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An update on the work you make possible • Summer 2026

Special Delivery

THE PAUL E. FARMER MATERNAL CENTER OF EXCELLENCE OPENS ITS DOORS

Because of your generosity, after nine years of careful planning, construction, and extensive staff training, the Paul E. Farmer Maternal Center of Excellence (MCOE) at Koidu Government Hospital opened its doors on February 14, 2026, ushering in a new era of maternal care in Sierra Leone.

That day, the first ambulance arrived at the MCOE carrying 33-year-old Sia Jimissa from Kono District. She had been in labor at her local clinic when staff recognized complications and called for an ambulance to bring her to the MCOE.

Immediately upon arrival, the clinical team determined

that Jimissa's baby was in distress. They performed an emergency cesarean section, and she safely delivered a healthy baby boy.

Because of people like you, the MCOE was constructed with three operating theaters and 120 beds, including 39 beds in the NICU, to ensure that mothers like Jimissa can receive the urgent care they need.

Jimissa's story reflects the profound and lasting impact of your generosity—safe deliveries, expert care, and brighter, healthier beginnings for families in Sierra Leone.

“

The idea that some lives matter less is the root of all that is wrong with the world.

Dr. Paul E. Farmer, PIH co-founder

”

ABOVE: Musu Fofanah's newborn rests in her arms in the postoperative ward of the Maternal Center of Excellence (MCOE) in Kono District, Sierra Leone, on Feb. 17, 2026. Photo by Sean Andrew Bangura / PIH

Dear friends,

In 2014, Partners In Health (PIH) responded to a deadly Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone. That emergency response evolved into a long-term partnership to strengthen the country's health system. Now, thanks to donors like you, we support 11 health facilities across eight districts, focusing on mental health, maternal health, and infectious diseases.

Today, I'm overjoyed to share that our progress in Sierra Leone continues with the opening of the Paul E. Farmer Maternal Center of Excellence (MCOE). Located on the Koidu Government Hospital campus in rural Kono District, this new wing is a major step forward for maternal and child health in Sierra Leone.

For years, Sierra Leone had faced one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. But together with you and in partnership with the Ministry of Health, we've driven down the rate by 78%, and the opening of the MCOE is a powerful sign of this progress.

The MCOE provides high-quality, dignified care for women and newborns while also serving as a model that can strengthen care across Sierra Leone and beyond.

Importantly, the MCOE is also a place of hope. With a dedicated neonatal intensive care unit, labor and delivery suites, and welcoming spaces for rest and recovery, it was designed with compassion in mind.



Photo by Sean Andrew Bangura / PIH

This milestone was made possible by your support. Because of you, more mothers and babies will receive lifesaving care, and more families will have hope for the future.

As we celebrate this achievement with the Ministry of Health, we are doing more than opening a new wing—we are helping build a future where no woman dies giving life.

With gratitude,

Vicky Reed
Executive Director, PIH Sierra Leone

Built in Partnership “ **WITH HANK AND JOHN GREEN**

We warmly invite you to watch our webinar, Built in Partnership: The Grand Opening of the Paul E. Farmer Maternal Center of Excellence. Moderated by PIH CEO Dr. Sheila Davis, the webinar features key staff from the MCOE and special appearances by Hank and John Green! Don't miss this opportunity to learn how the MCOE is helping advance compassionate, quality care for mothers and newborns.



WATCH NOW!
Scan the QR code or
visit **PIH.org/open**

This has been a six-year journey working with the Sierra Leonean government and Partners In Health Sierra Leone to build the staff, stuff, space, and systems necessary to provide good, dignified care.

John Green,
New York Times bestselling author
and PIH trustee





Maternal Center OF EXCELLENCE

STRENGTHENING CARE THROUGH STAFF, STUFF, SPACE, SYSTEMS, AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

The Maternal Center of Excellence (MCOE) in Kono District is addressing one of Sierra Leone's most urgent challenges—preventable maternal death. This innovative facility, built with your support, is strengthening maternal care through five essential elements, which we call the “Five S’s.”

STAFF: the people who deliver care

Before opening the MCOE, PIH trained local staff through classroom teaching with scenario-based exercises led by senior midwife mentors. This culture of learning continues with a training center that, once finished, will include lecture halls, simulation labs, and dormitory space for clinicians from across Sierra Leone. This hands-on training builds staff confidence and experience, helping them mentor colleagues and improve patient care.

“*Training elevates the quality of care we provide, giving mothers and families confidence in us. Now, when mothers come to the MCOE, they know they are in good hands and will receive the compassionate, expert care they deserve.*”

Isata Dumbuya,
Director of Nursing and Midwifery
PIH Sierra Leone

STUFF: the essential tools and resources

In Sierra Leone, health workers often know how to manage pregnancy and childbirth complications but lack the tools to diagnose and treat them. The MCOE is addressing those gaps by adding modern equipment, three operating theaters, and Sierra Leone's first neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). It is the first facility in Sierra Leone outside the capital, Freetown, to have piped medical gas delivered directly to patient beds.

SPACE: the physical environment

The MCOE expands patient capacity and adds dedicated areas for emergency care, surgery, and neonatal support to the campus of Koidu Government Hospital. The building's design improves access for staff, patients, and visitors while creating a warm environment with natural light, open-air waiting areas, and landscaped courtyards. It also includes a dormitory for mothers with babies in the NICU, supporting families during extended stays.

SYSTEMS: the processes and connections

Breakdowns in referrals, transport, triage, communication, and core infrastructure can lead to maternal deaths. The MCOE was designed to strengthen these connected systems—from community referral and ambulance dispatch to registration, triage, and urgent hospital care—so complications can be identified earlier, patients transferred faster, and treatment delivered in time. In doing so, it creates a more responsive maternal care system that helps save lives.

SOCIAL SUPPORT: the basic necessities

Many pregnant women face financial and logistical barriers to quality care. PIH's community partners help overcome these obstacles by providing essentials such as food, transportation, and cash. Birth waiting homes also allow expectant mothers to stay near clinics until delivery. This support helps more women seek care early, give birth in facilities, and avoid preventable complications and deaths.



Finda Boyah's twin girls are placed on the neonatal warming table by Mc Geoffrey Mvula, NICU nurse supervisor, and Fanta Kondeh, state registered nurse. *Photo by Caitlin Kleiboer / PIH*



The beautiful landscaped courtyard provides a serene space for patients and families at the Maternal Center of Excellence. *Photo by Caitlin Kleiboer / PIH*



Four generations gather on the day of Hawa Lebbie's (left) discharge from the Maternal Center of Excellence. *Photo by Caitlin Kleiboer / PIH*

From Crisis to Care

Because of support from donors like you, Phebian Baningo and her daughter received care when they needed it most.

Baningo unexpectedly went into labor far from a health facility. With the help of a traditional birth attendant, Baningo delivered her baby girl, Grace, at a family member's home.

But the baby appeared unwell. Baningo and her mother rushed Grace to the MCOE, which houses Sierra Leone's first NICU. The medical team immediately placed her on oxygen support and in an infant warmer to regulate her temperature.

Just four days later, Grace had improved significantly. Baningo began breastfeeding her daughter and practicing kangaroo care—maintaining regular skin-to-skin contact to regulate the baby's temperature, heart rate, and breathing. "Every day, you have to practice it," Baningo said. "It helps the baby grow healthy and strong."



Phebian Baningo's daughter, Grace, was the first infant born outside the facility to be admitted to the MCOE's outborn section of the NICU. Photo by Ibrahim John Kamara / PIH

2017

Planning for the MCOE began at Koidu Government Hospital—once short on power and supplies, and now equipped with 24/7 electricity, stocked pharmacies, and skilled staff.

2025

Construction of the MCOE for inpatient care was completed. The team prepared the new spaces and began training to deliver quality care to mothers and newborns in Sierra Leone.



Photo by Sean Andrew Bangura / PIH

The MCOE: A Journey to Lifesaving Care

2021

Marking a new era in maternal health, Dr. Austin Demby, Sierra Leone's minister of health, and the late Dr. Paul Farmer, PIH co-founder, take turns laying symbolic bricks for the MCOE.



Photo by Maya Brownstein / PIH

2026

The MCOE opened its doors to patients and began expanding lifesaving services to continue strengthening Sierra Leone's maternal health system for generations to come.

YOUR IMPACT



308

NICU Admissions



1,346

Babies Delivered



4,043

Women Received Care

*Impact totals from Feb. 14 – May 31

Your Generosity

ENABLES QUALITY CARE AT THE MCOE



Photo by Sean Andrew Bangura / PIH

Every day, women in Sierra Leone face life-or-death complications in pregnancy and childbirth. At this state-of-the-art facility equipped to reduce preventable maternal and newborn deaths, they are met with skilled clinicians who provide specialized care. Your support ensures that women like Fatu Mansaray, pictured here at the MCOE, receive the dignified care they deserve.



LEARN MORE
about care at the
MCOE by scanning
or visiting
PIH.org/mcoe

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