

Street Child Makeni: Summary Report

MAY 2009



*** Reunifications reach 117 (out of 120)! ***

After our massive achievement in completing the reunification of over 70 children in late April. **We have successfully traced and reunified another 9 of the remaining children this month**, bringing our total to 117 children out of the 120 who were registered onto the project! Also to consolidate, we **visited all 108 of the previously re-unified children in their homes this month**.

The remaining 3 are complex cases. One boy is unfortunately serving a prison sentence for stealing a phone. Another has not been seen since February, but according to good sources is OK in Freetown. We still have not seen him since then. The third was a very close friend of the one in jail and has been hard to get through to since his friend was jailed. We will persevere with all three.

Annual Meeting for Street Children and Police

On May 16th, 20 youth leaders from youth groups in Makeni, 80 street children and some NGO representatives converged for a meeting to **broaden the knowledge of children on the roles and responsibilities of the police**. This was part of a confidence and trust building process that will enable children to access services the police can provide, even in conflict situations.

Games and sport

We have held soccer and athletics training sessions for the boys at Birch Memorial Secondary School (near the Centre). Children suggested that they would like to organise a sporting event, either 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

Attendance

The daily attendance at the children's centre has dropped in the morning sessions due to the fact that 34 children are now in schools. The other reunified children trickle in slowly - until the afternoon when the centre becomes full. Full morning turn outs are still 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 in school, and thus only appear with them. However, the atmosphere in the afternoons when everyone is together is very good – and participation in the activities is strong.

Medical & health

During May our clinic nurse gave health talks on environmental sanitation. In addition our female beneficiaries were visited by our partner, Marie Stopes in order to monitor the use and effects of the newly prescribed contraceptives provided last month.

The condition of the clinic remains very testing, however we are trying to make basic improvements before the rainy season sets in properly. Treatment of beneficiaries continued as usual with the highest number of cases being treated for Malaria (22) and Respiratory Tract Infections (17).

School visits

All 34 children in education were followed up with. We visited 4 primary schools, 1 hairdressing salon and 1 vocational training institution where our children are now placed. We checked particularly on their punctuality, regularity, class participation and general conduct. To be honest, the reports are very much mixed – as we would expect at this stage when the children have been out of education for so long. We are working with the individual children on specific issues as they arise.

Meeting with Paramount Chiefs & Local Authorities

Engagement and 'buy-in' from the traditional & formal authorities is critical – so this meeting was to explain the project to community leaders again, update them on progress & answer their questions and invite them to collaborate with us in the monitoring especially. Both the regional and project coordinators spoke.

Councillor Ishmael Bangura expressed thanks and appreciation on behalf of his fellow councillors, stressing its timeliness but wishing that the scale of the project could be increased to take in more children. The deputy Mayor of the Makeni City council expressed similar sentiments, 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.

Formalising partners

We continue to enjoy excellent relationship with our partners in Makeni. 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).