

Newsletter May 2009

Women's Project to Girl Power Group

The Women's Group, since its inception in February 2007, has enabled over 250 girls to come back into school and is now starting to see some of its products join the public exam classes. However, it has still remained clear that many girls, even when given the opportunity of education, lack the self-esteem and self-belief to really achieve according to their full potential. To combat this, EducAid launched the Girl Power Group last term. On a daily basis, girls in Sierra Leone are told that they are second rate; not up to much, other than to look pretty, have babies and cook. In a 1998 self-perception study of Sierra Leonean Women, the findings were quite shocking to a western audience. [ref: *Female Self-Perceptions & Attitudes*. By PWC 1998.]

- 83% of women believe that a woman should not do anything without a man's approval.
- 49% of women believe that it is good for a man to marry more than one wife
- 54% of women believe that a woman must always yield to her husband's sexual demands
- 77% of women believe that a woman should give the best part of the meal to her husband
- 48% of women believe that men should beat their wives as they see it necessary
- 77% of women agree with gift marriage i.e. that a woman can be given by her family to a man to settle a dispute or as a gift or in lieu of payment etc.

Ten years later, things are slowly on the turn as indicated by the 3 new Gender Equality Laws introduced in 2007:

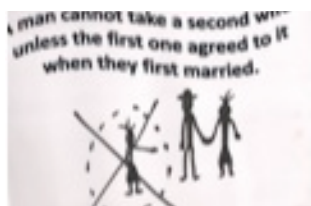
1. Registration of Customary Marriage Act which protects wives from any first marriage from having to accept a second wife if she doesn't want to.
2. Devolution of Estates Act that makes it possible for the first time for women to inherit property.
3. Domestic Violence Act that protects against emotional, economic, sexual and physical abuse.

The Girl Power Group has so far had over 30 girls trained to use simple posters to teach other women and communities to understand the three new gender equality laws. The girls are reading and learning about successful women. They are learning to challenge the messages they had previously taken for granted as true that come to them from friends, family and society. An up-hill but worthwhile battle!



Girls learning to explain the Gender Equality Laws to each other. [Above]

Customary Marriage Registration Law poster used to facilitate simple explanations [Below]



Regular Giving

EducAid is a very small charity with a very loyal and committed donor base.

Around **40%** of our income is standing orders. **93 donors** give from **£4 to £350** per month with the majority of donations being **£10p/m**.

Regular monthly donations total **£3,632**. This is vital and very valued income allowing us to plan ahead. Thank you again to all of those involved.

We send out **550** newsletters on a regular basis although less than half of the recipients have donated in the last year.

We have set ourselves a target to double the number of regular donors before the end of **2009**. **£10** a month is a small sum to many UK earners. **£10** represents half a round of drinks in a British pub or a couple of pizzas. But to EducAid, it represents the transformation of one young person's life.

We are managing to maintain costs at approximately **£120** per year to feed and educate one student. Any donation though, however small, makes a difference and is appreciated. If you are in a position to support us with regular giving, please download a standing order form and gift aid form from the website:

www.educaid.org.uk

Thank you in advance for your generosity!



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EducAid Sierra Leone

EducAid Sierra Leone is a charity helping to improve education in Sierra Leone. Registered charity no. 1048012



Above: Some of the lucky EducAid science graduates who have been sponsored by friends of EducAid to tertiary level.

Below: Some of the EducAid graduates currently serving as junior staff who hope to gain sponsorship at tertiary level in the future: potential engineers, teachers, administrators and so on!
n.b. Janet, front left and Issa middle 2nd row both have sponsorship for next year.



The Rough with the Smooth

There are so many positive things we feel are happening in the school: the developing self esteem of so many young people; the rebels turned peer mediators; the previously hopeless confidently working towards a bright future and so much more. Yet alongside all this the hard facts of living in the world's poorest country still hit us. Last March EducAid lost its first student and in April another one. Since then we have lost three more: Christian, [23], died of complications relating to an ulcer. Abdul Raman, 16, died of a 'headache'. Mohamed Kargbo [15] died of TB - undetected by the best hospital in the country! The medical and health situation that exists here is absolutely extraordinary and tragic.

It is easy to see the link between such daily demonstrations of the lack of value of life and the clear lack of self-esteem that so many youngsters have here.

Our staff training and Citizenship Education Week later this year will focus on understanding and developing self-esteem for learning, for development and for overcoming poverty. Meanwhile the health statistics and realities daily undermine our pleas that they believe in themselves as more precious than diamonds; more precious than all the diamonds that have done so much damage in this troubled country!

'Live Links'

EducAid has been working on some school curriculum materials for UK schools to be used in citizenship, PSHE, RE, English, maths lessons (& more). These will be available for sale or in return for fund-raising undertaken. If you are interested please contact miriam@educaid.org.uk

Aspirations:

- Plans are still afoot to build again in Rolal so that we can provide senior secondary schooling for the Port Loko-based youngsters who otherwise have to transfer to Freetown to continue their education.
- Negotiations with the Ministry of Lands have reopened for us to get land to build a school with appropriate space for recreation, the school farm and staff quarters. We are seeking the necessary funding!



Please pray:

- For the consolation of the families of Christian and Abdul Raman;
- That our students will believe in themselves and realise their potential;
- That our students will be willing to stand against the tide of corruption that surrounds them;
- That staff and students have the courage to stand firm in the battle for development and to overcome poverty.