

GIRL POWER PROJECT -- Brief Information

SIERRA LEONE CONTEXT

"No nation can be better than the quality of its education; no education can be better than the quality of its teachers; no family can be better than the quality of education of its members". Education is a human right for all children and those who are not in school are being denied that right. It is emphasized in international treaties and declarations, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989), the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA, 2000) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG, 2000). Furthermore, failure to access and complete a basic cycle of quality inclusive primary education seriously limits future opportunities for children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), with its near universal ratification, is the world's most agreed upon international human rights treaty. Sierra Leone too has ratified the CRC, which makes it a legal obligation for the government to ensure compulsory primary education of good quality for all children, free of costs.

Systems, schools and teachers that take children's rights serious do create learning environments that are accessible in terms of infrastructure, curriculum and methodology for different children. Whether children stay in school and benefit from education especially depends on what happens in classrooms. Many children may find learning difficult in the schools as they are currently constituted. Repetition rates and poor learning achievements are importantly linked to what and how teachers teach and interact with children. The complexity of inequalities of class and gender, ethnic, religious and other differences that constitute education deprivation, should force governments to find better strategies to accommodate diversity in schools.

Sierra Leone is one of the African countries to introduce Universal Primary Education (UPE). Many additional schools were built, teachers trained and tuition fees abolished in primary schools (this was only possible for schools approved by Government line ministries and those not approved yet are not benefiting from the scheme). Nevertheless, nearly one in twenty school age children have never enrolled in school, and Sierra Leone has one of the highest percentages of primary school dropouts in the world and the least in development Index (education). Children who have never registered for school remain invisible and so do the causes for their non-enrolment. These children, along with those who drop out of school, are likely to be the most disadvantaged and hard to reach. The different reasons identified for drop-out and non-enrolment, varies widely according to region, demographic, and socioeconomic background. In order to implement effective policies to reduce the number of out of school children, information must be updated regarding which children are not in school, where, why and what can be done to reduce barriers to education and support them to stay in school. Financial constraints are the most prominent factor explaining both non-enrolment and high drop-out rates.

Other major reasons are the abandoning and forgotten of communities within the borders due to distances, poor sensitization of parents on the importance of sending their children to school, no child labor laws and policies, no monitoring of educational institutions by government officials nor international monitors on the rights of the child, no tracking of those who dropped out, no improvement of school environment, lack of community teachers, inadequate and poor classrooms, no alternative methods of punishment, distance to school is too far, discrimination and marginalization not addressed in schools and communities, poor food availability for children at home, no co-curricular activities that will ensure the child's interest in school, lack of skills and high unemployment rate, No adult education for those who did not complete primary and secondary schools, and poor or delayance of teacher's salary.

Certain factors contributing to non-enrolment and drop-out rates display significant disparities based on region status and gender. While there is generally a very small gender gap when it comes to factors explaining non-enrolment, it is worth noting that a far higher proportion of households with female children (30.5%) attributed domestic work to non-enrolment, compared to households with male children (19.9%). Even though tuition fees have been abolished in Sierra Leone (not in all schools in Sierra Leone especially the community or village schools), this has not made UPE (Universal Primary Education) entirely free as parents still have to pay for additional charges at schools, books, stationary and equipment, exams, uniforms, transport or school development funds.

Such costs make education inequitable. Presently rural Girls are more vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion and are therefore so affected. Government's decreased national budget allocations to the education sector can cause parents to contribute more in cash or kind to realize their children's right to education. Working with existing community structures such as administrative, traditional, religious and social leaders, school management committees, child welfare committees and encouraging the participation of children themselves in support of children's rights would prove beneficial to all.

PART III.B - DETAILED INFORMATION ON PROJECT PROPOSAL AND COMMUNITIES

Project Summary

This project will target the marginalised child brides and out of school girls in the Northern province. It will reach girls aged between 10 and 19 years in the rural poor, experiencing high stigmatization and marginalization, dropouts and not having the opportunity to go to school or will never go to school. This project will target and support 2,106 of these girls to access basic education and stay in school with improved learning outcomes. Many girls in these rural communities faced specific challenges to staying in school and learning. Many of these girls affected are orphans, married or young mothers, disabled, nomadic girls, migrants, etc in the poorest rural communities with no access to education. The project will target districts with suffering and unreachable girls, with increased poverty and illiteracy rate than all other districts in the country. ChildHelp is doing all its level best to alleviate child poverty, increase literacy rate and create productive employment. These identified district communities are faraway and unreachable, having been left behind, and not benefiting from external supports, both senior primary and Junior secondary schools for a long time.

Many of these identified community schools has poor attention and support, causing more girls to drop out, with teenage pregnancy, early marriage and giving higher priority to high social risks for survival. Those not having the opportunity to go to school continue staying home, facing more disproportionate burden of domestic works, and greater risk of violence, including sexual violence. The community people do take all this issues as traditional and believes that girls' places are in the kitchen and farm. ChildHelp will enable girls left behind and dropped out, to go back to school, improve their learning and attendance through literacy and numeracy interventions for all girls and boys. It will also cover programmes that develop skills for life and work for highly marginalized, adolescent girls.

The project seeks to improve life changes for Girls who experience complex marginalisation through:

1. Increasing Access and Retention in grades 5 and 6 of Primary School and grades 7, 8 and 9 of Junior Secondary School, and of children with disabilities in Primary Schools.
2. Strengthening girls' back to school learning at Primary and secondary School.
3. Ensuring that girls are learning in an inclusive environment and protected from harm
4. Ensuring girls' voices and needs are listened to and responded to and that girls participate in decision-making concerning their education.

The project will target 2,106 of the most marginalized girls dropped out of school due to increased poverty and other factors and also target marginalized girls that never been to schools. The target communities have extremely poor Gender Parity in enrolment at both primary and secondary level, with girl to boy enrolment ratios ranging from 0.57 to 0.75 and below the national average of 0.85 (2010/11 School Census). It will also target unrecognised girls (and boys) with disabilities facing greater disadvantages; to help them with better ways of getting in school and ensuring they receive a quality of education to transform their future through the bridge and accelerated learning education.

The project will specifically target:

- 880 girls in grades 5 and 6 of Primary and at risk of dropping out to complete Primary and transition to JSS,
- 330 girls in JSS at risk of dropping out to complete JSS,
- 690 out of school girls who dropped out in grades 5 and 6 of Primary or are of JSS age to re-enrol in Primary or JSS and stay in school.
- 206 Girls with Disabilities to enroll and stay in school,
- Improved learning, retention and attendance for the 6,263 girls and 7,189 boys currently enrolled at targeted schools.

The project will adopts an integrated, holistic approach addressing the multiple, interrelated barriers high marginalised girls who experience complex marginalisation because of their circumstances face in accessing or completing quality basic education. It will raise demand for girls' education, strengthens back to school learning, provides female role models in schools and communities, protect girls from Gender-Based Violence and works with childrens' and parents' clubs to identify and advocate for girls' access to education and school. The interventions selected are scalable and represent good value for money. It will partner with higher education institution to train women to enter into teaching in the upper grades of Primary whilst assigning them as classroom Learning Assistants to support girls in grades 5 and 6. The action will specifically target the high number of girls who drop out in grades 5 and 6 of Primary School and in the transition to JSS where gender parity also rapidly declines and who are also victims of child marriages and traditional harmful practices. The action will focus on adolescence as the transition stage when prevailing gender roles become entrenched. Tested approaches will be scaled up in targeted communities to support marginalised girls to stay in school and learn effectively in a safe and inclusive environment.

Background of beneficiary region

Identified communities have been neglected and in poverty. Their children are in extremely precarious situations; many are not in school and the following categories of children that are at considerable risk of dropping out or have dropped out of school are not limited to: orphans, children living with extended family members (or caretakers) who are exploited and abused, children who are internally trafficked for economic or domestic purposes, children involved in early or forced marriage, children who have been or are exposed to sexual harassment or sexual exploitation, disabled children and homeless or street children.

In these communities, in spite of women's limited economic activities, 37% of the mothers struggled hard to financially support their children's schooling, paying hidden school fees through sales from their small vegetable gardens or other petty trading activities. In these communities, every girl-child that is not in school is a potential worker, performing two to three domestic and economic tasks daily, or given to marriages as commodities. Girl-children who combined work and school, talked about frequent absenteeism and poor grades resulting from the lack of time to study their lessons or do their homework.

During the consultative meeting and school visits, many girls and boys stated that, they would rather do their petty trading, farming, fishing, mining, and other forms of hazardous work to get paid, than sit in school and be hungry. Those that have never gone to school preferred doing the same including marrying early for their living and security. Extreme poverty in targeted communities has seen young girl-children trafficked to cities and other urban areas with parental consent. Families are lured into the false belief that their children will eventually be sent to school, have brighter prospects and access to better education opportunities than in the provinces. Fifty-four percent of children who are out-of-school and non-going school are living either with caregivers or extended family members or caretakers. Though it is important to note that not all children living with caretakers or extended family are exploited and abused, focus discussion reveals that, a much higher proportion of out-of-school and those never went to school are exploited for domestic and/or economic purposes. Internally trafficked children end up working as child labourers, other forms of hazardous work or as a domestic worker, child brides and sex-workers.

Under school related factors, high direct and indirect costs associated with schooling were reported as the main reason as to why children dropped out of school and why parents are not sending their children to schools. Community members indicated their reluctance of sending "very young" girl-children to school due to various protection issues and the fact that children may not be able to cover the long walking distances required to reach the school. Girl-Children starting school at age 10, finish the primary cycle in their puberty years. The untimely pregnancy of young girls is ranked as the third most common reason for them dropping out of school. Investing in a girl child's educational future has been a hard fought battle for many advocates of gender equality.

The likelihood of a teenage pregnancy in these communities tends to pressure impoverished families into re-considering whether or not sending a girl child to school is a good long-term investment. In the targeted communities, young girl-children below the age of 12 years, reveal that, their parent(s) refused to send them to school and pay their "school fees" when their older sister(s) came home pregnant.

Though teenage pregnancy may have been the result of consensual relations between two people, child prostitution, older male classmates and teacher's sexual harassments have also been mentioned as possible causes in their communities. Not surprising, community members did not see the relationship between harmful cultural practices (such as early or forced marriages and initiations into secret societies) and children's dropping out-of-school.

The consultative meetings held explored cultural, traditional, religious and socio-economic impediments as well as school related factors that contribute to children's continued exclusion from accessing primary and secondary school. This follows the guiding principles of the SDGs 1, 2, 4, 6, 8 and 17 and Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC), namely: The best interest of a child. (Article 3.) Non-discrimination. (Article 2.) The right to life, survival and development. (Article 6.) The right to respect the views of the child. (Article 12.) The right to education on the basis of equal opportunity. (Article 28.) Development of the child's personality and talents, mental and physical abilities to their "fullest potential". (Article 29.) Education shall prepare the child for an active and responsible right fostering respect for basic human rights and developing respect for his/her own cultural and national values as those of others. (Article 29.).

ChildHelp will use these data and recommendations to increase girls' access and retaining in schools, and to provide a springboard for increased action towards the plight of out-of-school and those that never attended school.

Overall approach/Theory of Change

Despite substantial political, social and economic development, human development indicators rank Sierra Leone the least. Women experience greater poverty than men: 74% live on less than 50 pence a day, relative to 54% of men. Women's low socio-economic status in a highly patriarchal society and their unequal access to services, such as education, means they can't lift themselves out of the vicious cycle of poverty; their lack of education is both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Girls are highly marginalized and many are stigmatized in these communities, due to multitude and interrelated supply and demand-side factors with barriers to access and retention acting at the school, community and systemic levels. Poverty is the leading factor in excluding children from education, something which perpetuates the cycle of marginalization and hardship.

Issues to be addressed

1. Barriers at school level
2. Barriers at community level
3. Barriers at systemic level

Interventions to overcome these barriers and supporting evidence

The interventions recognise that a holistic and multi-level approach at all levels is required to affect transformative and sustainable changes for girls, will act to reduce barriers at all three levels:

Areas to Intervene

1. Community level
2. School level
3. System level: Children's clubs will use the Scorecard Approach, JSS clubs will be represented at SMC meetings & interface meetings, the interventions will help hold duty bearers at school, chiefdom, district and national level to account to improve education service delivery and better meet the needs of marginalised girls, including those with disabilities. Learning Assistants will be placed in Primary Schools to support teachers and girls. The bursary programme will provide more textbooks in classrooms. The scorecard approach and Board of Governors training will strengthen teacher accountability, along with training on the Teacher Code of Conduct and strengthening of referral pathways from the school to district level. The project will not directly address issues relating to school infrastructure, and the supply of qualified teachers but will monitor with MEST increasing enrolment and retention rates and link with other sources of funding available for Infrastructure (e.g. forthcoming GPE round) and teacher training Distance Education initiatives.

The project will bring about quality improvements in school through in-service teacher training, strengthening accountability mechanisms and facilitating schools that are free from violence; this will benefit all identified girls (and boys) enrolled at targeted Primary schools and girls enrolled at JSS (and boys). Based on previous experience, it is expected that the project might increase attendance in target schools by at least 10% and increase school completion rates and the numbers of children sitting NPSE and BECE exams. More broadly, the project aims to increase accountability in schools, reduce teacher absenteeism and address the root causes of gender inequity in education by addressing the values that schools pass on to all students and by addressing discrimination at the community level.

It will ensure that children have access to a child and girl friendly safer school environment with training package of child-centred methodologies and equip teachers with the tools to provide a quality, participative and inclusive education in a healthier learning environment. It will also engage traditional, social and religious leaders in changing the views on harmful traditional practices, with sensitisation campaigns, educating men, women, boys and girls on the long-term negative medical implications of teenage pregnancy and female genital mutilation (FGM), which is vital in changing people's perceptions and addressing harmful traditional practices.

It will also increase children's participation and involvement in the implementation and execution process, and in gathering information and soliciting possible solutions to out-of-school children which is an approach often overlooked, though it has long been proven that a "child to child" methodology is an effective way of working with children. Child participation may be integrated into community-based data collection systems. Children can be part of the solution for problems directly affecting them.

There is substantial evidence that keeping girls in school is associated with greater lifetime earning capacity, employment opportunities, improved social status and healthier reproductive choices.

Envisaged activities and work plan to be carried out

Project activities and work plan

The project workplan is based on a start date of 1st January 2018

Output 1: Marginalised girls access and complete nine years of basic education

Activity 1.1 Bursaries: girls will be identified and offered three years of bursary support. Rather than focus on one grade, the project will reach more marginalised girls by identifying three cohorts of girls to be supported to enrol in each of Primary grade 5, 6 and JSS grade 1 in the 2018/19 school year. Girls will then receive bursaries for three consecutive years, conditional upon minimum attendance rates and completion.

| | Grade | # Girls | Grade | # Girls | Grade | # Girls | TOTAL |
|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| 2018/19 | Primary 5 | X | PRIMARY 6 | X | JSS 1 | X | X |
| 2019/20 | Primary 6 | X | JSS 1 | X | JSS 2 | X | X |
| 2020/21 | JSS 1 | x | JSS 2 | x | JSS 3 | x | x |

Activity 1.2 Child-led social advocacy activities around girls' right to education

Activity 1.3 Parent Advocacy clubs

Activity 1.4 Community Rehabilitation

Activity 1.5 Individual accessibility supports for children with disabilities.

Output 2: Girls benefit from improved learning outcomes and build the skills they need for life

Activity 2.1: Introducing young women in primary schools as learning assistants and supporting into TT:

Activity 2.2: Girls' Mentoring programme in Primary schools and JSS:

Activity 2.3: Girls' Study Groups

Output 3: Girls are learning in a safe and Inclusive Environment – I E

Activity 3.1: In-service training on inclusive education, gender responsive pedagogy and Code of Conduct

Activity 3.2: Training School Board on Code of Conduct and girls' education

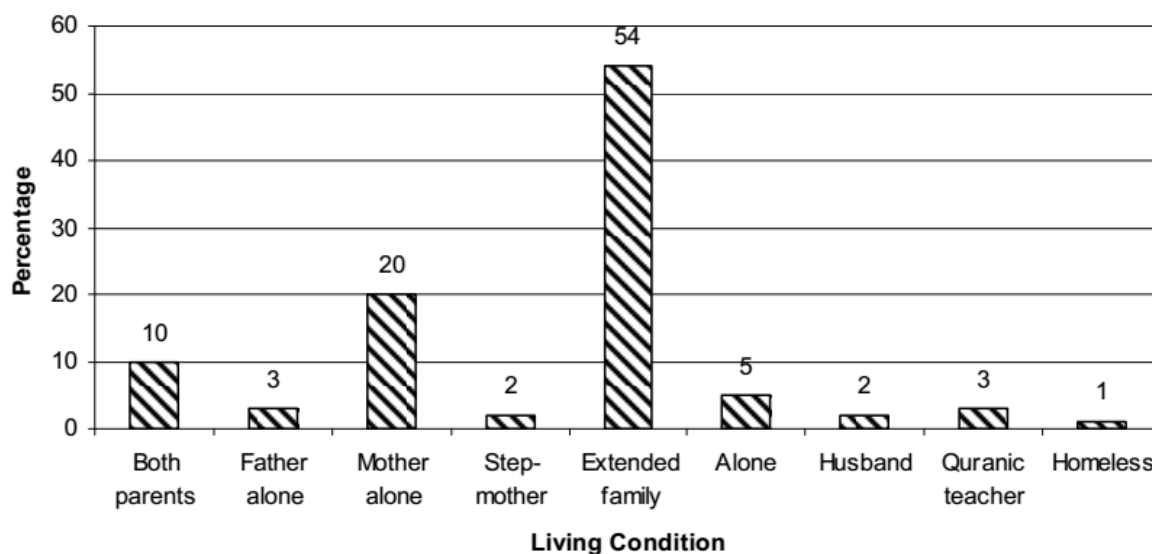
Output 4: Ensuring girls' voices and needs are heard and responded to

Activity 4.1: Girl and boy friendly school scorecards will be used by 900 girls and boys in 18 JSS to monitor the extent to which schools are child-friendly. .

Activity 4.2: Children's clubs interface meetings at chiefdom and district level

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION BELOW

Children's living situation in targeted communities



Sample of Direct & Indirect School Expenses for School Year 2017/18.

This varies from schools to schools.

| Areas Itemized | Amount |
|--|---|
| School fees for primary community or private schools | Ranges from SLL 120,000 to SLL 780,000 as private |
| School fees for secondary schools, community or privates | From SLL 350,000 to SLL 1,600,000 per year |
| Registration | 15,000 |
| CT Salary including Development Fee | 70,00 to 170,000 |
| School Renovation | 6,000 |
| Exercise books | 48,000 |
| School feeding | 15,000 |
| Sports | 35 to 50,000 |
| Socks | 8,000 |
| Pants | 7,000 (Pair) |
| Vest | 10,000 |
| Uniform | 60,000 |
| Underwear | 10,000 |
| Shoes | 40,000 |
| Others | 5000 |
| Computer training classes if available in schools | 189,000 to 340,000 |
| Transportation to schools | Varies from 80,000 to 120,000 monthly depending on distance |
| Extra lesson for classes 6 and BECE Level | 45,000 to 150,000 |
| Photos for classes 6 and BECE including ID Cards | 15,000 to 60,000 |
| Yearly Expense in Leones | It can range from 340,000 to 2,200,000 yearly. That is from \$ 45 to \$ 295 yearly depending on the schools |

Note: Exchange rate USD \$ 7500

CASE STUDIES IN TARGETED COMMUNITIES

Living with Caregivers or Relatives

Case Study 1: Mary.

"I am staying with my mother's sister. My father is dead, my mother is alive but very old...she lives in the village. I am the person that does all the work in the house (aunt's house) and help her in the farm. I wash plates, sweep, grind cassava leaves for cooking and also help in cooking. (During daytime) I sell cassava leaves then work at the groundnut farm after selling. My aunt has 5 children, 3 of them go to school. I dropped out in Class 1...I don't know why I'm not in school." (10 year-old girl from Manjawor.) Mary further stated that even if there was someone to sponsor her school fees, she believes her aunt would still not allow her to go to school.

Teacher's sexual advances

Case Study 2: A teacher's spurned sexual advances

"My father sent us all to school but I stopped attending school in the middle of the second term in class 4...I was 11 years old but I looked like a 15 years old...as you see my body is big...at the time, I had full grown breasts and looked like a 'big girl'...my class teacher kept making "love advances" to me...he asked me to have sex with him...he did not say it directly but told me he loved me and that I should be his 'girl friend.' He was around 40 years old and had 2 wives and he said he was going to marry me. He was a very wicked man. Because I refused, he beat me every morning when I was late for school and also whenever he asked questions in class that I cannot answer – he would punish me. He would give me 24 lashes and say to me 'fool man.' He would verbally abuse me in front of the whole class...I started missing classes whenever I am late for school and followed other girls to the river...it was not possible for me to tell anyone such a story...people think that teachers are good at discipline...the teacher told me I was not going to pass...so why should I waste my time (for school)... I feel bad because it wasn't that I was not making an effort to learn...I was "unlucky"...this is why I am suffering today...my other siblings are in foreign lands...I am a farmer." (25-year-old female from Koinadugu)

Case Study 3: Education and disability. *"I am the eldest of 3 sons in my family; I have to feed them by "dregging. Both my parents are blind; my younger brothers walk around with them. I was going to school...but I stopped in class 6. My mother sent me to school. Even though she was blind she was determined that I go to school. I used to take them (mother and father) to the park in the morning before going. Whatever she had, she used to pay my school charges, uniform and other materials. We were asked to pay for photographs, extra classes and other items...my mother could not get the 20,000 Leones required. Raising the money was difficult through begging alone and my mother could not pay the fees...I stopped attending (class 6) because I could not pay." (17-year-old male from Makeni.)*

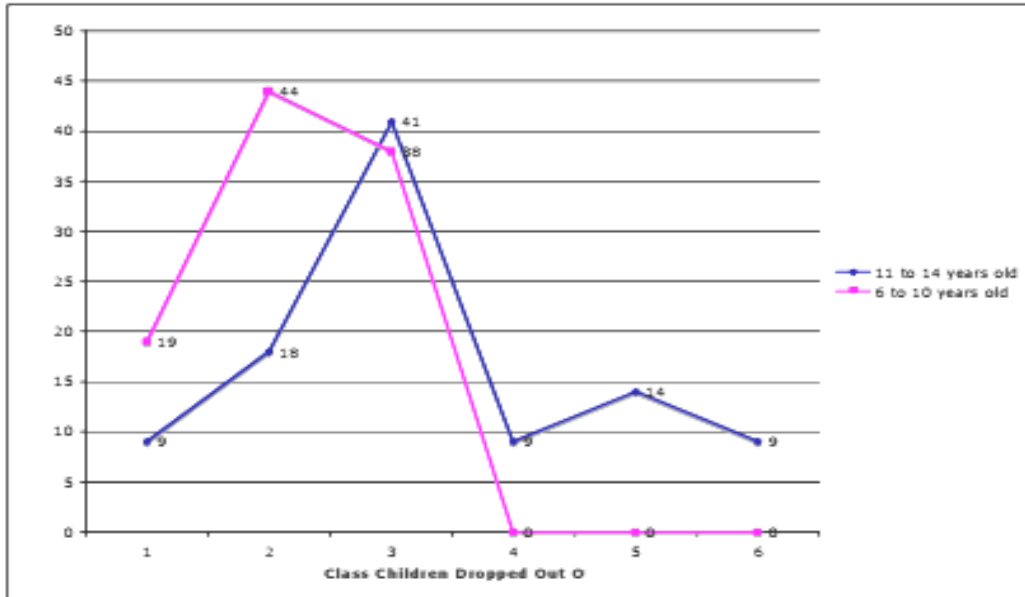
Case Study 4: Alpha's life with epilepsy.

"I sleep anywhere...I stay with my people...my mother doesn't want me because of my condition...nobody wants me in school...I want to go to school but they won't allow me in school (Alpha is epileptic)." (13-year-old male from Kambia.) "Alpha roams the streets of Kambia...his mother abandoned him here without saying goodbye to anybody or putting him in the care of someone...she left him over two years ago...she (the mother) spent lots of money on herbalists to cure him (the child)...we thought his condition was due to the "debul"a demonic spell...he attended school until class 5 but the teachers are afraid that his condition is contagious and might spread to other kids if they stepped on the saliva he released during his epileptic attack...so we stopped him from going to school...his condition is an embarrassment to us...each time he falls, we are sent to collect him from the school or in the streets...because nobody at school wants to touch him...or his saliva...we never deprive him of food when he is around...I cannot care for him...his father is a nurse in Freetown." (Alpha's 60-yearold blind "grandfather".)

Case Study 5: Living with my (step)sister

"Since we moved to Makeni three years ago, my (step)sister keeps promising me that she was going to send me to school but up 'til now she has not done that. I was attending school at Kalangba town, 15 miles to Makeni city, but since I relocated here, I have not gone to school. I really don't feel good about it especially when my twin (who lives with another sister in a different town, Gbendembu, 7 miles from Kalangba) is going to school. I fetch water, go to the bush to collect wood, cook and care for her baby. I sell food stuff around town for my (step)sister...My twin and I have not seen each other since they separated us." (12-year-old female from Kalangba.)

Focus Group Discussion during consultation – the class children dropped out from schools



In-depth interview result – the class children dropped out from schools

