

Introduction

In May, we felt the need to consolidate the gains made so far, particularly those of April. With the reunification work almost complete, we are transitioning from the first (emergency) stage to the second (educational) stage of the project cycle. And the ever-increasing challenge of character moulding the children as they come to terms with their difficult past is more than enough work for the project staff.

Highlights

- 9 of the remaining 12 children traced & reunified.
 - Visited all 108 homes of the reunified children.
 - Visited all the 34 in their new schools.
 - More on advocacy and a Memorandum of Understanding is signed by FSU, DCI, Timap for Justice and MSWGCA.
 - Information exchange meeting held with street children and the police.
 - Project update meeting held with paramount chiefs and community leaders.
 - Low turn out at ICC (Interim Care Centre) in week mornings
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I. Working progress and challenges – the street children

Overview

May consolidated the gains we made in the previous month. There was a need for more follow up visits to both the homes of the reunified children and to the learning institutions where we placed the first set of reunified children. There was also the need to continue our outreach programme through the work of the CCRMGs as well as bring more community stakeholders to understand the project, as well as help monitor its activities. We also had some of our local partners becoming much more committed to our work after collaborating together for about six months. We continued our sensitization, this time with young people and law enforcement officers and held our counselling and other routine sessions at the interim care centre.

Attendance

Our daily attendance has dropped within the morning sessions due to the fact that (34) children are in schools, while the other 74 (reunified) trickle in slowly till the afternoon when the centre becomes full. Full morning turn outs are only recorded on Saturdays. The reasons for staying home in the morning for those not yet in school are varied. While some are settling down with their families after the reunification; others are missing their friends already in school, and will only appear when their friends' coming was near at hand. However, the afternoon sees all of them come to take part in all of the activities of the centre.

Feeding

This key activity still goes on, and is well patronized. As is already stated, the lunch and the last meal receive the highest attendance. Non-registered children are also ever increasing, ranging from 30 – 40 this month. The children continue to enjoy the meals.

Family Tracing and Reunifications

Only three (3) out of the twelve (12) are yet to be traced and reunified. These are Fenty, Hassan and Alusine. (Hassan is serving a jail term for stealing a cell phone.)

Fenty said his family is in Masingbi, some forty (40) miles from Makeni. We would have completed his reunification by now, but he abandoned the centre since February and travelled to Freetown (as we were told). We still have not seen him since then.

Alusine on the other hand, was a close associate of the jailed Hassan. They, in fact, live together. Since the arrest of his 'friend', he became unnecessarily aggressive and never stays long in the centre. All the stories he has told about his family have all proved to be false.

All the other remaining 9 were successfully reunified with their families.

Counselling

Another of the main activities of the centre - continuing either at one-to-one or at group level. We continue to look at all aspects of behaviour change in the group programmes and deal with the specifics at individual level. We also continued to help special sessions for our school-going children.

In the area of trauma healing, after a lot of counselling sessions, so much change has been seen in girls like:

ALIMATU

She is now active and punctual. She has found time to play and interact with colleagues, and has built a strong relationship and trust with her caregiver.

ISATU

After receiving care from HANCI (SCoSL) for the past six months, she wrote a letter of appreciation to the staff expressing her gratitude for such gesture of goodness and kindness. She is receiving counselling in order to continue such a positive behaviour.

The following had specific issues for which they received psychosocial counselling:

HASSAN

Hassan was a very quiet boy but was provoked by a visitor (Alpha). They both fought, leaving Hassan with a deep cut on his right arm. They are both receiving counselling.

ABDULAI

He was reported by his caregiver that whenever he returned home from HANCI in the evening hours, he would move round fighting other children in the neighbourhood. This was breeding strong animosity with the neighbour, hence the complaint. He is also been counselled.

FODAY

Foday Bangura was reported to have been beaten by a visiting boy while on their way home on the 21st May. He has been counselled to desist from fighting

Medical

The health centre provides curative, preventive and health education services to our beneficiaries. We work in collaboration with hospitals and clinic in the Makeni Township. During the month under review the following activities were undertaken at the health centre:

- Health talks on environmental sanitation
- Visitation by Marie Stopes staff
- Treatment of beneficiaries

Health Talks

Health Talks on Environmental Sanitation was presented to the street children in Makeni by staff nurse Aminata at the interim care centre on the 26th May 2009 as a way of sensitizing them to take precaution for their health.

The following was covered:

- Provision of safe and adequate supply of water
- Proper disposal of waste
- Safeguarding of food
- Provision of good housing etc

A period of questions & answers saw to it that these components were well discussed to allow a reasonable understanding of the topic.

Visit by Marie Stopes Staff

Staff members from the Marie Stopes Clinic visited the HANCI Clinic to check on the street girls who were provided with contraceptives. A good check up was done by the team on each of the recipient and from the observations, no abnormality or complex result was reported.

The second purpose of their visit was to invite us to their family planning promotion ceremony which was held on the 29th May, 2009, at the Makeni town hall. We sent a representative. The team promised to visit the centre next month.

Treatment of Beneficiaries

Below are the reported cases for the month.

NO	DIAGNOSIS	# OF CASES	TREATMENT ADMINISTERED
1	Malaria	22	Inj. Quinine, Inj chloroquine, Inj B-complex, Tabs Quinine, Tabs ACT, Tabs chloroquine, Tabs Routine, Tabs paracetamol, Tabs ASA, Inj Novalgin
2	Respiratory Tract Infection (RTI)	17	Inj crystalline, Tabs septrine, Tabs vit. C, Caps amoxyl tabs, ASA, tabs paracetamol, tabs phenegan
3	Sexually Transmitted	03	Caps DCN, Tabs metronidazole, Inj gentamycin, Inj procaine penicillin tabs paracetamol
4	Nevralgin	12	Inj Novalgin, tabs brufen, tabs ASA.
5	Laceration	14	Procaine penicillin (powder Inj) GV solution, Providone solution gauze, cotton wool plaster.
6	Worm Infestation	05	Tabs Mebendazole
	Tonsillitis	03	Caps Amoxyl, caps tetracycline, tabs ASA, Tabs Vit C. Tabs paracetamol
8	Typhoid Fever	02	Inj chloraphenicol, caps chloraphenicol, tabs routine, tabs paracetamol
9	Skin Infection	05	B. B. solution, cotrimazole cream
10	Chicken Pox	01	Tabs metro, caps amoxicillin, tabs promethazine.
11	Gastritis	02	Tabs, gelusil, tabs metronidazole, caps amoxicillin, tabs paracetamol
12	Burns	01	Procaine Penicillin, (powder& Inj) G.V solution, Vit. C caps Amoxicillin.

We made two referrals and both were successfully treated.

II. Outreach, Reconciliation and Advocacy – Consultations with Street Children, Families and Community Leaders.

Awareness Raising Meeting with Children and Young People.

This meeting took place on the 14th May 2009 at the HANCI Children's Centre, Makeni. 94 street children and 20 youth leaders from 10 youth groups in the township attended. There were 4 facilitators who led discussions on the following topics:

- The Role and Responsibilities of Parents towards their Children
 - Mrs Jestina Memuna Smart, Counsellor Makeni City Council.
- Obligations of Children at Home
 - Mr. Abdulai Kamara, Probation Officer, MSWGCA
- Community Participation in Upbringing of Children
 - Mr. Alhaji Musa Conteh – CEFORD
- Children must be seen and heard in their Homes and Community
 - Rev. Paul M. Kargbo – Teacher of Birch Memorial Secondary School.

At the end of the meeting, the chairman encouraged youth leaders, to collaborate with HANCI in helping the 'refined' children to become useful citizens in the near future. In reply, the youth leaders expressed willingness to accept these children and work in their favour if only they were willing and ready to go back to their families. They expressed gratitude to HANCI for SCoSL Project which has come to bridge the gap between them and their once beloved children.

Social worker, Abu Sesay gave the vote of thanks.

Annual Meeting for Street Children on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Police and How They Can Access Available Services for Children

May 16 saw 20 youth leaders from youth groups in Makeni, 80 street children and some NGO representatives converge at the Interim Care Centre (ICC) for this session. The regional co-ordinator gave the welcome address while the project co-ordinator explained the purpose of the meeting. While welcoming the participants, the project co-ordinator said the meeting was to broaden the knowledge of street children on the roles and responsibilities of the police, a confidence and trust building process that will enable children to access services the police can provide even in conflict situation.

- Mr Daniel Kamara of the Family Support Unit
 - Spoke on the support given to children that are in conflicts with the law as well relating to promoting and protecting gender roles within the community.
- Mr. Theophilus Samuel Koroma, Crime Officer Makeni Division
 - Spoke on the services available to law officers for children.

- Mr. Abdulai Kamara, Probation Office of the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs in Makeni
 - Spoke on the right of children and responsibilities of parents towards their rights.

David Kamara, a visiting child moved the vote of thanks. In his statement, he expressed appreciation for the salient points brought out in the questioning time and the explanation of the three facilitators, especially on the services available from law officers to children, and the effort made by SCoSL in reunifying his colleagues and placing them in educational institutions. He also advised his colleagues to desist from all crime related activities and to see the police as a law enforcing body, rather than enemies.

Refresher Training Workshop for Community Child Rights Monitoring Group on Child Rights Issues and Positive Discipline.

The project has three CCRMGs in the three communities where it has the highest number of reunified street children. Each is made up of 9 members, a total of 27 in all. They are the 'defenders of children's rights in their communities'. For them to play this role, they needed to receive certain training in child right issues. Having received their initial training a few months back, we saw the need to bring them together to refresh them on some relevant things they needed to know in preparation for their work in earnest. We had all of them for this training on May 19, at 4pm.

Mr. Abdulai Kamara of MSWGA spoke on the Child Rights Act.

Mr. Mustapha Kieh of DCI spoke on the responsibilities of parents as is enshrined in Child Rights act.

At the commencement of the training, participants were encouraged to face their responsibility and continue their work in their communities. This refresher was to build more confidence in them. At the end, they had the opportunity to conduct role plays on how to respond to child rights issues, how to record cases of abuse and how to report such cases to the appropriate quarter. It proved to be very participatory and a lot was learnt. We are looking forward to see how they will work within their respective communities.

Meeting with Paramount Chiefs and other Local Authorities

This meeting was an attempt to explain the project to community leaders again, answer any queries or questions they may have, and invite them to collaborate with us in the monitoring of the project. It took place on the 20th May at the HANCI's ICC in Makeni.

Our audience included the Deputy Mayor, and the Development Planning Officer of the Makeni City Council, Councillors of both the city and district councils, representatives of Bombali Seborah and Makari Gbanti Chiefdoms, Section Chiefs, Local Chiefs, Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs officials and

Section Chiefs within the three communities we work in (Bangura Street, Campbell Street and Ropolon community).

The regional co-ordinator gave a brief background to the project. The project co-ordinator (SCoSL) explained the purpose of the meeting and gave a detailed run-down of project activities since its inception.

Councillor Ishmael Bangura expressed thanks and appreciation on behalf of his fellow councillors, stressing on its timeliness and wishing that the target beneficiaries be increased. He further said that they would report to the council about the efforts HANCI/SCoSL is making to reduce the number of children living on the streets.

The deputy Mayor of the Makeni City council expressed similar sentiment, saying how interested they were in the project. She said she was most pleased with the educational aspect of the children. She ended by appealing to her colleagues and their communities to change their attitudes towards positive parenting.

The meeting ended successfully with all present promising to help in the supervision of the project and help its progress when and wherever possible.

Radio Discussion

Following the meeting with paramount chiefs, and other local authorities, an hour long panel discussion was hosted that night at the SLBS radio on FM 88.0 and was aired simultaneously at FM 95.1. It had, on the panel, the project coordinator and two social workers and it was meant to acquaint the community of Makeni and its environs on the activities of the street children project since its inception in Makeni. Mr Falilu Amadu Sesay, the deputy station manager of SLBS FM 88.0, helped in moderating the programme. All those that listened to it reported that the discussion went very well.

Community Sensitisation Work by Members of the CCRMGs.

This took place on the 21st May at the Ropolon Community, a response to a request made in CCRMG refresher training. The meeting started at 4:00pm and was chaired by a CCRMG member, Mr. Augustine Anrea of the host Community. 23 CCRMG members and 32 community people attended - including parents, teachers and other stakeholders.

The staff merely observed the meeting. Everything else was done by the CCRMG members. They took the front one at a time to explain the project, their own role, and what was expected of every community member- they were really outstanding in their delivery and community members understood them. The speakers included Isatu Jalloh, Sento Kpukumu, Isatu Kamara and the chairman of the day.

The meeting ended successfully, judging by the responses of the stakeholders. Pa Ibrahim Jalloh, chief of Ropolon, thanked HANCI for such a venture and encouraged his subjects to work earnestly, especially as his community in particular had a lot of

abuse cases. He promised to set up by-laws towards the rights and obligations of children in his community.

Mr. Ansumana Koroma, a teacher within the community, thanked HANCI and stated that all that has been done was good. However, the only problem is that they have many children in that community who were not going to school and they are at risk to take to the street. He pleaded with the organisation for their prompt intervention in that area also.

Fatima Gbla, a CCRMG member of Bangura Street gave the vote of thanks.

Visitation of schools

We visited 4 primary schools, 1 hairdressing salon and 1 vocational training institution. We checked particularly on their punctuality, regularity, class participation and general conduct. The reports are very much mixed, as would be expected at this stage - but we took time to record all our observations for each.

Games and sport

We held training sessions for both soccer and athletics at Birch Memorial Secondary School. These games are being organised for thorough bonding and better interaction among children. Children suggested that they would like to organise a sporting competition like a football gala or athletic competition.

The girls stayed at the compound playing volleyball and other indoor games. They are also looking forward to having a volleyball competition with girls from either Birch Memorial Secondary School or United Methodist Church Secondary School.

III. Organisational briefings

The Staff

The staff continue to be dedicated to the work and a very strong team spirit is been built gradually. Hiring the two new staff last month was really the right thing to do. Their presence is partly why we achieved this much in the last two months.

Our Partners

We continue to enjoy an undivided loyalty with our partners. To cement our ties with several of our key [partners, we were delighted to sign formal memoranda of understanding with the Police Family Support Unit, Defence for Children International (DCI), Timap for Justice and Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA).

Challenges/Constrains

- Some of the thirty-four children placed in schools complain of being hungry during the morning sessions in school.
- The Seventy-four reunified children are anxiously waiting to be placed in schools.
- There is a rapid increase in the number of children visiting the centre especially during lunch period.

Recommendations

- We recommend the provision of waterproofs for staff since the rainy season is here.
- We recommend reunification packages for the one hundred and seventeen reunified children.

In The Coming Month

The following are the some of the activities scheduled for the month of June:

- Conduct family group meetings to support children's successful home return.
- Continue the provision of food and drugs for the beneficiaries.
- Conduct a training workshop for all beneficiaries on child protection issues.
- CCRMGs to continue their community sensitization work.
- Conduct staff-learning workshops on documenting relevant learning issues with street children and on evaluation.
- Continue spreading child rights & messages through the radio.
- Continue the daily activities and games of the centre.
- Receive 2 groups of SCoSL visitors & volunteers.

CONCLUSION

We shall soon forget about tracing and reunification in this project circle, and turn our attention to following the progress of our beneficiaries at home and in school – a new phase with new challenges. But quickly glancing back to where we started, we will be encouraged to realise we are moving surely to our desired end one day at a time. We desire to see all our clients enter educational institutions and that is the common request for them all. So far, we are happy that most families and children themselves have begun appreciating the work of the project very sincerely. We feel strongly motivated by this. We pray that as a united whole (HANCi-SL, SCoSL, our beneficiaries, and the community stakeholders), we shall all move into the next phase with similar determination to see the success of this entire project.

Faithfully Submitted,

OPERATIONS.