

The education renewal project in Sierra Leone

The ERP builds on the “RapidEd” Initiative launched in 1999 by PLAN and developed in Rwanda and other war zones to address the education and rehabilitation needs of children. The ERP is implemented by PLAN Sierra Leone with the assistance of PLAN Norway and support of Operation Day’s Work (ODW). ODW provided the amount of USD 3 484 239 (25 061 000 NOK) over initially a three year implementation period.

Name of organisation: Plan Norway

Local partner (s): Plan Sierra Leone

About the evaluation:

This is a summary for the final evaluation of the four year Education Renewal Project (2003-2007) implemented by Plan Sierra Leone with support of Plan Norway, under the direct funding of the Operation Day’s Work (ODW). ODW directly benefit from NORAD’s funding support which contributed to the results achieved through this project. The program is based on an educational approach for children affected by war in Moyamba and Port Loko districts as well as Rural Western Areas of Freetown

Evaluation year: September, 2007

Conducted by: The Evaluation Team comprised of the following team members:
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Country: Sierra Leone

Region: West Africa

Theme/DAC sector: Education

Summary of the evaluation (max 2 pages):

Title of the evaluation report: EDUCATION RENEWAL PROGRAM (FINAL EVALUATION)

Background:

The Education renewal Project aimed at achieving the following specific objectives for children in the Moyamba District and the Port Loko/Rural Western Area of Freetown:

- To receive good quality formal education through the provision of school furnishings, materials, books, teachers’ guides, in-service teacher training and school rehabilitation;
- To benefit from trauma healing, education for peace, reconciliation and conflict management and school based counselling services as necessary;
- To receive health and hygiene education through a child-to-child approach;
- Develop stronger governmental, voluntary and community institutions to support primary education in Sierra Leone

Purpose/objective:

The final evaluation was aimed at investigating the extent that the above project objectives have been realised using the evaluation criteria of *relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact* and *sustainability* and thereby assess the influencing factors to the achieved results.

Methodology:

The Evaluation Team (ET) conducted field work, briefing meetings with the Plan Sierra Leone Country Management Team and interviews with stakeholders i.e. partners and beneficiaries. Desk study involved studying baseline situation to determine /assess changes by time of this evaluation. It also involved the ET reviewing relevant documents related to the project e.g. project files, reports including previous Medium term Review and Audit reports and stakeholder interviews. Structured observations were made particularly on facilities to assess their condition. Triangulation was done to validate information collected.

Key findings:

1. The project was considered highly relevant and in line with Sierra Leone Government efforts for supporting the education sector.
2. The project achieved its targets for providing all the targeted schools with: learning materials, school facility rehabilitation, water and sanitation facilities, health and hygiene education, as well as for training teachers and providing trauma healing, education for peace and conflict management, school based counseling services. The evaluation also notes that there were notable increases in school attendance including that of girls and overall increase in numbers of children who passed the national exams during this period.
3. The routines for project monitoring and reporting between Plan Norway and Sierra Leone were found to be reasonable. While there were some differences between Donor and Plan regarding target age group, this is however considered of minor significance.
4. The ET observed that in general infrastructure was still in good shape even though it was observed that in some cases the demand exceeded the space provided and the absence of ramps for disabled children was overlooked in the facility plans and construction. Other equally useful components that were not sufficiently incorporated are proper play grounds for the children.
5. The teacher training was found to make considerable impact in improving teaching skills.
6. Training of Schools Management Committees (SMC) also contributed positively towards improved school management.
7. Some areas had creative solutions to safeguarding water pumps while others faced challenge of vandalism.

Recommendations:

1. Data management at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) should be improved in collection, storage and retrieval.
2. The Teacher Development Initiative (TDI) for upgrading skills of teachers should be expanded to include aspects of training teachers for special needs children.
3. Community awareness for maintenance and security of school property and facilities should be strengthened. Mainstreaming of these aspects through creation and assignment of maintenance roles to specialized clubs is thus recommended.
4. Mainstream facilities for children with disabilities

5. The TDI is considered valuable and useful to be considered for continuity
6. The need to explore funding possibilities with the private sector is also recommended.
7. The key lessons include the role of effective community mobilization including instilling in them a culture of maintenance. The positive effects of improved access to water and sanitation to girls' school attendance were also noted. The evaluation also concludes that education is a vital response for post conflict communities and making the response more integrated as is the case in this project is therefore commended.

Comments from the organisation:

8. The observation of increased enrolments is better viewed as a positive challenge as opposed to being a generic challenge. This is because when a project of this nature succeeds to create the required demand for participation it is a healthy response. We however, agree that the project with the communities' observations that the project underestimated this response as the class sizes did not match the enrolments.
9. The ET makes sweeping observations that the project was fortunate to have been completed in a relatively stable political environment and yet made no attempt to comment on the current and or perceived risks of instability in the targeted districts of Moyamba and Port Loko districts as well as Rural Western Areas of Freetown and the political situation in the country in general.
10. The project exceeded numeric goals for outreach and capacity and below are the results achieved against planned. Thus the program reached 97 schools (80 in Moyamba and 17 in Port Loko and rural area of Freetown) as compared to set target of 60 schools in total. These schools benefited from the total package i.e. teacher training, training of school management committees, provided with school supplies, water and sanitation interventions and school rehabilitation. All 11 libraries targeted for support were reached in this program. Again while as 3000 children were targeted to benefit from the health and hygiene education, it is estimated that 4,000 children benefited. **The ET does not investigate further as to the influencing factors for such exceptional attainment of these targets.**
11. Other observations are as follows:
 - a. It must also be noted that the project inception happened in a very unstable post conflict environment
 - b. The education renewal intervention contributed not only to reconciliation, but also to stabilising the otherwise conflict affected environment
 - c. The intervention was subject to risk assessment and risk management throughout

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