

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES IN THE KARGBORO CHIEFDOM

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WATER

A Safe drinking water supply is the backbone of a healthy economy, yet is woefully under-prioritized, globally. When families do not have a safe and reliable source preferably direct to their home, they have to walk long distances and it is often women and children that are responsible for collecting water. School attendance in Sierra Leone decreases when children are required to spend hours at a stream fetching water.

Thanks to WELLFOUND's continued advocacy, technical assistance and engagement with the communities, safe drinking water and sanitation remain high on the agenda of WellFound. This effort to support and strengthen water governance systems in Kargboro chiefdom is implemented with a genuine focus on women's empowerment to take effective leadership in water management issues.

The approach gives specific emphasis on women's participation in the various stages of planning, implementation and management of schemes. For example, the local person responsible for regular operations and minor repairs is preferably a woman from the village who will be trained and engaged through deliverable-based payments.



Fig 1: Gbonjema 1 and Mofantaneh Community wells

Six (6) of the **seven (7)** wells to be completed this year have been completed and the **one (1)** well-remaining is being drilled as the team encountered hard rocks and we have to get another drilling firm to go through the hard rocks and the drilling commences this weekend. About **two thousand hundred and eight (2,108)** people have benefitted from safe drinking water across **six (6)** villages in Kargboro chiefdom.

MARKET GARDEN & MICRO SAVINGS AND LOANS

The VSLA concept was introduced by WellFound in the Kargboro Chiefdom, Moyamba Districts of the Southern Region to empower women in the Kargboro Chiefdom by establishing Market Garden and Micro Saving Scheme in our Operational communities.

One of the major objectives of the VSLA concept is to help improve the entrepreneurial capacity of communities, inculcate the culture of savings and increase community access to credit to embark on income-generating activities to diversify and sustain their livelihoods.

We used to travel to Moyamba to do menial jobs to enable us to take good care of our children's needs, particularly their education and health," says Mrs Sunkari Thompson she said: "But since the introduction of Village Savings Loans Association we no longer go since we're are able to take loans from the scheme to undertake economic activities.

"We can now pay for our children's education, and their health as well as feed them very well. We thank WellFound very much for introducing to us this good intervention."

The VSLA is a banking methodology, which offers the productive poor mostly in rural communities, the opportunity to purchase shares and lends to themselves with the agreed interest rate on a group basis. In the case of the Kargboro Chiefdom for instance the price of shares ranges from Le 5 – Le 10. The capacity of the groups was built by WellFound Staff. Each time the group meets, each of the women purchases shares.

Each of the groups saves together and takes small loans from the money to embark on petty trading and other income-generating activities.

The activities of the VSLA run in cycles of about one year, after which the accumulated savings and the loan profits are shared among the members according to the amount they saved. Sierra Leoneans culture has the urge to save for use in times of need and the VSLA concept confirms this culture.

Although the VSLAs may not be formally registered, they have a considerably higher degree of formality. It has clear and formalised systems of governance, enshrined in written constitutions and procedures related to savings, credit and the operations of social insurance funds, transparent procedures, effective but very simple systems of record keeping and effective security of records and cash.

Many of the women have confirmed that the intervention had improved upon their living conditions, particularly the well-being of their children.

I was finding it difficult to establish my business but through the VSLA, I was able to put up my business with the Le 500 loan I took from the scheme. Now I get more customers and can

now pay for my children’s school fees including their Health”, Mrs Famata Mei, a 25 year old businesswoman, said.

With the intervention, most of the beneficiaries had gone into petty trading such as selling fish, pepper, soap etc. it is common knowledge that women are the best managers of homes and they take good care of the family, particularly the wellbeing of children. However one of the major challenges facing many women to play their roles very well as managers of the home is a lack of economic empowerment and the project has proven to be successful in addressing the issue.

The implementation of the VSLA had made a significant impact on the well-being of families particularly children and women as most community members can now have access to credit which they can use to start and expand their businesses. It has instilled in them the spirit of savings. It has brought social cohesion and cordiality among families, groups and communities. Through savings and loans, group members are now able to contribute to the welfare of the family especially food, health and children’s education.

It is an effective method of helping poor communities to mobilise funds to support their small businesses.

A total of about **nine hundred and sixteen (916)** women are benefitting from the scheme and are economically active.



Fig 2: Village Savings and loans sittings in Vaama Community

Mainstreaming women's economic empowerment with Market garden in Kargboro Chieftdom is more straightforward than mainstreaming gender since it focuses specifically on women and on economic empowerment. Women's level of control over family resources and also over community-level economic decision-making.

Reducing income poverty is considered to be a step towards women's economic empowerment and eventually greater gender equality.

Market gardeners in Kargboro Chiefdom are typically women middle-aged with limited education and employment skills other than subsistence farming. These people adopted marketing gardening or market selling because they had no other employment opportunities and needed to generate income to support their household and children's education.

For the majority of market garden women, market gardening and associated selling was the primary source of individual income. Market gardening is the primary source of household income and an income generator for individuals and households as observed by the team.



Fig 3: Ngeihun community women harvesting okra



Fig 4: Okra being harvested at Ngeihun community

SANITATION & HYGIENE PROMOTION

Sanitation and hygiene are critical to health, survival, and development. Many countries face challenges in providing adequate sanitation for their entire populations, leaving people at risk for diseases related to water, sanitation and hygiene.

Basic sanitation is defined as having access to facilities for the safe disposal of human waste (faeces and urine) as well as having the ability to maintain hygienic conditions, through services such as garbage collection.

Sanitation is more than toilets; it encompasses the facilities, behaviours, and services that prevent diseases caused by contact with human waste. Hygiene refers to behaviours that can improve cleanliness and lead to good health. WellFound has made significant achievements in:

- Reducing the number of people practising open defecation
- Increasing the number of people with access to basic sanitation facilities
- Improving the affordability and availability of sanitation products and services
- Increasing handwashing with soap and water at critical times
- Increasing the rate of safe management of household drinking water.

Maintaining personal hygiene and sanitation is important for several reasons such as personal, social, psychological, health etc. proper hygiene and sanitation prevent the spread of diseases and infections.

WellFound continues to work with communities to be open defecation free several meetings were held with communities and they agreed to construct their own latrines as it is going at a very slow pace.

Eighty-three (83) households have constructed their own latrines and a total of about **seven hundred and ninety-nine (799)** to be constructed as we are monitoring the payments of the communities.



Fig 5: Engagements on sanitation with Rontoke and Tengbelor respectively



Fig 6: Latrine constructed in Tengbelor and Mogbencha respectively

WellFound continues its advocacy on Behaviour change communication in communities as community Health Volunteers trained by WellFound are disseminating information's on four (4) key behaviours: Handwashing with soap and water, cleanliness and maintenance of latrines, Safe water handling, transportation and storage and Solid waste Management at household level propagating the importance of latrines and handwashing.

Hands play a significant role in spreading diseases. Cleaning our hands regularly with water and soap is a highly cost-effective way to protect people's health.

However, thousands of people have no access to handwashing facilities with soap and water.

Many infectious diseases such as cholera, and pneumonia, are often caused by pathogens being transmitted through the air or spread by people's hands. Faeces left exposed will find their way back into people's mouths without good hygiene behaviours

High rates of diarrheal diseases and acute respiratory skin and eye infections are all driven to varying degrees by poor hand hygiene, devastating families, and placing an avoidable burden on the healthcare system. Children under five years old are particularly vulnerable.

The transformative health benefits of improved water and sanitation services can only be fully realised when good hand hygiene behaviours are practised. This simple act is proven to dramatically reduce the spread of deadly diseases.

Hygiene promotion sessions and CLTS workshops were delivered and a total of **ten thousand nine hundred and seven (10,907)** people have been reached on hygiene promotion, **Four thousand eight hundred and forty- nine (4849)** people practising Safe storage, whilst **Six thousand and seventy-three (6073)** practice handwashing with soap and water, **Seven thousand two hundred and forty-four (7244)** people report increased knowledge on safe defecation.



Fig 7: Safe Storage in Mofantaneh community



Fig 8: Handwashing with soap and water in Mogbencha and Lipalai community

EQUALITY

Too often, people living in low income communities have fewer opportunities and less power to improve their lives. This inequality is magnified for women and girls, many of whom have little say in the decisions that affect their lives, their families, and their communities. Structural barriers such as discriminatory laws and restrictive policies limit their participation in the economy and their earning power. Harmful social norms and expectations further deny them control over their own lives, including their education, health, marital, and reproductive choices, employment, and family financial decisions.

WellFound believes, achieving gender equality is key to ending extreme poverty. The evidence is clear when women and girls have a quality education, access to health care,

sustainable livelihoods and a seat at the decision-making table, economies shift. Women's empowerment is a critical aspect of achieving gender equality. It includes increasing a woman's sense of self-worth, her decision-making power, her access to opportunities and resources, her power and control over her own life inside and outside of the home, and her ability to effect change.

WellFound continues to ensure that women not only earn money as their male counterparts but also get the same access to economic independence by making significant change in the lives of women in Kargboro chiefdom as the Village Savings and Loans (VSLA) scheme is making significant impact in the lives of women because women can now support their households by engaging in businesses because of loans taken from the VSLA.



Fig 9: Equality discussions in Vaama and Mogbencha community

A total of **six hundred and nine (609)** men and women demonstrates a positive shift in their attitude and understanding towards each other.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability continues to be the key in WellFound's approach as WASH services are sustainable when they are owned, managed, and maintained by the community, and when appropriate behaviour exists to support the effective usage of the WASH infrastructure. When WellFound starts working in a community, we make a commitment to work with that community for an appreciable period, living and working among community members to ensure that any development project – WASH or otherwise – is understood, relevant and owned by the community, so there is the motivation for the project to endure after WellFound leaves.

WASH Committee members are trained on their roles and responsibilities, and they led the development of the sustainability plan which is used across communities. Sustainability meetings were held and discussions on how they are going to sustain their facilities, and a sustainability plan developed by the community and implementations of the plans in progress.