



## July 2016

### Miriam's Catch up...

It's been a really busy time at EducAid; expanding programmes, building projects, and new pilot programmes, EducAid has not stood still for one moment. Not only have we been focussing on expanding the size of EducAid, but we have been taking time and looking at how we are running our own operation.

We have to stay true to our values, even as we grow and have a wider impact; the schools that are at the core of our work in Sierra Leone have to reflect everything that we hope to achieve in the country, so we are making sure we keep checking ourselves and don't lose sight of our core values.



### Every Voice Counts

Last term, we started something that I believe we can expect to completely transform our ways of working, our performance and successes and indeed our short and long term impact on many children's lives and on the country. The EVC project involves our students in the decision-making process. There are always going to be scenarios that the students experience, but that staff cannot recognize, and by including the students in the running of the schools they can become part of the problem-solving process. The EVC project gives us the opportunity to completely turn upside down the ways of establishing and running our relationships and really practicing our vision.

A key part of the EVC is when we run all our relationships by agreeing our expectations of each other. When we have set in place the norms that we want to be able to expect from each other, we are committing ourselves in order to build strong trustworthy relationships. When we do something to break the trust, the trust needs repairing. We have banned the words punishment and sanction in all EducAid schools. We now talk about how those who have broken the agreements and damaged the relationship are going to put it right again. A much pleasanter and more positive activity! If we believe in and are working to build a *democratic, dignified Sierra Leone* then surely we must start by having a democratic, dignified EducAid where we and our children learn to expect our voices to be heard and accept that it is our right and responsibility to make our voices heard. We need to be part of the conversation. What conversation? The conversation about how we can be better, do better, teach better, make EducAid better, make the world better, encourage each other to be better citizens: that conversation!



## Quality Enhancement Programme

The QEP is going from strength to strength; from discussions with partner schools it really feels as though we are pushing on an open door. Even though we don't follow the usual NGO programme patterns (we don't provide luxurious meals for our trainees, we won't sign off on unfeasible travel expenses etc.) the schools that we are working with are coming round to the fact that we are doing this for the prosperity of Sierra Leone, and they are beginning to respect that. Those that don't recognise this simply do not fit the model of school that we want to work with.

The QEP is now working with 60 schools around the country, and we are collecting our first set of data to assess the impact. It is an exciting time in the QEP teams.

Through those 60 schools, in round one and two of the QEP we have benefitted more than 6100 school girls by improving understanding, training, and methods around gender-sensitive teaching. As well as that, more than 12,700 children are benefitting from improved teaching and learning strategies, with all focusing on more human rights aligned teacher behaviours and school management.

## Building our Schools

As part of the EU funding that we secured in 2015 for QEP, we have been able to undertake some pretty extensive building works in Maronka and Rolal. One building in Maronka will significantly increase the capacity of the Girls' Safe House, whilst the other is a brand new teacher-training centre for our Quality Enhancement Programme. Rolal's new building is additional training and teaching space, and will also provide some hugely needed extra capacity for Home students to sleep.



As well as these new buildings, the EU funding has enabled us to install solar power in Maronka, Rolal, and Lumley. With the National Power working in Freetown typically less than an hour or two in the night, at best, and our rural schools not receiving any NP, solar power is a huge step for us. It will provide sustainable independence from expensive petrol-run generators.

## Leadership Course

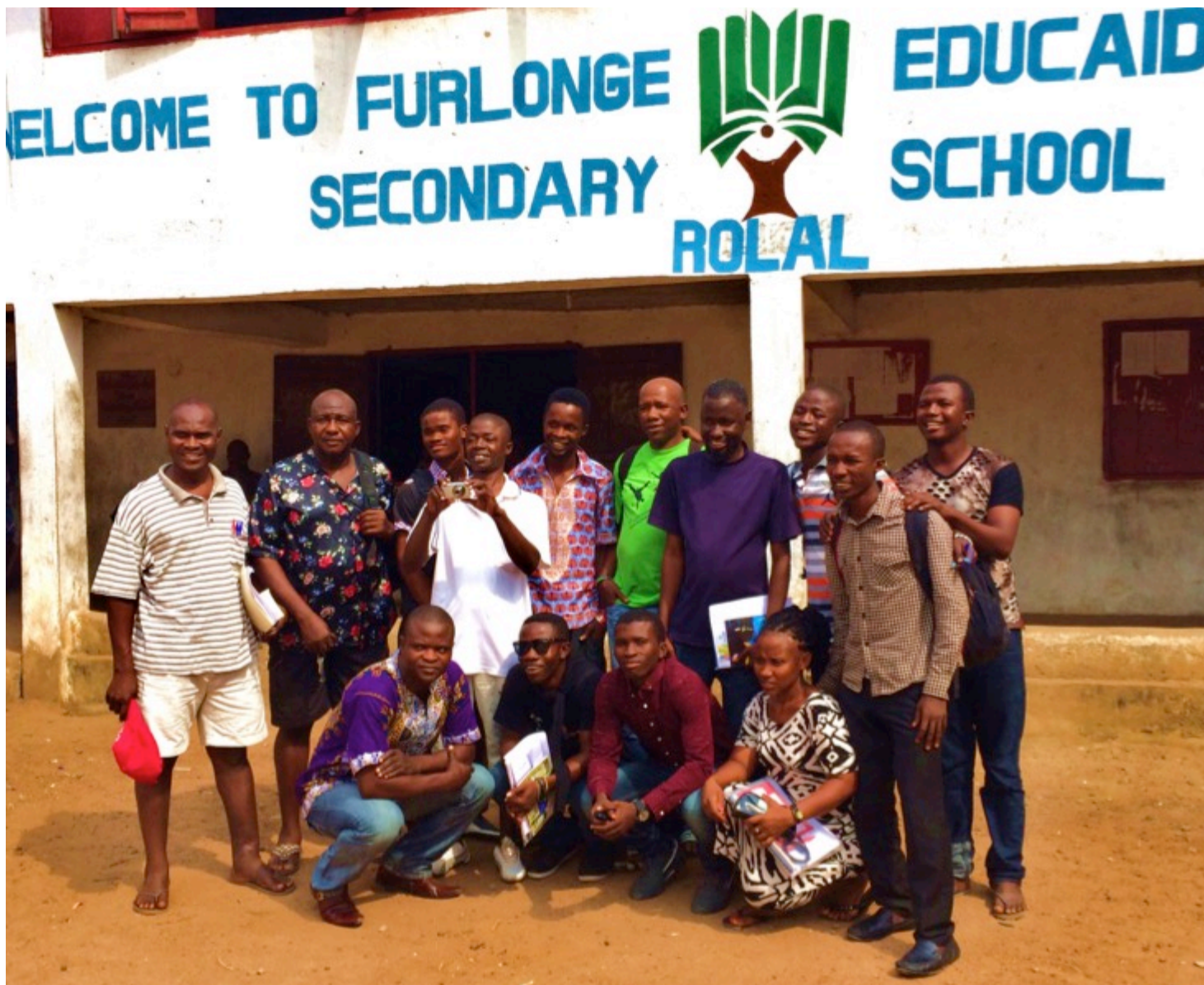
Our landmark leadership course with the University of Makeni is in full swing, with Cohorts 1 and 2 making good progress. We've had a series of eminent lecturers and professionals visiting us to undertake the arduous but rewarding weekend sessions, including Veronique Desnain of the University of Edinburgh; John McAvoy of Senior English lecturer of The University of Southern Bohemia in the Czech Republic; Dr Rebecca Horn, International Psychologist; Pat Horn, ex





Headteacher and Inspector; our very own Marcus Smith and indeed, yours truly. Veronique had this to say:

"This has been one of the most significant and rewarding teaching experiences I have ever had. I was deeply impressed by the students' dedication and willingness to work extremely hard to achieve a better level of understanding, but also by the courage in challenging themselves and their openness to new ideas. It became clear very early that the previous schooling they received from EducAid had equipped them very well for further study. Yet what was most striking was their determination to put their education to use to better not just their own lives, but also those of their communities and country."



The success of our course has been brought about not only by the quality of our lecturers, but by the attitude of our students. Our student body includes those outside of EducAid such as members of the police force who, due to the course taking place on the weekends, are able to undertake this course around their jobs. We are now in discussions with UNIMAK to expand our two year course in to a four-year full degree course.

