

Progress report

Clean water, improved health and better education in Sierra Leone

Prepared for Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors

January 2011



Plan to change the world

Plan aims to achieve lasting improvements in the quality of life for children, families and communities in developing countries. Thanks to donors like you, Plan has been implementing an education, water, and sanitation project in Sierra Leone that is helping to do just that. We are pleased to provide you with a progress report on this project and the results your gift has helped achieve to date.

Your gift to this project was matched

3:1

It is important to note that this project is in partnership with Dubai Cares and your gift has been matched 3:1.

Review of the need and project goal

The provision of social services still remains a challenge in Sierra Leone, especially in rural areas. The education sector is in dire need of more teaching resources and learning materials for children. There is also a need for improved infrastructure to meet the demand of children who are unable to attend school due to overcrowding and long travel distances.

Among the infrastructure needs of schools in Plan Sierra Leone's Bombali Programme Unit, as well as throughout the country, is that of clean drinking water on school grounds, hand-washing stations, and latrines that meet the gender-specific needs of boys and girls. Without such basic infrastructure, school remains inaccessible to a number of children and exposes them to water-borne and communicable illnesses, making learning difficult, and ultimately denying children their basic dignities and rights to education and health. With help from donors like you, this project will take those important steps, necessary to change this situation.

The purpose of this project is to improve access to, and quality of, education and to reduce water-borne illnesses among children and their communities in the area of Bombali.



This project is directly benefiting 1,984 boys, 2,125 girls and 3,500 community members

Impact – results made possible by your gift

The following activities took place this past reporting period:

Project inception workshop

A workshop was held with project stakeholders, including members from all beneficiary villages, project partners, district and ward council members, and Plan Sierra Leone staff, to discuss the project, its goals, roles, and responsibilities.

Infrastructure improvements

Plan uses locally available materials and sources local labour for its projects, further injecting money into the economies in which we work. During project planning, Plan works closely with communities to request bids, receive quotes, and select construction partners based on quality and cost. For this project, 10 initial bids were received. Four companies were chosen for all construction related activities, which include construction of schools, latrines, and boreholes with child-friendly hand pumps.

Construction began in May and was kicked off with a ground breaking ceremony. While construction was expected to have been completed this past September, heavy rains and a national-wide cement shortage caused some delays. Five out of seven schools to be constructed (in Rosana, Bisongo, Mathene, Kolisokoh and Robarray) are 90% complete. The schools in Mateboi and Mabap are 40% completed.

Beyond just infrastructure, other initiatives are underway to provide a quality education for children at these new schools:

- Teachers have been selected and will be trained to ensure they are fully competent and motivated
- School furniture, supplies, textbooks, and recreational materials are being procured

As evidence of their commitment to bringing improved education to their villages, there is a high degree of community participation in the construction process, with some of the women volunteering to carry water for cement mixing and some of the men helping as labourers.



Above: Plan Sierra Leone’s Country Director, Fadimata Alainchar, breaking ground for construction to begin in Mathene.



Above: The school that is currently being used in Mathene.



Above: The Rosana School, mid-construction.



Above: A new latrine block at the Mathene School.

Education awareness

Awareness raising campaign sessions were conducted in seven target communities. These sessions aimed to increase the support and commitment of parents and communities to enrol more children, especially girls, in school. Girl/Mother Clubs were also formed and trained. Training focused on issues such as advocacy, mediation, counselling, communication and monitoring techniques for the advancement of education for girls.

Community health and hygiene

To improve hygiene practices, like hand-washing, education sessions were held. School health clubs will be formed and hygiene kits, containing items such as soap, will be distributed to encourage these newly learned behaviours.

A number of training workshops were also conducted on the concepts of Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS – see next page for more details), School-Led Total Sanitation (SLTS¹) and School Sanitation Hygiene Education² (SSHE) to community participants, trainers, Plan staff and partner organizations. After training, CLTS was officially implemented in six communities and it has been well-received. For example, in Mathene, the village chief has led by example and has begun digging a latrine for his own household.



Above: The Mathene village chief and his daughter.

¹ Brings the CLTS approach to a school setting.

² SSHE is a comprehensive program to ensure child friendly water supply, latrines, and hand washing facilities in the schools and promote behavioural change through hygiene education.



The CLTS approach

Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) is an innovative methodology for mobilizing communities to completely eliminate open defecation. Communities are facilitated to conduct their own appraisal and analysis of open defecation and encouraged to take action to turn not only their households, but the whole village, into an “open defecation free” zone. Plan Canada has successfully integrated CLTS in other community development programs in Kenya, Tanzania, and Ethiopia.

The key to CLTS is the recognition that merely providing latrines does not guarantee their use, nor result in improved sanitation and hygiene. Instead, CLTS looks at the behavioural change needed to ensure real and sustainable improvements by mobilizing and empowering communities. There is a shift from focusing on latrine construction for individual households to the creation of “open defecation free” villages. By raising awareness that as long as even a minority continues to defecate in the open everyone in the community is at risk of disease. CLTS triggers the community’s desire for change, propels them into action, encourages mutual support and helps the community to adopt appropriate local solutions. All these factors lead to greater ownership and sustainability, and ultimately support community members to become active participants in their own development.

Top (left and right), Middle (left): CLTS implementation in Rosana.

Middle (right): Community members discuss latrine design.

Bottom (left): A Plan Sierra Leone project coordinator facilitating a CLTS training workshop.

Capacity building

Various community committees were formed and trained to help implement, monitor, and sustain the project. They include:

- Project Manage Committees – Assist in the oversight of all aspects of the project
- School Management Committees – Play an important role in mobilizing community members, as well as ensuring sound management of the schools
- Water and Sanitation Management Committees – Help to ensure boreholes are used properly, maintained, and that community members are informed about healthy hygiene practices

Children have been involved in each of these committees and in every step of this project to ensure they learn about their rights, that their voices are heard and counted. After meeting with several of these committees, children gathered at an existing school structure, which was in poor condition. Skits were performed to demonstrate their knowledge of child rights and in particular education for girls. Using children as farm labour and teenage pregnancies are common, and were cited as main challenges in keeping children, especially girls, out of school. This increased level of understanding of child rights issues reflects the effectiveness that training and awareness raising campaigns have had.

Thank you

Once again, thank you for being part of this important project that is brining clean water, healthy sanitation, and education to children in Sierra Leone. Your support is invaluable and is truly making a difference in lives of so many.

If you have any questions or would like to provide feedback on this report, please contact Sarah Grant, by email at sgrant@planCanada.ca or at 416-920-1654, ext. 305.

Mabap – From isolation to hope

The village of Mabap is one of the communities taking part in this incredible project. What sets this village apart from the others, is that it is made up of amputees and people living with disabilities – something that makes them outcasts in the area of Bombali and gives their children few educational opportunities. This has all changed, thanks to this project.

With the construction of classrooms, the children of Mabap will have equal access to the education that is their right. Mr. Koroma, a Mabap resident, believes that with his child attending this new school, his family’s status in the region will improve. He says this project has brought life and hope for their children and a brighter future for everyone in the community. Mr. Koroma and others who live with disabilities are so engaged in this project that they have formed a committee to monitor the activities of the contractor and labour force to help ensure quality delivery of construction elements.

