

Water, Sanitation and Livelihood Projects Eastern Sierra Leone



Wherever the Need
www.wherevertheneed.org.uk





1. Organisation Background

Wherever the Need (WTN) became a registered charity in 1998 and since the year 2000 has been actively involved in the provision of drinking water and sanitation to the poorest parts of Africa and India. In 2006 WTN wrote a strategy document committing the charity, where feasible, to providing, managing and conserving water, constructing eco-sanitation toilets and encouraging tree planting programmes as part of a wider environmentally friendly programme. This strategy has already seen its methodology for eco-sanitation toilets used in a document produced by the Tamil Nadu State Government in India and brought Ministerial acknowledgement in Sierra Leone. Through working with the needs and wishes of local people, projects can be straightforward and simple whilst having a long-term positive effect for communities and the environment.

Its work in Sierra Leone follows the same thread and this document explains how working with the needs and wishes of local people, projects can be straightforward and simple whilst having a long-term positive effect for humans, animals and the environment.

The charity was formed and is run by business people and the project we submit to you is as simple in its presentation as it is in its management. Our 'Action' documents are available to provide an insight into the relevance of our work and what drives us and can be viewed and downloaded online at www.wheretheend.org.uk





2. Project Background

For the majority of people in Sierra Leone, life is not lived, but existed. Eleven years of civil war running from 1991 to 2002 decimated the country: over 50,000 people were killed, tens of thousands more were mutilated and over two million, more than a third of the population, were displaced. During the war, state structures broke down and national and regional security all but disappeared. The very social, economic and political fabrics of the country were destroyed by drug and arms trafficking, suppression (often taking the form of amputation) of civilian opposition to the rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the forced recruitment of child soldiers.

A major factor in the causes of the war was the diamond industry. Sierra Leone has an abundance of natural resources but, despite this, in 1998 it was declared to be the poorest country in the world by the Human Development Index (HDI). In May 2000 the situation had got so bad that British troops were deployed to stabilise the country and enforce a ceasefire. Two years later, the war ended, but its legacy still haunts the lives of the people of Sierra Leone.

It is currently listed as the poorest country in Africa, with a per capita income of only US\$550. The capital city, Freetown, is ramshackle, full of broken down buildings, shacks and potholed roads, which only deteriorate, along with all other socio-economic amenities, the further out of the city you travel. In the villages of Sierra Leone, the looting, pillaging and mutilation of the civil war are still very evident. In Gbongay, Eastern Sierra Leone, the village in which Wherever the Need's (WTN) work began in 2005, incidences of diarrhoea and other water-borne illnesses were high – two out of every five children dying under the age of five was a result of an insufficient supply of clean water and sanitation; during the war, the hand-pump for the village's well had been stolen by rebels. Consequently, people were drinking reddish brown, sludgy, contaminated water from a supply shared with livestock and other animals. As a result of water-borne illnesses caused by unclean water sources, millions of adults and children worldwide are unable to work or attend school. Consequently, local, national and international socio-economic structures are strained to the point of breaking through demand for medicines and a lack of sustainable livelihoods amongst populations. The annual global value of adult working days gained from the improved health of halving the number of people without access to clean water or sanitation, would reach almost £375 million (US\$750 million).

The first task for WTN was to replace the hand-pump in Gbongay and build a new concrete surround. Livelihood promotion is impossible without good health: if people have access to clean water and sanitation, they are better equipped to fend off disease, which in turn renders them able to work, attend school and save money that otherwise would have been spent on medicines. Time saved from having to collect water may also be spent working or at school, thus hugely benefiting the economy and encouraging development. How a reliable, clean source of water is provided may vary between communities. Site and community evaluation will determine whether a new pump, well or borehole is needed. In some cases water conservation may be the primary means of ensuring a constant supply.

Wherever the Need's main method of water conservation is Rainwater Harvesting (RWH). It is an option used throughout the world where traditional water supply systems are either too expensive, too difficult to be used at village level, or have failed to meet people's needs. RWH can be adapted to a wide range of conditions, and tailored to meet the needs of most communities. The type of system needed will depend on whether or not it is the community's primary source of water.

Since replacing the hand-pump in Gbongay and providing a clean water supply, not one child has died as a result of a water-borne illness. It must be highlighted, however, that such developments do not take place as a result of clean water supply alone.

All of WTN's programmes are coupled with hygiene education. Worldwide, every day over 6,000 people die from diarrhoeal diseases. The simple act of washing hands can reduce this figure by 40 per cent. Wherever the Need (WTN) is committed to working in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2015 and playing its part in helping to half the 2.6 billion people who currently have no access to basic sanitation facilities. Eco-sanitation toilets are part of this commitment.

Eco-sanitation or compost toilets are comprised of a raised platform above two chambers, one full and composting, alternating with the other. Organic material is regularly added to the chambers to introduce carbon for composting, to oxygenate the composting process and neutralise odours. It takes roughly five months for pathogen free compost to be produced. To help prevent the toilet from smelling, faeces and urine are not allowed to mix, as a chemical reaction between the two creates odour. Therefore, a pipe takes urine to a separate chamber. This may be used to nourish soils for crop growth. The villages of Eastern Sierra Leone have either poor or non-existent sanitary facilities, leading to many problems ranging from issues of health, to gender discrimination and empowerment. WTN has subsequently decided to provide these to each village in which it works due to the considerable positive impact they have upon communities (please see later).

Throughout Sierra Leone, employment is scarce and what little work there exists is poorly paid. Achievement of longevity in projects addressing social and economic development is impossible without the promotion of sustainable livelihoods. Throughout the Developing World, poor people are without the capabilities, assets (material, social, human and natural resources) or activities required to make a living. In many of the cases where livelihoods are possible, they are unable to cope with or recover from any shocks and often undermine natural resources. Once water had become available, WTN examined ways of helping the community earn a living to ensure suitability and success of our scheme: our work in Gbongay continued with the building of a carpentry workshop and the purchase of tools. This is where beekeeping hives would be built. Subsequently, one hundred and seventy five hives were constructed on site and thirty five individuals were trained in beekeeping.

An unexpected but positive change to our original plan was prompted by the villagers' own initiative. The carpentry workshop was slightly extended, providing another room to house sewing machines and accessories. This enables other members of the community to earn a living and increased the revenue of the village: so far the complete livelihood project has been very successful, with the income it generates currently looking after the needs of 40 per cent of the village. The villagers are planning to use some of the new income generated to make community improvements.





bee hives in the forest

Wells, pumps, toilets, livelihood opportunities etc. must be provided in an ever-increasing circle for the surrounding villages of an area; in this case the villages surrounding and near Gbongay. For example, single wells are overused, with people coming from miles around in order to use them. This leads to many problems: pumps may be used for 24 hours a day, thus being worn out if the well doesn't dry up first. If the pump does wear out there is nobody to take responsibility for repairs as so many people have used it. The pump may also be stolen or broken by frustrated or jealous neighbouring villagers. Consequently, such blinkered projects make little or no long-term impact on the areas in which they are located. Such problems can be applied to most forms of aid. Water and sanitation projects are too often seen as engineering projects with an end, an exit. What sets WTN apart is that to us they are more than that, as highlighted by our commitment to the regions in which we operate.

We are now committed in supporting the Pejeh Chiefdom, and later the Pujehun District in general, which contains seventeen villages covering some 12,000 people. Using the success of Gbongay as a template, we aim to undertake a project in all of these villages to ensure long-term, sustainable development throughout the whole Chiefdom. The communities we have worked with so far are working together, truly fulfilling our ultimate ambition. To ensure that no villager goes without rice, the villages in which we are currently working have bought 150kgs of paddy rice and are planting it for communal benefit. This highlights the close link between livelihoods and food security as well as water and sanitation, making them even more essential for community development. In addition, the women of the villages have started their own micro-finance scheme. This is a perfect example of seeing a community become proactive and be the cause of its own destiny. Wherever the Need supports such efforts wherever it can, as it is essential such positive work is spread throughout the Chiefdom.

The people of Sierra Leone want to help themselves and push forward their socio-economic and political status. They are trapped in a country ravaged by civil war and void of opportunity. The building blocks need to be provided, and then people, desperate to prosper take charge of their own destinies, will undertake the construction.

3. The Project

There are six phases to this project:

(I) Site and community evaluation. This ensures suitable and sustainable programmes are designed for the village. As beekeeping and sewing has worked so well in Gbongay, it will be used as the template livelihood scheme for each village in the area, unless this phase of the project suggests otherwise.

(II) Ensuring a clean and potable water supply through the provision of whatever the site and community evaluation deems as necessary. This may vary from the provision of a new hand-pump, to drilling a new borehole or providing the facilities for rainwater harvesting.

(III) Local labour employed to build eco-sanitation facilities. Hygiene education and the creation of self-help groups trained to deal with toilet maintenance and compost disposal is coupled with this stage of the project..

(IV) Local labour employed to build a carpentry workshop, purchasing of tools, sewing machines and accessories.

(V) Construction of beehives and training in beekeeping.

(VI) Support of local entrepreneurship and community work where possible and appropriate.





rain water harvesting tank



compost toilet in construction

4. Project Impact

This project addresses issues of social and economic development in a holistic manner:

Health – Through the provision of a clean, potable water supply. Eco-sanitation toilets are a safe way of dealing with human waste as the composting process kills pathogens. They are hygienic and do not smell.

Sustainable Livelihoods – Through rendering a population healthy enough to work, as well as the provision of livelihood schemes in the forms of beekeeping and sewing. Eco-sanitation toilets also provide income through the sale of compost produced, or through increased revenue from higher crop yields as a result of increased soil fertility.

Agriculture and Food Security – Livelihoods are intimately linked with food security, as is health. A healthy, working population generating income is well equipped to stabilise food security. Eco-sanitation toilets help to increase soil fertility through the addition of compost and urine, thus improving food crop yields.

Training & Local Understanding – All facets of the project are simple in design and can be built using local labour and materials. They use appropriate, sustainable technology and are operational at village level

Management & Conservation – Rainwater Harvesting is incorporated into schemes where appropriate. Eco-sanitation toilets save water and prevent contamination of water sources.

Climate Change & Environmental Sustainability – Where possible everything is built using eco-friendly materials and following good-practices. Eco-sanitation toilets avoid the use of harmful chemicals for the treatment of human waste. They are self-contained and protect water sources from contamination.

Education – The work is coupled with education programmes on the importance of maintaining a clean, potable supply of water, and hygiene.

Empowerment – Building is carried out using local labour and the workshop, pumps and any other amenities are managed and cared for by the community. This is to instil a sense of ownership amongst the population and encourage people to empower themselves, as highlighted by the rice cooperative and female micro-finance scheme mentioned earlier. Such a project helps to bring economic stability and empowerment to communities, which in turn has a positive effect on other aspects of development and the holistic cycle.

5. Cost

The cost of a project varies from village to village, but in broad terms a single well with hand pump costs £2,000, eco-sanitation toilet £500, rainwater harvesting tank £350 and a bee keeping livelihood programme for a village of 1,500 people would be in the region of £7,000. A complete village of 1,500 people would cost circa £30,000.

6. Donations & Feedback

Administration costs are kept to a minimum and the equipment, materials and labour we use are cost effective and environmentally appropriate through strong links to the areas in which we work and our skilled, knowledgeable, dedicated staff. We strive to be good stewards of all resources entrusted to us, openly accountable for our work, systematic in evaluating our impact and effectiveness, and professional in their management. We accept all responsibility for our collective and individual actions. Wherever possible, projects are set up on an individual basis, so that companies may have their own ring-fenced package.

We ensure delivery of high quality services in a cost effective manner, providing accurate and timely feedback on work. As far as this feedback is concerned, it can be in any form, within reason, that the donor wishes to receive it: photographs, writing and messages from those helped by the project are commonly favoured, but we can also film videos or take people out to visit and experience the project themselves. We like to form partnerships between the charity, donors and the people they are helping, providing regular reports on where money is being spent and what benefits it is providing.

Wherever the Need has over ten years' experience of setting up and carrying out development work in over twenty different countries. Consequently, we are not stuck by rules, meaning that if donors have special needs and desires we can try to incorporate them. We are proud of our flexibility, but at the same time understand exactly what works, and what doesn't. Therefore, we suggest that our expert advice is considered by all prospective donors.



For further information on policies and strategies please see the following Wherever the Need Action documents:

1. Who We Are;
2. Sustainability;
3. Livelihoods;
4. Education;
5. Agriculture & Food Security;
6. Training & Local Understanding;
7. Health;
8. Eco-Sanitation;
9. Empowerment;
10. Management & Conservation;
11. Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

Available on request from: info@wherevertheneed.org.uk