

WeSurvive - Stories of the Ebola Outbreak

Oral Histories Database

Project Summary

WeSurvive: Stories of the Ebola Outbreak is a web based oral history database that allows users to access and view over 200 hours of video testimonies from Sierra Leonean Ebola survivors, their family members, and others in the community affected by the outbreak. This material is presented alongside edited short films and associated 360 video content to accompany these intimate oral histories. The project is being produced alongside the forthcoming PBS Feature Documentary Film **Survivors** (which tells the heroic and heartbreaking story of the 2014 Ebola Outbreak from the inside out).



Content: Our collection of intimate interviews with Ebola survivors offers users access to worlds of previously unexplored information. Our collection includes personal accounts of the 2014-15 Ebola outbreak in West Africa. This trove of previously unpublished interviews includes associated information like age, gender, emotional state, location, type of scene, and several other key data points. The collection thus provides unique information about Ebola and life in West Africa more broadly.

Purpose: To share the untold stories of Ebola survivors with the world. You will be able to find these stories in numerous places, not only on our publicly available **WeSurvive** website but also as a part of FRED, a digital library of global culture that is an Innovation Studio Project of The Alliance and Microsoft.

How it Works: **WeSurvive** is the first smart, adaptive, video database of its kind. Using Microsoft's Azure Machine Learning to enable automatic tagging, translation, and searching of original moving image media content, **WeSurvive** allows users to sort, search, and actively explore these interviews with lightning fast return times. Our collection of intimate interviews with Ebola survivors, many of which were gathered during and immediately following the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, offers users access to worlds of previously unexplored data via intimate personal accounts of what actually happened during the outbreak. This trove of unpublished interviews includes detailed, unedited stories, as told by survivors and their extended communities, of what it was like during and after the outbreak. This oral history collection will be fully searchable and downloadable for use by researchers, scientists, artists, and public health professionals around the world. The database can be configured, viewed, sorted, and served in varying formats depending on user interest.

The video interviews and associated content that form the basis for this interactive database, have limitless potential for use by professionals in numerous different fields including public health, medical

humanities, anthropology, psychology, public policy, epidemiology, history, journalism, sociology, and the arts. The kinds of insights that can be gleaned from the cutting-edge sorting/ searching/ translation/ tagging technologies we are employing in the database have the potential to help users explore the relationships between networks of individuals in the region, and the outbreak as a whole. In addition, researchers will be able to explore social and economic life beyond the context of Ebola, given the level of data contained in the interviews. Coupled, in some cases, with raw 360 video footage of the actual landscapes in which the epidemic unfolded, these testimonials could be used for everything from epidemiological field work to experimental journalistic storytelling.

Professors in African Studies and African History could draw on the documentation for teaching. Researchers can use the data on gender, for example, to develop sophisticated understandings of how gender affected the spread of, experience of, and aftermath of Ebola. There is relatively little work done on this, but some evidence that women in Sierra Leone were more likely to get infected, and died in higher numbers, since they were the caretakers, and also looked after the dead. Also, these interviews could be used as part of larger training modules for physicians going into the region, to help them gain a deeper understanding of the culture, the people, and the environment before actually getting their feet on the ground. We are also in talks about partnering with SPARQ (Social Psychological Answers to Real-World Questions) at Stanford to be our academic co-hosts along with Emory.

Partners: National Endowment for the Humanities, Microsoft, National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture, Emory University, Stanford University.

Audience: Our core audience includes Public Health Researchers, doctors, scientists, NGO's, epidemiologists, and policy-makers from organizations like the WHO and the CDC, as well as anyone interested in the development of predictive health technologies. In addition, we expect there to be strong interest from journalists, artists, and academics such as anthropologists, historians and political scientists.

Timeline: We hope to launch the MVP in 2018 in conjunction with the release of the film.