

# Crisis Education Project Profile

March 2005

## Project: **Reintegration Support**

**Locations: Sierra Leone** (Kono and Kailahun)

**Implementing Organization:** International Rescue Committee (IRC)

**Type of Programming:** Improving access to education in high refugee return areas with links to other reintegration activities

**Target group/beneficiaries:** 10 communities in need of school reconstruction or rehabilitation

**Stage:** Transition/reconstruction

### **Environmental Context of the Program**

**SOCIAL:** 2002 marked a turning point in Sierra Leone's history. President Kabbah declared the official end of the disarmament and demobilization process, peaceful elections were held, and the Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission began the work of bringing justice and healing war wounds. According to UNHCR, to date some 200,000 Sierra Leonean refugees have returned and some 206,000 IDPs have moved from "resettlement camps" to their home districts. Despite the political progress, some 100,000 Sierra Leonean refugees remain in neighboring countries. About 60,000 refugees are still in Guinea's poor "forestry region. According to UNHCR, approximately 70% of this population is from Kailahun and 30% is from Kono, the project target areas. Although the Government and the international community have officially declared these two districts "safe for return", the widespread devastation of homes, schools, health clinics, water and sanitation systems, and roads makes return and successful reintegration difficult. In addition, the Government provides only the most basic social services and support systems for vulnerable residents and returnees are still very weak. According to assessment conducted by IRC in refugee camps in Guinea, education, economic development/agriculture, health, and protection of women and children (in that order) were the highest-ranking concerns among the refugees/prospective returnees.

**CULTURAL/RELIGION:** Sierra Leone is a multi-ethnic society. There are 20 native African tribes and comprise 90% (Temne 30%, Mende 30%, other 30%) of the population, Creole (Krio) 10% (descendants of freed Jamaican slaves who were settled in the Freetown area in the late-18th century), refugees from Liberia's recent civil war, small numbers of Europeans, Lebanese, Pakistanis, and Indians. Religion: Muslim 60%, indigenous beliefs 30%, Christian 10%. Languages: English (official, regular use limited to literate minority), Mende (principal vernacular in the south), Temne (principal vernacular in the north), Krio (English-based Creole, spoken by the descendants of freed Jamaican slaves who were settled in the Freetown area, a lingua franca and a first language for 10% of the population but understood by 95%).

**ECONOMIC:** The economy of Sierra Leone is based on agriculture and mining. Some 67% of the population is engaged in farming, fishing, or forestry. Much of the farming is of a subsistence nature. Plantation agriculture is remarkable only in the coastal region. Minerals are the nation's principal export. In 1997 the national budget showed revenues of \$87 million and expenditures of \$146 million.

**Political Relationships:** The 1991 to 2002 civil war between the government and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of more than 2 million people (well over one-third of the population), many of whom are now refugees in neighboring countries. Demobilization and disarmament of the RUF and Civil Defense Forces (CDF) combatants has been completed. National elections were held in May 2002 and the government continues to slowly reestablish its authority. However, the gradual withdrawal of most UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) peacekeepers in 2004 and the tenuous security situation in neighboring Liberia may present challenges to the continuation of Sierra Leone's stability.

### **Program Description**

**TARGET GROUP:** Students in 10 schools - 359 school teachers and administrators - Youth and girl student groups - School Management Committees (SMCs) - Community Teacher Associations (CTAs) - Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST)

**MATERIAL/PHYSICAL RESOURCES:** IRC's Construction Unit provides assistance with the reconstruction/rehabilitation of 10 schools with construction materials, basic water and sanitation, and furniture. Communities provide unskilled and/or skilled labor and materials, where available. After assessment of needs IRC provides essential learning materials to schools such as textbooks, basic teaching materials, and equipment that enhances learning environment and motivates students to stay in schools. The program activities for youth and girl students include provision of materials and training for cultural displays, interclub and interschool academic.

**FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES:** The program is funded by BPRM. IRC's past work with 35 CTAs in Kono, 27 in Kenema, and 30 in Kailahun has demonstrated that building the capacity of CTAs improves the participation of community members in school activities. The current project supports the formation and capacity building of 50 CTAs and SMCs to ensure schools have strong governance and community-support bodies. These bodies are formed democratically and receive start-up training and inputs to make them functional in supporting and monitoring school activities. CTAs have become key actors in supporting school rehabilitation, constructing school furniture, and providing additional income to schools for activities through income generation.

**COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION:** IRC's Community Reintegration Officers conduct initial introductory meetings followed by reintegration and recovery planning workshops with diverse groups of up to 25 members. Women, youth, and vulnerable groups, in particular those active in IRC's child protection, education and gender based violence programs, are represented in the planning workshops. Following the workshops, the community selects or expands its Chiefdom/Village Development Committee (CDC/VDC). The CDCs/VDCs serve as focal points for IRC interventions and are responsible for drawing out further community participation and the identification of reintegration projects.

**TEACHER TRAINING CURRICULUM:** The target areas of high return such as Kono and Kailahun, suffer from low rates of certified teachers in existing schools. The project provides in-service training programs for at least 300 teachers to encourage the use of local resources through a mentor-teacher program. In addition, teachers are trained on teaching aids to ensure the appropriate use of IRC-supplied teaching aids and materials. The project is piloting a "model school program" in a few target schools. Teachers in other schools are

invited to observe teaching methods used in the “model schools” with the goal of skill transfer. The project assists uncertified teachers to enroll in distance learning programs, advocates with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) for recognition of portions of the training refugee teachers received in exile to speed accreditation and to systematically add the newly deployed teachers to the MEST payrolls. IRC and the District Education Officer (a member of the MEST) hold information sessions with returnee teachers to inform them of possibilities for employment and certification.

### **Programming Interventions: Impact and Effectiveness**

**ACCESS:** The project aims to improve access to education in high return communities through:

- Reconstruction of up to 10 schools with water, sanitation facilities and basic furniture;
- Training of teachers and school administrators to improve the quality of teaching
- Provision of essential learning materials to schools
- Formation of youth and girl student groups and provision of activity materials
- Support School Management Committees/Community Teacher Associations (SMCs/CTAs) and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST)

**MANAGEMENT:** IRC project staff closely work with School Management Committees (SMCs) and Community Teacher Association (CTA) to improve school effectiveness and build local support for schools. The chairpersons of the Community Teacher Association (CTA) are key members of the School Management Committees and have become key actors in supporting school rehabilitation, constructing school furniture, and providing additional income to schools for activities through income generation.

**OVERALL PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS:** The program has been effective in restoring the access to formal education for children and youth in the ten communities, which has been a key element in supporting the return and reintegration of returnees back into their home communities. Community revitalization has progressed more quickly in these sites with operating schools than in other areas where schools are not as functional. Communities have a much greater capacity to support education needs, which has included the ability to design community specific solutions to identified problems. For example, some communities identified a lack of female teachers as a specific problem in their school and have built free housing and other such benefits to attract female teachers. Local government officials have a much better understanding of their role in supporting the revitalization of the education system and have integrated into policy the skills and tools learned in IRC training. For example, IRC introduced the concept of mentor teachers as a mechanism for teacher development, a model that has now taken on by the local government education system.

**EQUIP1: Building Educational Quality through Classrooms, Schools, and**

**Communities** is a multi-faceted program designed to raise the quality of classroom teaching and the level of student learning by effecting school-level changes. EQUIP1 serves all levels of education, from early childhood development for school readiness, to primary and secondary education, adult basic education, pre-vocational training, and the provision of life-skills. Activities range from teacher support in course content and instructional practices, to principal support for teacher performance, and community involvement for improving school management and infrastructure. EQUIP1 works with food for education issues and contributes to the provision of education and training in crisis and post-crisis environments.

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) is the lead organization responsible for implementing EQUIP1 and is joined by fourteen outstanding partners: Academy for Educational Development, Aga Khan Foundation USA, CARE, Discovery Channel Global Education Fund, Education Development Center, Howard University, International Reading Association, The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, Juárez & Associates, Inc., Michigan State University, Save the Children, Inc., Sesame Workshop, University of Pittsburgh, and World Education, Inc..

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