mental health center.

November 16th, 2016: arrival of the first patients in the Step Down Unit.



GOALS & PHASES

The project contemplates the following objectives:

1. Reopening of the St. Benedict Menne Health Center -closed by the Ebola epidemic. Achieved in April 2015.
2. Program of psychological support to affected people of Ebola directed to relatives of victims and community environment, survivors and health professionals
3. Start-up of the hospitalization unit (Step Down Unit) for patients with mental illness in coordination with Grant Hospital and the

Ministry of Health. Achieved in November 2017

4. Outpatient consultation and support for patients with mental illness. Achieved in March 2018

5. Training programs for the management of patients with mental illness, in collaboration with the Mother Patern College of Health Sciences -nursing & social work-, the Carter Center, Ministry of Health and community organizations. Achieved in January 2018.

Training program with Medical University pending.

Year 1996:
Sisters
Hospitaliers,
children of the
orphanage
and
benefactors in
Virginia



The mission of Sisters Hospitaliers began in Liberia in 1966



Chronicle of the arrival of the first missionaries to Liberia.



Chronicle of the first Christmas at the Virginia orphanage.



Staff of St.
Benedict
Menni Health
Center.

SISTERS HOSPITALIERS IN LIBERIA

The mission of **Sisters Hospitaliers** began in Liberia in 1966.

First it was with an **orphanage** in an area of western Monrovia known as Virginia, and later with a **health center** and a **rehabilitation center** for children with orthopedic problems in the suburb of Pipeline, east of the capital.

The progressive decrease in the number of children and

the fact that there were no referrals from patients meant that this activity ceased in 2008.

The ward destined to this activity was left unused and once reformed and reconverted within the framework of the **WE ARE LIKE YOU** project, it allows to house a Mid Stay Unit (Step Down Unit) for hospitalization of people with mental illness and intellectual disability.

LIBERIA

1

Liberia is a state of West Africa located between Sierra Leone, Guinea Conacry and Cote d'Ivoire. It has an extension of 111,370 km² and a population of **4.5 million people**, of which about 2 million live in Monrovia.

Liberia has gone through **two consecutive civil wars** (1989-1996 and 1999-2003), which caused the death of more than 200,000 people and the almost total devastation of the country, which **is among the 4 poorest in the world**. Its annual per capita income (GDP PPP) is 879 USD (2017)

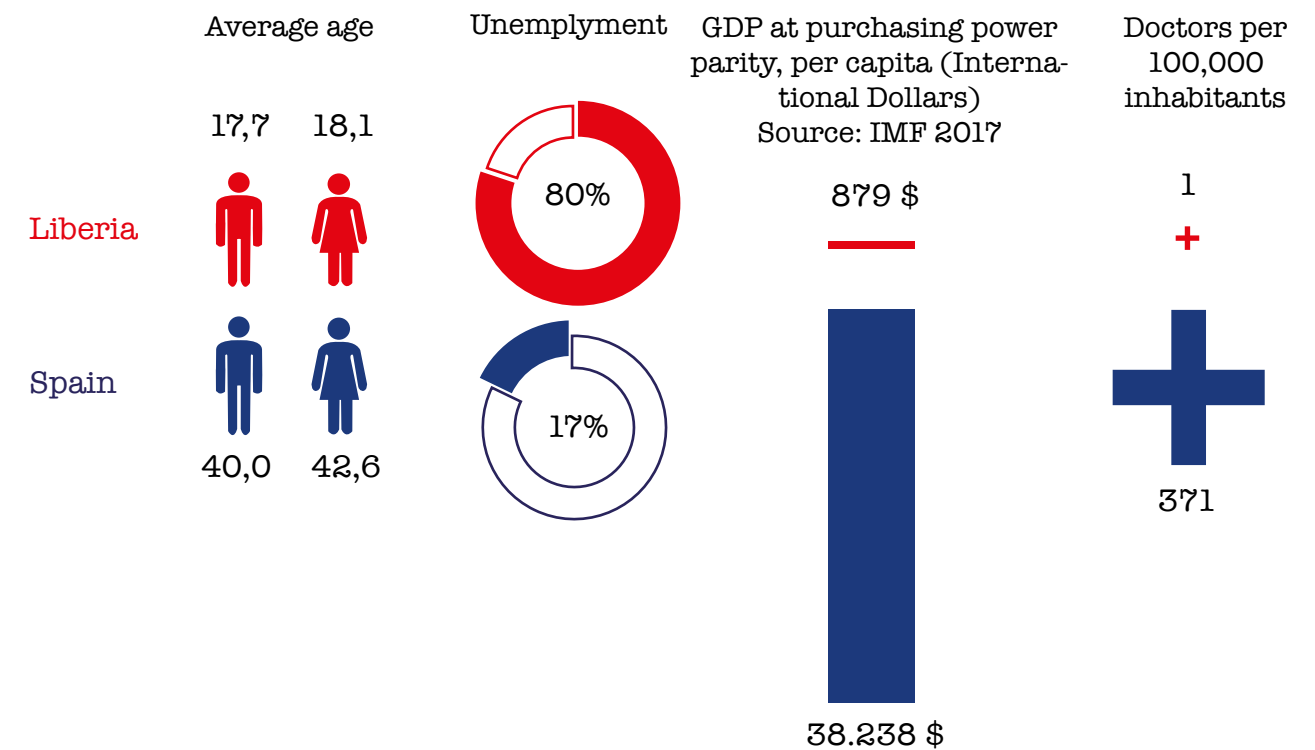
The reconstruction of the country after the war has been slowed down by **corruption** (5th most corrupt country in the world). 60% of the country's surface is made up of mining and forestry operations ceded to large foreign companies and countries such as China.

Liberia has one of the highest infant mortality rates, with 71 cases per 1,000 births and an unemployment rate of 85%.



More than 30,000 children are orphans and have more than 100,000 former child-soldiers and ex-combatants with pressing needs in education, rehabilitation and psychological care.

The level of illiteracy in the country is 85%, with more than half of the 1.6 million Liberian children out of school. Before the war there were some 2,400 schools in the country, of which 80% were destroyed.



NATIONAL HEALTH SYSTEM IN LIBERIA

War seriously damaged the liberian NHS. The health facilities were mostly destroyed and the medical and nursing staff fled to countries with more stability.

At this time only 45% of the population has access to essential health services and these are not free. The universal health coverage that we know in Europe does not exist in these countries.

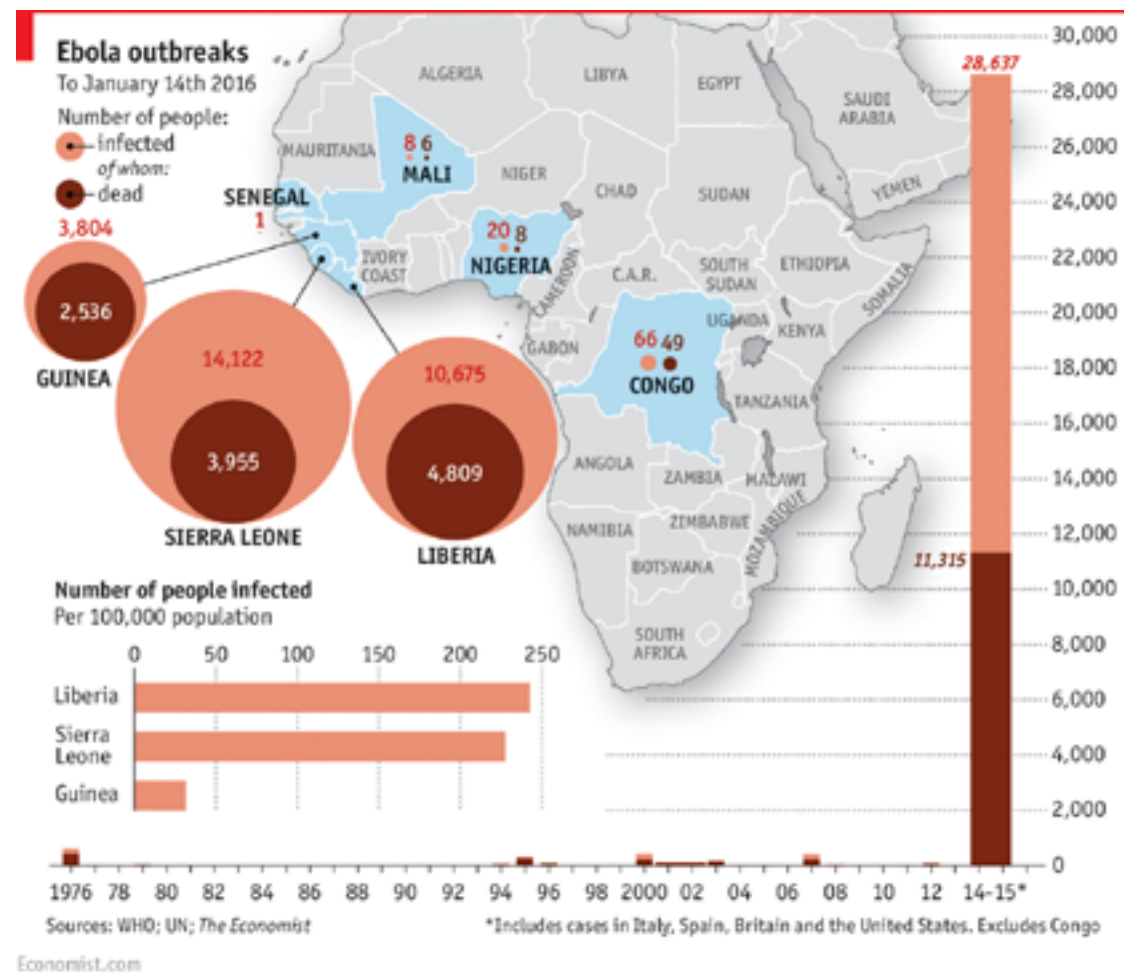
While the annual public health expenditure per inhabitant in Spain is around 1,500 EUR, in Liberia it is 17 EUR.

The fragility of the Liberian Health System is manifested

in the lack of doctors, especially in rural areas, absence of medical and surgical specialties, lack of professional training and a network of very limited and poorly equipped hospitals and health centers.

The treatment of **mental illness** and **intellectual disability** is almost non-existent, and is often linked to hereditary causes, alleged "contagion" or even witchcraft practices

People with mental illness suffer social rejection, stigma, marginalization or expulsion from the community and often physical abuse.



After new Ebola facilities were built, we reopened the Health Center in April 2015

Triage and isolation unit facilities for possible cases of ebola in the Health Center.



Ebola checking procedures previous to access to Benedic Menni Health Center.

EBOLA OUTBREAK

WE ARE LIKE YOU project was stopped in summer of 2014 with the worst **Ebola outbreak** that has existed and that affected Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea Conacry, leaving more than 11,000 dead and a number of affected six times higher, among relatives of dead people, survivors and health facilities staff.

The Ebola outbreak made the fragile NHS to collapse. Good part of the health workers left their jobs due to the great number of contagions and deaths, and all, **hospitals and health centers ended up closing**.

The Benedict Menni Health Center also closed in July 2014. Then, priorities of **WE ARE LIKE YOU** changed completely: first the Health Center of Pipeline had to be reopened.

After adapting the facilities to the Ebola prevention protocols and providing the staff the required training, we managed to reopen the Center in April 2015.

Meanwhile, other health centers and hospitals have gradually opened up, although the limited level of care they offered before the epidemic has not yet been reached.

Meeting in 2014 with the Minister of Health of Liberia, Dr. Walter T. Gwenigale.



Left. With Archbishop of Monrovia, Monsignor Lewis Ziegler



Right. Athletic of Bilbao (La Liga) football player Iñaki Williams, son of Liberian woman, gives us the Award "Entrepreneur" from Spanish NGO Anesvad.



The aids are not enough to develop the project in its whole dimension, so we are forced to seek the collaboration of benefactors and partners



Surveillance system donated by MCC Telecom.



Charity concert at Chillida Leku Museum, in San Sebastian.

AWARDS & HONOURS

This cooperation project has been developed in coordination with the **Ministry of Health of Liberia.**

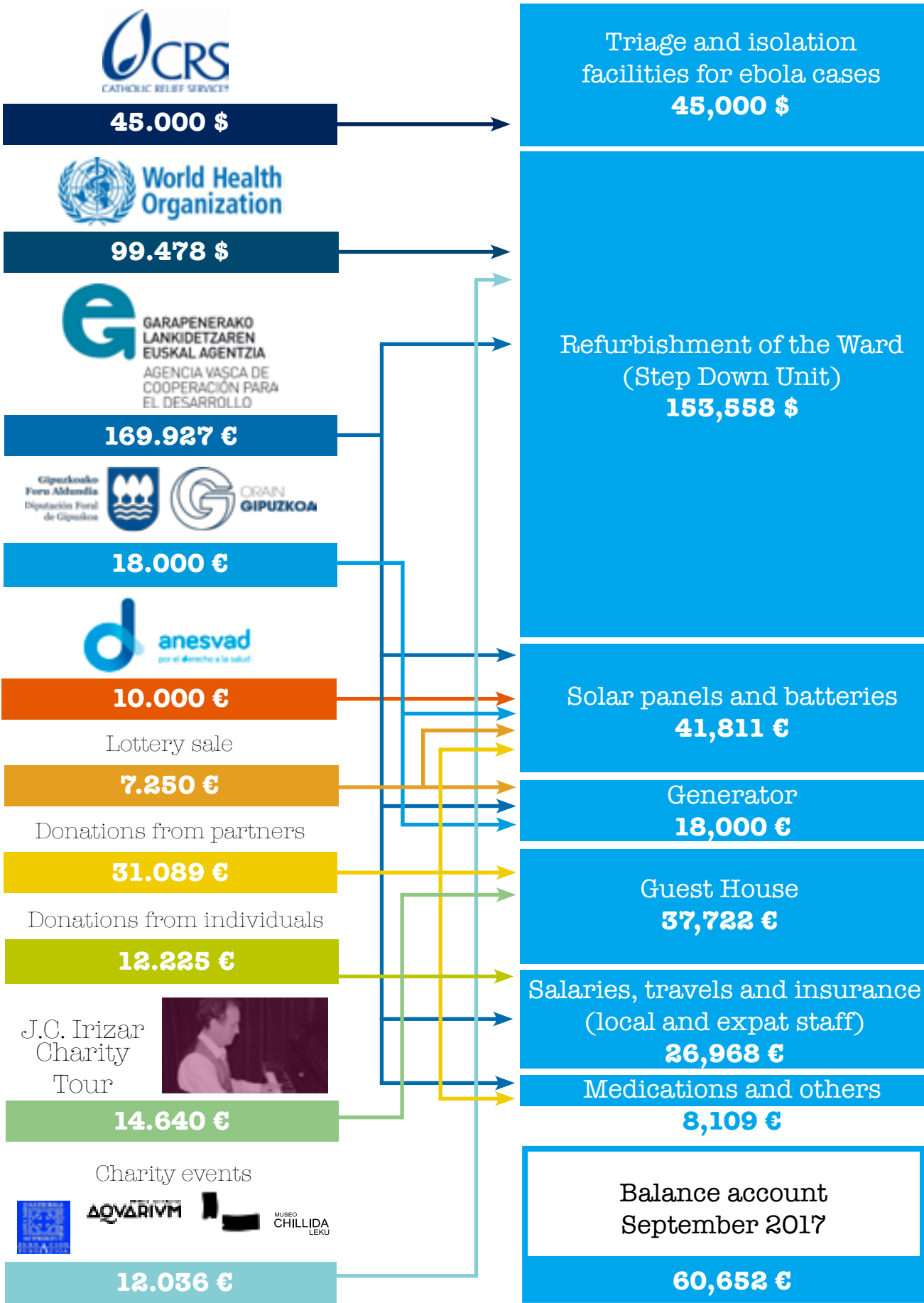
WE ARE LIKE YOU has received the support of the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, also the **Basque Agency for Development Cooperation of the Basque Government** and the **General Directorate of International Cooperation for Development of the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa**, as well as the recognition of **Anesvad** with the second prize "Entrepreneur 2016". **Catholic Relief Services (CRS)**, an organization that fights against poverty and disease throughout the world, has also given us its financial support for the ebola facilities. Currently, the collaboration of

the **National Catholic Health Council (NCHC)** of Liberia and the **Carter Center Foundation** allows us to advance in the implementation of mental health programs for the liberian population.

Since 2014, we have performed charitable events in the Basque Country, in which we raise funds, one of the more consistants are the Charity Concerts by the musician **Juan Carlos Irizar**.

However, this aid is not enough to develop the project in its entirety, so we are forced to seek the collaboration of sponsors, volunteers and benefactors who, with their work and contributions, allow us to complete the budget of the project and carry it forward.

USE OF FUNDS RAISED



ANNUAL BUDGET

7,560 €	Maintenance
8,750 €	Supplies
3,940 €	Cleaning
4,860 €	Office materials
16,470 €	Food
19,740 €	Drugs
12,150 €	Transportation and travel
87,035 €	Salaries
TOTAL	
160,505 €	

WE ARE LIKE YOU

GET INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

Once we have started the activity of the Step Down Unit and the OPD for mental disorders, the challenge we have is the fundraising to be able to maintain the program to people with mental illness over time, until the local institutions assume this type of treatments.

You can collaborate in different ways:

By becoming a partner and making a monthly contribution to the following bank account:

ES51 3035 0001 56 0010129618

Laboral Kutxa

We Are Like You

Volunteering and participating in awareness raising and fundraising actions:

info@wearelikeyou.org

WE ARE LIKE YOU

www.wearelikeyou.org



Hermanas Hospitalarias

AITAMENNI



Sisters Hospitaliers

ST. BENEDICT MENNI HEALTH CENTER



Hermanas Hospitalarias

AITA MENNI



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