



Rebuilding Sierra Leone



The Vision

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Vision Statement: The Nehemiah Project (and related programmes)

The Nehemiah Project seeks to develop programmes which empower Sierra Leonean people to engage in the rebuilding of their nation. It focuses on the restoration of the communities in which it operates, equipping individuals to overcome the effects of deprivation caused by the war. It seeks to empower and enable individuals to recognise that they can make a positive change in their own lives and in their communities.

Objectives

The Nehemiah Project is committed to equipping all people to:

- Realise their potential
- Recognise their value in the community
- Understand they can make a positive change in their environment

Primary Focus

The Nehemiah Project seeks to ensure local communities develop high quality services and individuals are empowered to access them including:

- Education
- Health
- Employment

Richard Cole

John Singleton



Rehabilitation Projects

Nehemiah Rehabilitation Project, established in 1996. The purpose of this programme is to:

- enable previously traumatised children to be re-integrated into the community with a basic education and vocational skills;
- develop self-controlled and responsible individuals and to re-unite children with their families, where these can be traced, or see them integrated, wherever possible, into stable home situations;
- provide good quality education and vocational training for children from the local community who would otherwise not be able to access schooling.

The Nehemiah Project was set up after much consultation with the local community and Government bodies. Specialist information was also gathered from projects in other countries working with children affected by war.



Successful reintegration of former child soldiers or traumatised children.

Approximately 83% of the residents in the Nehemiah Rehabilitation Project have been or are expected to be reunified with their families or reintegrated into the community. These residents have been monitored since leaving the project and to date most placements have worked successfully. Of the remaining residents on the programme, on average 9% remain in the project because family members or suitable foster families have not yet been found. The other 8% are still not able to return to the community due to ongoing emotional or behavioural difficulties and it has been agreed that they will continue on the programme.

Ruth Nest Project

In recognition of the fact that the issues for the females are quite distinct and need to be catered for separately from the males, the Ruth Nest programme was established to provide residential care for girls and young women. The Ruth Nest programme provides residential care for females who were rebel soldiers or who were captured and abused by rebel troops. A number of these young women have their own children (some as young as 14) and no family to return to. The Ruth Nest women are starting to experience healing in their lives, gain education and vocational skills which will enable them to move on in the community.



Education

Kuntorloh Community School was birthed in response to the needs created by severe destruction, the aftermath of civil war, especially following the last major rebel incursion into Freetown and the surrounding area in 1999. The school, which now offers Nursery, Primary and Secondary facilities, provides affordable education for children of local families, many of whom had lost their homes during the war.



Providing an excellent service to the community, the school is also an encouragement to families to remain in the area rather than to migrate to the heavily populated centre of Freetown.

The school curriculum is carefully monitored to ensure that it complies with the standards set by the Sierra Leone government's Ministry of Education.

Students are required to progress from Primary to Secondary education by graduating in the National Primary School Examinations (NPSE), and the school continues to achieve an excellent record.

In addition to providing quality education for children and young people, Kuntorloh Community School is committed to the professional development and training of teachers and staff.



Vocational Training

The vocational training programmes were initially set up to provide a training facility for the young residents of the Nehemiah and Ruth Nest Rehabilitation Projects but from the resultant success of these initiatives, and in response to local community needs, they have now been expanded in order to offer classes to young people and adults from the surrounding areas. The range of programmes available include Tailoring, Hairdressing, Carpentry, Masonry, Motor Mechanics, Animal Husbandry, Business Studies and Computer Studies.



Each of the initiatives is developing strongly and providing a source of local income, and many of the students are referrals from the Sierra Leone Government's Demobilisation, Disarmament & Rehabilitation (DDR) programme for ex-combatants.

The vocational training programmes all have a social enterprise initiative linked to them. This not only provides some income for the running of the programme but allows students to develop skills in self management and business as they train. The Social Enterprise initiative also encourages students to engage in basic skills which are embedded in the vocational learning. For example, tailoring students are taught how to measure accurately and write up orders which tackles any lack of basic numeracy and literacy skills.

Students also have opportunity for work experience either through LifeLine or with local projects. This has included; building a local clinic, providing uniforms for Kuntorloh Community School and working alongside LifeLine agricultural staff in the care of the livestock. This experience greatly enhances the student's prospects of employment or developing a successful business.

IT & Business Studies



Major social challenge is being addressed in Sierra Leone, now that peace is finally established - the rehabilitation of the thousands of young men and women who, for many years, have known nothing but war. The majority have missed 10 years of school education, so for many it is not feasible for them to return to a classroom and resume where they left off. The LfeLine Business & Computer Studies Training Institute offers basic skills education and vocational training packages to equip these young people to find their places in the modern world of business and commerce. IT skills can not only open the door to future employment opportunities for the successful students but can also narrow the skills gap in IT as Sierra Leone rebuilds its economy - computer and information literacy skills are in high demand and are increasingly sought not only by local, but also international clients.



This initiative is creating a social structure in which young people are developing high self-esteem through the opportunities being opened to them with programmes reflecting the a wide range of IT and other associated business training. After a conflict, crime rates usually increase as those who were once fighters suddenly find themselves with nothing or little to do, becoming frustrated and disenchanted since they do not have the necessary skills gain status in the society. The programmes at the LfeLine Business & Computer Studies Training Institute develop the whole person, rather than merely provide training or education, and tackle issues of behaviour, attitude and expectation thus reduce crime and tensions in the society. Due to the brutality of the war in Sierra Leone many organisations are now working with the huge numbers of resultant amputees, teaching them how to lead normal lives again, and this initiative complements these efforts by providing IT skills training. The social impact involves creating new employment opportunities, employment and income for disabled people, the creation of social cohesion by reducing disparities in society, the enhancement of self dignity, and the empowering of people to participate in the global economy.



Health & Physical Welfare

Training

One of the major impacts of the war has been the serious effect on the health of the population, particularly children's health. A significant proportion of children are malnourished and the killer diseases of pneumonia, malaria and diarrhoea take their toll on many lives every year. In a community such as this where people feel they have little power to change their situation, effective and creative health promotion can help important messages about prevention of illness and simple treatments to be widely disseminated. Thus a sense of independence and empowerment can be nurtured and encouraged, with positive effects on the health and well being of individuals.



'Well Baby' Clinics

These clinics focus on the concept of 'well babies' and the provision of effective maternity care.

LifeLine has sought to not only offer low risk medical care through the clinic based at Kuntorloh, but also provide training for local people in basic community health care. Students are taught basic childcare techniques and principles, equipping them to start monthly 'well baby' clinics at different community locations, and have the opportunity to visit already established clinics to gain practical experience before starting their own in other communities. The goal is to provide access to a local community health worker for every child under 5, as the first port of call for basic advice and simple treatment, before the need to refer sick children directly to local clinics or hospitals.

Traditional Birthing Attendant (TBA) courses equip recognised workers with antenatal care techniques and hygiene practices, helping to prevent many unnecessary maternal and infant deaths. Pregnant women are able to receive an excellent standard of immediate basic care, before the need for referral to local low-risk clinics or hospitals.

"A second war front has opened; to rescue a generation that cannot be incorporated into normal society. Young boys who live on the streets are violent, lost and without any hope unless someone shows them love and care."

Richard Cole



Working in partnership...

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