



Leh Wi Sabi

International Rescue Committee, Sierra Leone
December 2007

IRC advocates for Gender Acts implementation

On November 24, IRC joined civil society organizations, UN agencies and other international NGOs to kick off the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence in Sierra Leone with a rally and march through downtown Freetown. The 16 Days is a worldwide campaign that focuses on ending all forms of gender-based violence (GBV) and protecting survivors. The campaign officially runs from November 25 through December 10.

The Sierra Leone campaign began with an meeting of civil society organizations, where IRC Sierra Leone Country Director Alan Glasgow presented a solidarity message. Participants then marched through downtown Freetown, chanting and singing, to call for the implementation of the three Gender Acts. Parliament passed the Acts in June, and they cover domestic violence, registration of

customary marriage and divorce, and devolution of estates.

“Passing the Gender Acts was a huge step forward for women in Sierra Leone,” Amie Kandeh, IRC GBV Coordinator, said. “Now we have to focus on empowering communities to make these laws work for women. The 16 Days Campaign is a step in making that happen.”

A coalition of community based organizations, national and international NGOs and UN agencies—known as the “Coalition on Women’s Rights”—traveled to Makeni, Kenema and Bo between November 26 and 30 to conduct radio discussions, service provider panels and community sensitization workshops on the Gender Acts. IRC GBV staff worked actively with the Coalition to organize and lead the events.



Activists rally outside the courthouse in Freetown to push for implementation of the three Gender Acts.

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International programs head visits Sierra Leone

IRC Vice President for International Programs, John Keys, met with Sierra Leone staff November 13-15 in the Freetown office following a visit to IRC’s Liberia programs. Mr. Keys was accompanied by Karri Goeldner, Head of IRC’s Economic Development Unit.

The trip was Mr. Keys’ first to Sierra Leone since a helicopter crash claimed the lives of two IRC staff members in 2004.

“I was proud to learn during my visit that IRC continues to have a robust presence in Sierra Leone,” Mr. Keys said.

“While many NGOs are scaling down or have left the country IRC continues to pursue innovative programs, such as the new education and gender based-violence (GBV) programs,” he added.

During his visit, Mr. Keys met with several

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Program Updates

Emergency Obstetric Care (EmOC)

Katy Mitchell, IRC technical adviser for reproductive health, traveled to Kenema between November 28 and December 13 to conduct an evaluation of the EmOC program. The program is a multi-country initiative, and similar evaluations took place in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Pakistan. The evaluation included assessments of EmOC facilities; service provider observation; service provider knowledge assessment; traditional birth attendant knowledge assessment; and client exit interviews. The final evaluation report will be available early in the new year.

Gender-Based Violence

Deputy Director of Programs Jane Cockerell and GBV Coordinator Amie Kandeh traveled to the United Kingdom on December 7 to plan the Sierra Leone portion of "Women and Girls Rebuilding Nations: Moving Towards Gender Equality in West Africa", the new GBV initiative funded by the NoVo Foundation. The project proposal will be submitted to the NoVo Foundation in January and program activities are expected to begin in March.

Lassa Fever Program

The European Commission-supported Lassa Fever Prevention and Control program closes at the end of December. The health team would like to thank Senior Environmental Health Manager Francis Gbondo and Lassa Fever Prevention Managers Mohamed Bockarie and Keifala Saffa for their hard work on the program. Since coming onboard this program in June 2007, the staff have revitalized the Lassa Fever Prevention Working Groups in eight camp host communities as well as in 20

additional communities in Kenema and Bo Districts. They also conducted mass community sensitizations on good hygiene practices and their relationship to Lassa fever prevention and control. The team also distributed essential tools and supplies for hygiene promotion in the 28 participating communities and conducted education sessions on Lassa fever prevention and control with local health staff and community members.

The program would also like to thank Frank Broadhurst, senior technical adviser for environmental health, for working with the team to conduct a final evaluation in December.

LEGACY Initiative Phase II

Phase II of the LEGACY Initiative, which focuses on supporting and strengthening select junior secondary schools (JSS) in the south and east of the Sierra Leone, officially opened on September 1. The program is supported by the NoVo Foundation. The Child and Youth Protection and Development (CYPD) team was busy planning staff recruitment, JSS selection and program start-up activities. Current education staff visited and evaluated potential JSS schools in December, and new staff will join the team in January.

Strengthening Democratic Governance

The USAID-funded Strengthening Democratic Governance program in Kailahun has been extended for six months, until September 2008, to continue activities through local elections.

Refugee Programming Closes

Following the end of UN support to refugee camps in June 2007, all of IRC's refugee education and gender-based violence programming officially

Sierra Leone Country Plan Update

In October 2007, the Country Director and Deputy Director of Programs presented the IRC Sierra Leone 2008-2010 Country Program Strategic Plan to an Executive Leadership Team at IRC Headquarters in New York. The plan focuses on improving IRC's ability to attract, develop and retain high quality national staff; improving operational and management support to programs; and building connections between programs in different sectors to maximize their impact. Implementation plans will be shared with staff early in 2008.

Senior management have also continued to work on plans for strengthening capacity building within the country's programs and among IRC staff. Staff development plans will also be shared early in 2008.

closed at the end of December. In the last six months, the education program conducted trainings for local education authorities in five districts as well as trainings for school management committees and community teacher associations in the eight camp areas. The GBV program focused on preparing the residual refugee population and host communities to take over services provided at the three local women's centers (see page 4 for article). The education and GBV teams would like to thank project staff for their hard work and dedication to the programs.

Questions or Comments?

Contact IRC Sierra Leone:

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CYCLE Sierra Leone team visits Liberia

Between October 17 and 19, CYCLE (Countering Youth and Child Labor through Education) Sierra Leone staff members traveled to Liberia to exchange program successes and lessons learned with the CYCLE Liberia team. CYCLE seeks to reduce the prevalence of exploitative child labor in both Liberia and Sierra Leone.

“The workshop was an important time for the teams to share their knowledge and experiences from the past two years of implementation, particularly in preparation for the program’s midterm review in February,” said Cosby Nkwazi, the regional Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator for CYCLE, who attended the workshop.

CYCLE Sierra Leone collaborates with local NGOs and community groups in the Western Area and Kono District to prevent children and youth from entering exploitative labor or to remove them from it. In the past two years, the program has enrolled over 18,000 such beneficiaries in educational and vocational training programs in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Workshop participants included



During their visit to Liberia, the CYCLE team met with beneficiaries of the Liberia CYCLE program. The woman pictured above with her child is a student at one of the CYCLE-supported sewing schools, where she is learning skills to support herself and her family.

regional and national CYCLE staff from both Liberia and Sierra Leone; representatives from Liberian partner NGOs, youth and community groups; and representatives from the Liberian Ministry of Education and the National Commission on Child Labor.

While in Liberia, the CYCLE team

visited schools and vocational institutions where they met program beneficiaries.

“It was very encouraging to meet people who started their education with CYCLE support, completed their training and now have continued their education on their own,” said James Nyuma, the CYCLE Sierra Leone data analyst who attended the workshop.

The two teams also discussed their key successes and challenges. According to Brima Lamin, one of Sierra Leone’s CYCLE Program Managers, the Liberia team was impressed with CYCLE Sierra Leone’s strong relationships with community members and organizations like the local Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) that are working to reduce child labor.

The Sierra Leone team was impressed with CYCLE Liberia’s strong relationship with the national government, which includes an active working relationship with the National Commission on Child Labor. In its third year, CYCLE Sierra Leone is intensifying its efforts to engage at the national level, Mr. Lamin said.

IRC educates communities on the Gender Acts *(cont. from page 1)*

Many community leaders — including paramount chiefs, religious leaders and Mammy Queens — attended the panels and community sensitization workshops.

Fallah Jusu, paramount chief of Kissi Teng chiefdom along the Guinean border, attended the workshop in Kenema to learn the provisions of the new laws and then share

the information with his chiefdom. “When I return [to Kissi Teng] I will convene a meeting of section chiefs, Mammy Queens and youth leaders to also learn about the laws and then educate the rest of the community on them,” Mr. Jusu said.

IRC GBV staff conducted similar education sessions

for community leaders in Kono and Kailahun during the same period.

IRC and the Coalition on Women’s Rights also met with government leaders to discuss national GBV policy, and also organized community groups to celebrate World AIDS Day on December 1 and International Human Rights Day on December 10.

These activities are just the start of IRC’s work to educate communities about GBV and women’s rights under the Gender Acts, Ms. Kandeh said.

“Many leaders are coming onboard to challenge GBV, but more need to do so,” Ms. Kandeh said. “It is clear from our meetings around the country that the work is just beginning.”

Women’s centers hand over to communities

For many of the Liberian refugee women integrating into Gerihun community in Bo District, the small IRC-supported women’s center with its colorfully painted walls and cozy environment has become a central part of their community.

As their fellow refugees have repatriated to Liberia, the remaining members of the Women’s Action Group in Gerihun Camp have continued to work with IRC staff to provide counseling and referral services to survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) both in the camp and host community and to educate the community on GBV issues. They run literacy classes for refugees and other community women and also provide recreational activities for survivors of GBV within the center. IRC began supporting the women’s center in Gerihun camp in 2002 and similar women’s centers in Jembe and Largo camps in 2004.

“Thanks to IRC’s support [to the women’s centers] GBV survivors are now able to stand before the community and share their problems,” said Fatu Comeh, the chairperson of the Gerihun Women’s Action Group. “Our voices are starting to be heard and we want to continue that.”

With the end of UN assistance to the camps in June 2007 and the close of IRC support to the centers in January, IRC has worked with the Women’s



IRC Social Worker Safiatu Jalloh (left) and a member of the Gerihun Women’s Action Group display a sign made by GBV survivors accessing the Gerihun Women’s Center.

Action Groups in the three camps and host community leaders to hand over the centers to the communities.

Between November 28 and 30, IRC organized a volunteer training with 24 refugee and host community members from Gerihun, Jembe and Largo to prepare them to provide counseling and referral services to GBV survivors and to mobilize their communities to prevent GBV.

A closing-out meeting was also held at each of the centers on December 10, International Human Right Day.

Host community chiefs, elders and other community groups attended along with the remaining refugee populations to discuss the center’s successes and to formally hand them over to the communities.

IRC is also providing the centers with materials for small scale income generating activities, including seeds and tools for gardening and sewing materials. Women’s Action Group members attended a business management training in November to learn how to manage these resources.

John Keys visits IRC office in Freetown (cont. from page 1)

in-country donors as well as IRC staff from administration, finance, logistics and programs. He also visited the CYCLE site

at Aberdeen to meet with project beneficiaries. “IRC Sierra Leone was delighted to have John here with us, although sadly

there was no time to get him to the field on this occasion,” Country Director Alan Glasgow said. “Overall John was very

impressed with what he saw, in terms of the program, strategy and commitment of the IRC team here in Sierra Leone.”

ABOUT THE IRC

Founded in 1933, the International Rescue Committee is a world leader in relief, rehabilitation, protection, post-conflict development, resettlement services and advocacy for those uprooted or affected by violent conflict and oppression. International Rescue Committee is at work in 25 countries delivering lifesaving aid in emergencies; rebuilding shattered communities; caring for war-traumatized children; rehabilitating health care, water and sanitation systems; reuniting separated families; restoring lost livelihoods; establishing schools; training teachers; strengthening the capacity of local organizations and institutions; developing civil society and good governance initiatives and promoting human rights. For refugees and asylum seekers afforded sanctuary in the United States, International Rescue Committee provides support services to help them resettle and become self-sufficient.

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Staff Movements

Freetown

Susan Clarke joined IRC Sierra Leone as the new Health Coordinator on October 1. Sue has a background in midwifery, nursing and public health, and has worked on health and nutrition programs in Uganda, Somalia, Sierra Leone (Makeni) and South Sudan.

Sue is joined by **Annalisa Brusati**, the new Child and Youth Protection and Development (CYPD) Coordinator. Annalisa will oversee the LEGACY and CYCLE programs. She has extensive experience in child and youth protection in the development sector across Asia, Africa and the Americas, including working on child labor programs. She joins us from Sudan.

Pamela Goss-Power has also joined the CYPD team as Education Coordinator.

Pamela comes to us from IRC Liberia where she served as the Education Program Manager. She is based in Kenema

LEGACY Director Bidemi Carrol is joined in Freetown by **Radha Rajkotia**, the new Youth and Livelihoods Technical Adviser for West Africa. Radha has previously worked on youth and livelihoods projects in the UK and Sierra Leone.

Other Freetown arrivals include:

Princess Squire and **Marion Sesay** as GBV Counselors

Mohamed S. Conteh as GBV Liaison Manager for the Ministry of Health

Eunice Whenzle as Rainbo Center Manager

Ba-Challey Koroma has moved from the Kono office to Freetown to serve as Administration Manager.

Alyson Zureick as Grants Coordinator.

Drivers **Ahmed Kamara**, **David Sandy** and **Suliaman Sheriff**.

Kenema

Tamba Gborie has moved from Kailahun to Kenema to serve as Field Coordinator.

The team in Kenema has also been joined by:

Fredrick Samai as Finance Manager

Fredanna M'cormack as the Maternal Health/Blood Safety Intern

Sheku Kabba as driver

Alhaji Barrie has moved from driver to transport officer in the Kenema office.

Kono

Tamba Anthony Matturri has moved from the SCOPE program to serve as the Deputy Field

The team in Kono has also been joined by:

Michael F.S. Katter as storekeeper

Mohamed A. Lansana as grounds keeper

Shahrzad Joharifard as Programs Volunteer

Kailahun

The team in Kailahun has been joined by:

Rosa Veronica Vandi as GBV Program Manager

Natsnet Gebrebrhan as the GBV Start-up Manager

Lilian M. Karimu as Social Worker

Christopher Brima as Community Mobilizer

Yankuba Lanasana as Logistics Assistant