



African Union

Support to EBOLA outbreak in West Africa

ASEOWA

April 5, 2015

I SURVIVED EBOLA: THANKS TO ASEOWA

Alimatou Camara Speaks of her battle with Ebola and of the Care she received at the ASEOWA run Ebola Treatment Unit in Guinea



Guinean Alimatou Camara, a seventeen year old housewife in a polygamous union, lost her mother in-law, her only daughter and her stepdaughter to Ebola. She got infected too, but survived, thanks to the African Union Support to Ebola Outbreak in West Africa (ASEOWA).

**By Lilas Belepe,
Communication Officer, ASEOWA Guinee**

A resident of Forécariah, a town situated one hundred kilometres away from Conakry, the capital of Guinea, she narrates the ordeal that befell her and her family, her battle with Ebola and the time she spent recovering at the African Union run Ebola Treatment Unit (ETU), in Coyah.

“It all started when my husband’s mother came to us from Dubreka (another town in Guinea) with a high fever and extreme fatigue. We tried to treat her at home, but her health failed to improve. Two days later it worsened to diarrhoea and vomiting. While my husband and I were contemplating whether to take her to a health centre, she died. Because we did not



After counselling, Alimatou receives Attestation of Healing from the ASEOWA psychosocial team



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know what illness it was, we buried her following all customary rites – (that is, washing the corpse etcetera).

On the eighth day after her burial, my three year old daughter fell ill with high fever and by the next day, she had started vomiting and passing out blood. We informed a nurse in the neighbourhood who alerted the health authorities via 115, the Ebola emergency response number in Guinea. They came in an ambulance and took my child to the transit centre in Forécariah. That same evening, she was taken to the ETU in Coyah and the next day, we were informed of her death.

I had not finished mourning my daughter when I developed a flu and headache. My husband made a quick and tough decision as we had just lost our only daughter. He called the nurse in our neighborhood and an ambulance took me to the ETU in Coyah. When I learnt that I had tested positive to Ebola, I collapsed, as I did not think I would survive.

The day after my admission, however, I felt a glimmer of hope because the health workers took care of me like a baby. Before the treatment began, one of them explained to me that if I took my drugs religiously, I had a chance to recover and to leave the ETU alive. I trusted him because he spoke to me warmly. He gave me hope and so I chose to comply. The doctors and nurses who catered to us would bathe me, feed me, and talk to me gently – and I felt better by the day.

On my fourth day at the ETU, my seven year old stepdaughter joined me after testing positive for Ebola. By then, I was feeling much better and my first test in treatment had returned negative, meaning I had been healed. I however requested to remain at the ETU in order to take good care of her. Unfortunately, she didn't make it.

I lost my mother-in-law because my husband and I hesitated to take her to a health centre and I lost my only daughter because I did not take her to the ETU on time. I regret that.

I want to thank all the health workers at the ETU for the love and care that they provide to all the sick. I watched these kind souls devotedly take good care of all of us. Today, I want to call on any persons who develop symptoms such as fever and the flu to opt for medical examination, and if they test positive to Ebola, they should accept to be admitted in an ETU, because the ETU is not a place where people are left to die. I spent a week and a half there and I came out alive. I want to remind everyone that treatment at the ETU is totally free as I neither paid for drugs nor for food.”

Alimatou who was admitted on the 1st of February, 2014, into the ETU in Coyah, jointly managed by the African Union Support to Ebola Outbreak in West Africa (ASEOWA), together with Cuban



Surrounded by ASEOWA health workers, Alimatou proudly holds her certificate of healing

and Guinean medical teams, was discharged on February 9th, 2015. She has since rejoined her husband and co-wife at their family home in Forécariah, where like many other Ebola survivors, she may face stigmatization from some members of the community.

To address this, ASEOWA is stepping up community sensitization efforts to educate the population against the stigmatization of health workers, Ebola patients, survivors and their families. Partners are also working hard to minimize stigma in all its forms through continued social mobilization and communication.

Translated into English and with additional reporting by
Paschal Chem-Langhee, Communication Officer, ASEOWA –
Guinea

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For more information on the African Union's response to the Ebola crisis, contact: Wynne Musabayana on

MusabayanaW@africa-union.org; Tel +251922406157