

WE VOICE

Restless Development Sierra Leone Quarterly Newsletter October-December 2011

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Students, community elders and VPEs marching to the community centre for World AIDS Day commemoration in Rotifunk, Moyamba district

WORLD AIDS DAY

Restless Development joined in the commemoration of World Aids Day (WAD) on 1st December by undertaking sensitisation and awareness-raising activities that reached 21,000 people. Volunteer Peer Educators (VPEs) supported by Youth Action Club members took the lead in organising community outreach activities in 97 placement communities including drama skits, quizzes, speeches, songs and dances to promote this year's theme of "zero new infections by 2015."

In the run up to the event, Restless Development organised a "mock parliament" in Bo which engaged 95 participants including 66 young people and stakeholders representing government and civil society. The topic under discussion centred on the role of SRH education in schools in reducing HIV infection rates. The young people presented their viewpoints in a form of debate in which the audience also participated.

MEETING A PRINCESS

Ten members of the Youth Action Club based at Tom Linson High School in Makiteh, Port Loko, were among the privileged group of Restless Development volunteers and staff who met Princess Anne during a state visit to Sierra Leone in October. Drama volunteers performed a skit exploring some of the causes and consequences of teenage pregnancy. The Princess then talked to groups of staff, volunteers and students about their experiences and their work. Teacher Augustine Marah said 'This has been a fantastic experience for my students. It has really widened their horizons.'



Staff and volunteers meet with HRH Princess Anne at the British Council in Freetown

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NEWS HIGHLIGHTS



Trainee VPEs put what they've learned in to practice at foundation training in Makeni

LARGEST EVER GROUP OF VPES IN PLACEMENT

As of November 2011, 194 VPEs have been in placement covering 121 placements in all rural districts. In October, 146 DFID-funded volunteers received foundation training to prepare them to deliver non-formal sexual reproductive health and life skills education in rural communities. They entered their placements in early November adding to the 48 volunteers already in placement under the UNICEF-funded programme in Kailahun and Kono. The year 2011-2012 will be the largest group of VPEs in the history of Restless Development Sierra Leone.

VOLUNTEER VOICES

My name is Alhaji Kamara and I am 20 years old. Before enrolling in the Restless Development volunteer programme I was a member of the Kambia District Youth Council. I am excited to join this programme as it will help expand my experience, enable me to contribute to the national development of the country and help me build on the advocacy experience I already have. The foundation training I received has been very educative and I'm looking forward to starting my placement. I do have some concerns because I'm not familiar with the customs and values of the people there, but the training has helped to prepare me for the challenges I may face.



A HEATED DEBATE LIGHTS UP THE CAMPUS

Youth Leadership and Advocacy Programme field officers in Bo, Makeni and Freetown Youth Information Centres organised a very successful debate on the topic, "Unemployment is the root cause of violence during the election." The debate engaged 550 students on three campuses. Six participants selected from among the student body competed in each debate: three affirmative and three negative. Speakers put forward their arguments and were then cross-examined by their opponents. At the end of the debate, the judges collated the marks and declared one of the teams victorious. Almira Abdullah, who was a member of the affirmative team at the Fourah Bay College (FBC) debate said, "I am very delighted to participate in such an interesting debating topic. I've learned about the TRC report of 2004 which states that one of the major causes of violence in elections is unemployment and that most of those involved are young people between the ages of 18-35."



Participants at FBC debate competition

A trainee VPE completing his foundation training shares his experiences

Restless Development's Vision is to see young people taking a leadership role in addressing the most urgent issues facing the world

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

STAFF MEMBER REPRESENTS SIERRA LEONE AT UNESCO YOUTH CONFERENCE

Ramatu Koroma, one of our young, dynamic and talented female staff, represented Restless Development and Sierra Leone at an African Policy Forum on Literacy and Basic Life Skills for Vulnerable Youth in Bamako, Mali, in September. The forum, organised by UNESCO, brought together representatives from African countries to discuss policy issues affecting vulnerable youths. Country representatives presented their policies which were then debated by all to see how the real issues of vulnerable youth are being addressed. Participants also had the opportunity to go on a field trip to see the interventions of other organizations in vulnerable youth issues in Mali.



Participants at the Mali conference. Ramatu in centre in pink shirt.

YOUNG LEADER ATTENDS FAMILY PLANNING CONFERENCE IN SENEGAL

Admire Conteh, an alumni of Restless Development, attended a Family Planning Conference in Dakar Senegal in October which focused on access to long term family planning for youths. Admire was selected for her wealth of experience in youth reproductive health.

In addition to having volunteered as a VPE under the Restless Development Youth Empowerment Programme, Admire also recently took part in data gathering for research on family planning and youth in Sierra Leone initiated by the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and IPAS from the United States. During the conference Admire contributed her ideas to the discussions on how to improve family planning for young people. Among other things, she advocated for standardized youth friendly services. She also encouraged the involvement of young people in policy formulation as well as strategically empowering them as researchers as she herself has been. Admire is back and ready to share her learnings with other youths of Sierra Leone.

VOLUNTEER VOICES: A MOHS INTERN SHARES HER EXPERIENCES



Grace Nancy Dumbuya, 26, was a Restless Development VPE in Bombali district in 2007-8. Since August 2011 she has been working as an intern in the Health Education Unit at the Ministry of Health and Sanitation in Makeni.

“I am very happy with the new skills I’ve gained so far. My work is very diverse and I’ve been exposed to a lot of activities I had no previous or much experience of including monitoring and evaluation, giving advice to lactating mothers, environmental health and sanitation to name a few. I’ve also had to do quite a lot of public speaking and preparing and presenting the Unit’s reports at different inter-agency and inter-sectoral meetings. My communication and interpersonal skills have also improved. Overall, this has been a very useful experience for me. I would now like to think about seeking a formal position within the MOHS and I believe the skills I have gained here will put me in a strong position to do so.”

Restless Development puts young people at the forefront of change and development in Sierra Leone

THIS QUARTER IN NUMBERS

1,145 young people accessed Voluntary Confidential Counseling and Testing at community clinics and in the Youth Information Centres after being exposed to Restless Development's programmes.

2 new episodes of the popular radio soap opera touching on issues of HIV and electoral violence were aired a total of **27** times on **3** regional radio stations.

1,960 young people in **65** rural communities received training in civic and voter education in preparation for the 2012 elections.

A survey carried out in December 2011 in Restless Development placement communities suggested that a total of **56%** of young people interviewed had used a condom the last time they had sex. This is a total of **6%** higher than the milestone set for this year.

In October, **3** Young Leaders (ex-VPEs) and **3** Restless Development staff members, along with Restless Development staff and volunteers from **4** other countries, were requested by USAID to take part in an international "webinar" to give their input on their upcoming youth policy. The Sierra Leone contribution to the event was generously hosted by USAID at the US embassy in Freetown.

COMING UP

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

A series of awareness raising activities are being planned by Restless Development staff and volunteers to commemorate International Women's Day on 8th March.

BARRIERS TO ACCESS RESEARCH

Restless Development Sierra Leone has received funding to undertake a youth-led research project looking at the barriers facing young people when it comes to accessing sexual reproductive health and family planning services. This project is expected to be completed by March 2012.

MOBILE PHONE TECHNOLOGY HARNESSSED FOR RESEARCH

The Youth Leadership and Advocacy unit will this quarter be launching an innovative pilot monitoring research of youth-targeted SRH radio shows using mobile phone technology.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME EXPANSION

This quarter anticipates an expansion of the popular ministerial internship programme with at least one new placement expected to be established at the National Youth Commission and more in the pipeline.

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