



Hope & Homes for Children



Project SIerra: A Family and A Future

Soroptimist International Quadrennial Project

Annual Report

From

Hope and Homes for Children to Soroptimist International

August 2009 – July 2010

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Executive Summary

Project Sierra: A Family and A Future is a four-year partnership between Soroptimist International (SI) and Hope and Homes for Children (HHC).

This detailed report covers the progress, impact and finance for the third year of Project Sierra from 1st August 2009 to 31st July 2010. The aim during this period was to continue working together to transform and improve the lives of extremely vulnerable children, young mothers and families in Sierra Leone, West Africa, so that they might fulfil their potential.

The high level of support that Project Sierra has continued to receive from SI members this year has had a direct impact on the lives of the beneficiaries. There has been real progress achieved on all three projects: Young Mothers Support, ACTIVE Family Support (formerly known as Integrated Child and Family Support) and Young Mothers and Children Living Alone in Freetown. The fundraising income achieved during the year was £287,428, making this the most successful year of fundraising so far.

Thank you to everyone involved.

A map showing the locations of Project Sierra's work in Sierra Leone



Soroptimist International and Project SIerra's Third Year

Soroptimist International has continued to promote Project SIerra internationally, through its Federations and through its global network of Clubs. The latest project reports and information continue to pass directly to SI members and non-members by the project website and via the International Project Liaison and Federation Project Liaisons. In addition, in recognition of new, faster means of communication, the first Project SIerra Facebook site, known as *Friends of Project Sierra*, was launched this year.

The Facebook site gives SI members and clubs a quick and easy means of communicating with each other. Members are able to join as a 'friend' of the Project and receive the latest project news and updates. They can share their fundraising ideas, inspire each other and share their experiences about the project. Entering the world of social networking quickly proved to be a popular and effective means of engaging Soroptimists from around the world with Project SIerra. Within a few days of its launch at least one hundred members and friends had joined the site and many more are following.

Soroptimist International has continued to deepen the engagement of its 90,000 members, across 125 countries/territories, to their quadrennial project and inspired their continued support. Members have used their knowledge of the project along with their own experience to hold a multitude of different events to raise awareness and funds within their local communities. Each activity held is significant and collectively they have built on the promise shown in the first and second years.

Initiatives during the third year

- Two project study tours to Sierra Leone for representatives from each Federation.
- Launch of the 'Friends of Project SIerra' Facebook networking site as a means to update SI clubs and members around the world.

The Project SIerra website, www.projectsierra.org, continues to be the main link between SI and HHC. It provides the latest information for SI members including quarterly reports, case studies and film footage. It is also a valuable resource for fundraising and advocacy ideas and most importantly, shows members how their support is making a lasting difference through case studies from the beneficiaries themselves.

Country Visits to Sierra Leone

There have been two study tours to Sierra Leone this year; first in January and again in May. These gave the SI representatives, from each of the four federations, the opportunity to see the Project's work first hand and a chance to meet the women and children they are helping. A particular highlight during the tours was the amount of publicity generated for Project SIerra. Tour participants represented the project in interviews with local radio stations, television and national press.

The above-mentioned initiatives and study tours to Sierra Leone have all contributed to the fundraising achievements of SI. The total amount of funds raised by SI for Project SIerra by the end of July 2010 was £648,996.

Impact and Progress

This section summarises the progress made in the three project areas of Project Sierra, i.e.:

- Young Mothers Support
- ACTIVE Family Support
- Young Mothers and Children Living Alone

The progress can be measured against the desired outcomes of the project, as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding.

1) Young Mothers Support

Project Locations: Bo, Makeni and Freetown

- This year the young mothers programme has supported 104 young mothers and 58 babies. We were delighted that 52 of these beneficiaries became sufficiently self-reliant by the end of the year that they were able to graduate. Through Project SIerra's support, they have acquired the skills and confidence to support themselves and care for their babies and are empowered to achieve their full potential.
- The programme has had a positive impact on the local community by benefitting the young mother's extended family members, for example. The team recorded that there has been a minimum of 162 people at any one time who have indirectly benefitted from the project, via initiatives including counselling and awareness-raising workshops.
- The vocational training centres have reported significant progress this year. A total of 27 young mothers, who had received skills training, successfully completed work placements within local organisations. There was such positive feedback from the organisations that seven of young mothers were offered, and accepted, ongoing employment.
- The project's drop-in centres continue to have a significant impact, acting as central 'hubs' for beneficiaries. They provide food and day care for the babies so that the young mothers can attend training classes during the day. The meals provided have significantly helped to reduce illness and improve the health of the beneficiaries.
- The team has continued to provide valuable counselling sessions throughout the year, giving advice on behaviour, awareness, respect, family planning and child care to help the young women understand their roles and responsibilities.

2) ACTIVE Family Support

Project Locations: Bo, Mattru, Kamakwie, Tambakha and Makeni

- This year the team has continued to work closely with 700 extremely vulnerable families, consisting of approximately 3,200 family members. By the end of the year 66 of these families, with 280 family members, were able to exit the programme, having reached a suitable level of independence. This was a great achievement for the team as these families had been so very vulnerable.
- Providing educational support to the children has been an important focus for the team this year. The team supplied books, uniforms, shoes and payment of school fees during special ceremonies attended by community elders. The performance of children at schools has also been closely monitored.
- The team has continued to offer counselling sessions to families and has encouraged the beneficiaries to use their extended family members for support if necessary.
- A Business Development Manager was employed in Makeni to assist 40 families, who received small business support to develop realistic and sustainable long-term plans.
- In the second quarter the ACTIVE Family Support Manager visited Kamakwie and provided training for the team's staff. This included training on creating and reviewing individual support plans for the project beneficiaries.
- Community talks on family reintegration and community support have taken place, as have health talks targeting communities where sickness levels have been highest. The health talks have been helpful in raising awareness about common illnesses like cholera and diarrhoea which are very prevalent in remote communities like Kamakwie. Over 600 family members and community members have benefitted from health checks and treatment for illnesses and disease.

3) Young Mothers and Children Living Alone in Freetown

During the year the Children Living Alone programme in Kissy, Freetown, merged with the Young Mothers programme – below is a summary of their joint achievements.

- Over the year we have worked with 70 children, 15 young mothers and 68 families. There has been a total of 168 direct beneficiaries but there has also been a wider impact as 484 extended family and community members received support from the programme. In total, 68 children have been reunited with their parents and continue to receive support. A total of 6 beneficiaries have been able to graduate from the programme.
- The medical service continues to have a positive impact on the health of the beneficiaries. Nearly all the young mothers enrolled in the project have been found to be in bad health due to conditions on the streets and the lack of post natal care. They have been observed closely and were provided with appropriate medical care to improve their well-being.

- The feeding program continues to be an important service as this is often the only meal that most of the beneficiaries are certain of each day. It contributes significantly to their healthy development and motivates them to attend the Centre each day.
- This year the team has held meetings with community elders in three of the communities where many of the beneficiaries live. The purposes of the meetings were to encourage the elders to take an active role in child protection activities and to make their communities more 'child friendly'. The meetings were considered to be very successful.
- In the final quarter, the team ran three very successful workshops to support the process of reuniting young mothers with their families. These raised awareness of child exploitation and abuse, and gave parents and guardians valuable advice on supporting their children.

The Wider Impact of the Project Sierra Partnership

Soroptimist International continues to make a significant contribution to Hope and Homes for Children's work in the short and long-term. SI also makes a real impact through its advocacy and awareness-raising efforts at all levels: local, national and international.

During the third year we continued to implement our ACTIVE Family Support model throughout the project. This approach provides a reputable model of excellence in protecting the most vulnerable children and young mothers in their communities. Most importantly, work on Project Sierra does not happen in isolation - the children, their families and communities are all active partners.

In recognition of the effectiveness of the ACTIVE Family Support model, our partner in Sierra Leone, HANCI-SL, has been recognised as the official arm of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs in Kamakwie. This is extremely important as it signifies official recognition of the effectiveness of our work and the influence we are having on the Government's approach to childcare.

The Development of Help a Needy Child in Sierra Leone (HANCI-SL)

Help a Needy Child in Sierra Leone (HANCI-SL) is the Sierra Leonean NGO that Hope and Homes for Children have been working in partnership with since 1996. They are continuing to use the ACTIVE family support model and implement this throughout the projects. The section below provides a brief overview of their actions and noteworthy events during the reporting period.

The Operations Team (consisting of four staff) continue to travel between the project areas to visit local staff and review daily field work records. In March they held a short session on Psychosocial Counselling for staff at Bo. The same was repeated in Makeni.

This year the Founder and Executive Director of HANCI-SL, Dr Roland Kargbo, retired after 15 years with HANCI-SL. Following a long recruitment process, it was decided that HANCI-SL's Operations Director, Kelfa Kargbo, would take his place as the new Executive Director. We are delighted that Kelfa has been successful as he too has been with HANCI-SL from the very beginning. Dr Roland is anxious to continue his work in a voluntary capacity so that he can document the lessons learned and history of this special organisation.

Some changes to senior staff roles were made to ensure more strategic and sustainable management of the programmes overall. Lois Kamara continues to run operations at the Kissy project and oversee the urban projects. She is also studying for a degree in Social Work. The team have employed a press relations officer to continue raising the profile of the project so that they can increase their capacity.

The strategic changes that Project Sierra is taking, focusing on community-based services, mean that the Makeni project will now be managed by our partner, HANCI-SL, through other funding sources. This is a very positive indicator of how much Project Sierra has built the capacity of HANCI-SL to develop other funding relationships. Project Sierra will continue to fund the Project Manager and will help to build HANCI-SL's capacity as an organisation but we shall no longer be reporting directly on the programme work in Makeni.

The team know that in tough times, where prices increase, it is the young and vulnerable who are most at risk. This makes the team's role with Project Sierra, helping young mothers, their babies and families, even more vital.

Highlights and Challenges

Highlights

Most significantly, the increase in the level of **support shown by the wider communities** towards all projects has been a wonderful development. Mediation workshops have successfully increased understanding in the community, and by working closely with local villagers and key stakeholders such as regional Chiefs and village Elders, we have been able to raise awareness across the country about the plight of women, children and families.

This increased awareness has resulted in **communities' understanding and committing to our work** – locals now actively support vulnerable children and families and acknowledge that every individual in the community has, and can continue, to benefit from our work. We helped one family from Makeni to rebuild their house; when we next returned, other members of the community were helping to rebuild more houses themselves – they realised that they could help in some way too.

The most vulnerable beneficiaries will therefore continue to be supported by their neighbours and fellow villagers in the long-term, allowing for their participation in society and amongst the community.

The two study tours this year were a huge success, as beneficiaries and HANCI-SL staff thoroughly enjoyed meeting SI representatives from different countries around the world. Not only this, the representatives had an audience with the President's wife, Sia Nyama Koroma, who said how valuable she found our work in Sierra Leone to be and pledged her support. This, along with the large amounts of media coverage surrounding Project SIerra, revealed just how **highly the Project and HANCI-SL are regarded in Sierra Leone**.

Challenges

Like last year, the **economic downturn**, which directly impacted the poorest Sierra-Leoneans, has meant that the cost of food prices have risen again. The resulting effects meant that some areas of our project work became even more important. For example, the provision of daily meals for young mothers and their babies at the day care centre has become an increasingly vital service. The downturn has also affected the ability of the poorest families to provide for their children and therefore some have needed additional support, particularly in Freetown on the Young Mothers and Children Living Alone project.

There was a particularly **heavy rainy season** this year, causing severe flooding and damage to rural roads, limiting the ability of the team to carry out monitoring visits. In the first quarter, the team worked hard to combat negative consequences of the rains such as leaking roofs and an increase in diseases such as malaria and cholera.

Project SIerra Financial Reporting

During the four-year term of Project SIerra, SI aims to raise GBP £1million towards funding the three projects in Sierra Leone: Young Mothers Support, ACTIVE Family Support and Young Mothers and Children Living Alone in Freetown.

The £1million represents approximately 50% of the total income that Hope and Homes for Children plans to spend on these projects during the span of our partnership together. The remaining 50% is funded by a variety of different voluntary sources.

Income August 2007 – July 2010

The table below shows the division of income sources from SI. The majority of donations, £281,000, have come from SI Headquarters to HHC via direct transfers. The remaining donations are received directly from SI Clubs or individual members. The total income from the project launch in August 2007 to the end of the third year, July 2010, is £648,996.

	First Year Total Aug '07 - Jul '08 (£)	Second Year Total Aug '08 - Jul '09 (£)	Third Year Total Aug '09 – Jul '10 (£)	Project SIerra Cumulative Total Aug '07 – Jul '10 (£)
SI HQ	97,387	250,000	281,000	628,387
SI Clubs	7,939	2,155	2,390	12,484
Individuals	1,526	2,561	4,038	8,125
TOTAL	106,852	254,716	287,428	648,996

Table 1) First, second and third year total incomes and cumulative income from SI sources

Expenditure August 2007 – July 2010

Figure A below shows the amount of funds allocated to the three project areas and the core costs. The greatest proportion, £337,607 is allocated to the ACTIVE Family Support programme and the least, £63,080, to the Young Mothers and Children Living Alone programme in Freetown.

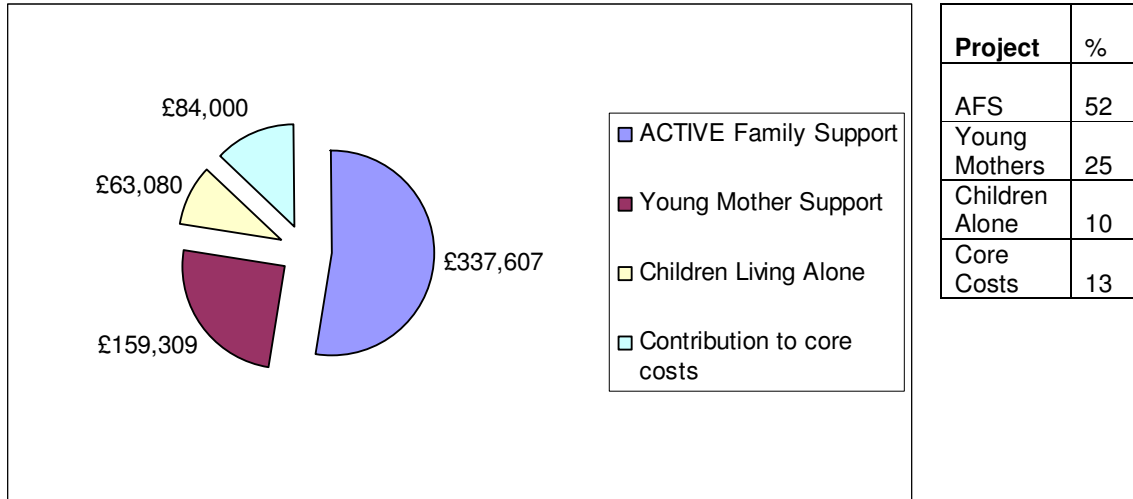


Figure A) Expenditure in GBP (£) on Programme Areas from Aug '07 – July '10

We have also shown expenditure by geographical area. Figure B, below, shows that the largest project expenditure has been in Freetown where we continue to deliver both the Young Mothers Support and Children Living Alone programmes. The lowest expenditure is in Tambakha.

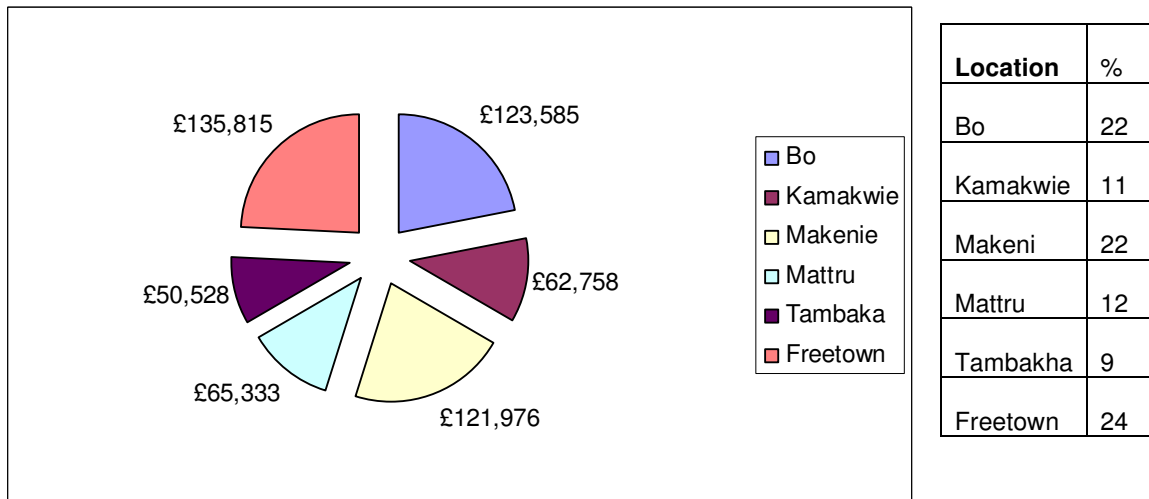


Figure B) Expenditure in GBP (£) by Geographical Area from Aug '07 – July '10

Thank you

Having the long-term commitment from Soroptimist International, through what has been a time of real economic difficulty, has given tremendous stability to the Project, enabling us to continue delivering much needed training and assistance.

Your support through Project Sierra continues to give a better life to thousands of women, children and their families.

“We have been delighted with the progress which has been achieved through *Project Sierra – A Family and a Future*, thanks to the truly fantastic support of Soroptimist International. Your commitment to this Project really is transforming the health and life chances of thousands of deprived and impoverished women and children in one of the world’s poorest countries. Thank you.”

Rick Foulsham, Chief Executive

Hope and Homes for Children

