Makeni Hospital Library, Sierra Leone - A brief history:

- Makeni Government Hospital Library was established in March 2013, by two UK GPs (the founders of African Hospital Libraries) who had been working as clinical doctors at the hospital for 11 months with VSO, in collaboration with the Hospital Management Team.

- The library was established in response to variations in clinical care delivered by hospital staff, and the lack of access to educational and reference resources.

- Core books were sourced from TALC, and were added to by private donations, and the Hospital’s WHO Blue Trunk Library (which had previously been kept in the Hospital Stores). The library has subsequently received several more shipments of books (mostly sourced from TALC and WHO) from the UK, through African Hospital Libraries.

- Library furniture, consumables, signage, and library staff salaries and relevant expenses, are paid for using African Hospital Libraries funds.

- The library employs a full-time librarian, Fatmata M Kamara, who has been employed as librarian since April 2013. The library also employs a Library Coordinator, Mr Komba A Momoh, who works across both libraries, in Makeni and Bo Government Hospitals.
The Library System:

• The Library at Makeni Government Hospital uses a robust system for cataloguing library items, registering users, and lending books. The system includes a data collection system, to record all borrowing episodes by library members.

• The Makeni Librarian was trained in the library system by the UK GPs, and was also issued with a copy of “How to Plant and Grow a Library: A Manual”, which was written by supporters of African Hospital Libraries, in collaboration with TALC. She has since trained the Bo Librarian and Library Coordinator in the same system.

• The library is free to join for all hospital staff, and for healthcare students on rotation, subject to completion of a registration form.

• Members are issued with a photo membership card, and a borrower card, with which they can borrow library items.

• Loans of library items are for 2 weeks, after which a transparent system of reminders and fines is implemented.
• Makeni Hospital Library has 175 Registered Members

• Since its opening, the library has been operating from a small disused nurses’ bay. This space is very small and insufficient for growth. It can accommodate a single table, at which 4 people can read, and a desk for the librarian, in addition to the book shelves. Despite this small space, the library has been used for examinations by local healthcare training institutions, for up to 7 people at a time. Between July and December 2016, 55 readers have used the small table for private study.

• Library membership is diverse, and includes all cadres of hospital staff, as well as healthcare students from Ernest Bai Koroma University (Makeni), Kenema Polytechnic, and Njala University.

Borrowing episodes, Makeni Library: January to December 2016

• In June 2016, the Library Inventory contained 597 items (including duplicate titles).

• A total of 274 items were borrowed in the 12 month period between January and December 2016.

• The most popular categories of books borrowed were: Medicine (27%), Midwifery Obstetrics and Gynaecology (11%), Paediatrics (10%), Surgery (10%) and Fiction (10%) – see figure on next page.
Items borrowed by category: January to December 2016

- Anaesthesia
- Fiction
- HIV/AIDS
- Laboratory
- Medicine
- Management
- Miscellaneous
- Midwifery, Obstetrics and Gynaecology
- Nursing
- Nutrition
- Paediatrics
- Public Health
- Pharmacy
- Radiology
- Surgery
- Tuberculosis
- Teaching, training and research
Some of the most popular library items in Makeni Hospital Library
Resource Centre Project:

- The current library space is far too small to enable future growth of the library – it is situated in a small disused nurses’ bay. There is therefore very limited space for private study, which restricts capacity for both hospital staff and healthcare students.
- It is the vision of the Hospital Management Team and African Hospital Libraries, to build a dedicated Resource Centre within the hospital grounds.
- This Resource Centre will provide extra space for educational resources and private study, and will increase the comfort of members by providing toilet facilities and air conditioning. A small computer suite will also be established in the Resource Centre, to enable access to online and e-resources. This has been requested by library users.

Progress so far:

- The Hospital Management Team has given land to the project (in photograph, bottom left), and will provide water and electricity.
- Plans have been drawn up and costed by a local builder
- A Service Level Agreement with the Ministry of Health is in progress
- Salaries of library staff, and costs of consumables, will continue to be met by African Hospital Libraries
Feedback from library users:

“..the reading of the books have made me to help my boss at the HIV unit.....it helps us how to take care of my clients at all times..”

“Reading books from the Regional Hospital Library has helped me to be able to diagnose and treat patients with malaria and STI and skin infections, and understand lifesaving skills in pregnant women. Reading novels is great fun to me...”

“The Makeni Regional Hospital Library has helped me a lot as a nurse to know about some medical condition, their management, treatment, complication etc. The library also helped me to improved my day to day reading and learning of new diseases and medical words and their meaning. The library also helped me to know what to do even when there is no doctor around. A great thank you to all who are making it possible for the library and its day to day running. God bless us all.”

“The library is very essential for nurses. The library was helping us for our researches.”

Library users ask for more space, to allow personal study within the library, and for internet facilities.