

Cornerstone Wesleyan Church began a partnership with the community of Kenenday, Sierra Leone in January 2020. Facilitated by World Hope International (WHI), Cornerstone's generosity has helped promote leadership development and agricultural improvement in this small, rural village located in the Karene District.

Sierra Leone was ranked one of the least developed countries in the world (184 out of 189 countries) by the 2018 Human Development Index.[1] There is overwhelming poverty with 74% of employed people living on less than \$3.10 a day, a life expectancy of 52 years old, and a literacy rate of 32.4%. Islam is the predominant religion in Sierra Leone, with more than 78% claiming to be Muslim. Less than 21% are Christian, while the remaining 1% adhere to traditional beliefs, also called animism. Subsistence farming is the primary means of livelihood in the region. Limba is the most common language followed by Krio, English and various other tribal languages, including Temne, Loko, Koranko and Mandingo.[2]



1UN Development Program. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SLE>
2CIA World Fact Book. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sl.html>

Village Profile

Kenenday is located in the Karene District in the Northern Region of Sierra Leone. It is comprised of 56 houses with a population of approximately 572 people representing 71 households from the Limba tribe. The village is lead by Headman L. Kamara. The Youth Leader is M. Kanu, and the women are represented by the Chairlady F. Kamara. Village elders, Pa M. Kamara and Ya G. Turay, provide advice to the Village Development Committee. Leadership positions are earned through consultation with elders, youth, and women's societies.

At the time of the original assessment, residents were engaged in subsistence farming including rice, peanuts, cassava, and sweet potatoes. They also reared animals such as goats and sheep. However, the community lived in extreme poverty without adequate seeds and too few animals to have food security. The community members have an overused drying floor to properly dry seeds and a grain storage to store seeds.

The community had one water well, which serves Kenenday and other surrounding communities during the dry season. Only a few latrines were available and were overused. As a result, most people used the bush for defecation which spreads diseases. Residents lacked a Peripheral Health Unit and families walked 5 miles away to Kamakwie Hospital to receive medical care.



Kenenday currently has no primary or secondary school. The nearest primary school is one mile away for grades 1-3. Children in grades 4-6 walk four miles to the nearest town. The secondary school students walk seven miles every day, which is one of the reasons for drop outs, along with poverty, and teenage pregnancy. There are 18 school aged children who are not attending school (7 boys and 11 girls) due to poverty, disability, single headed households, or as a result of being orphaned.

The village of Kenenday is made up of 55% Muslim with 35% Christian and 10% African traditional worshippers. Christians, who are mostly Wesleyan, meet in homes on a rotation to hold Sunday services.

Kenenday is beginning a transformation process which after three years aims to leave the community empowered to continue a cycle of development without continual outside assistance.

Completed Activities: January - June 2020

Baseline Survey

A random group of 10 community members (5 men and 5 women) were selected to complete the baseline survey. This will provide an information base against which to monitor and assess progress and effectiveness during implementation and after the activity is completed.

Village Development Committee

A Village Development Committee (VDC) was formed in Kenenday with the community electing 10 members. It is required that women be included in the membership to empower women in a male dominated society. Time is spent in the beginning of each Village Partnership investing in the foundation of an effective VDC because these leaders are the key stakeholders in the progress and success of the activities during the partnership. WHI acknowledges the fact that sustainable development depends on local leadership.

The workshop allowed community members to discuss their values, share knowledge, and brainstorm using resources to improve their community. The training was conducted with leaders reflecting on the power of dreams and identifying their values. Other topics included an understanding of Child Rights, knowing their roles, addressing conflict, and learning about trust and commitment.

Social Sustainability Self-Assessment

To promote sustainability, the Rural Development Specialist together with the Kenenday VDC conducted a social sustainability self-assessment exercise using transformational development indicators. The exercise showed the community is growing in the areas of community representation and involvement, leadership, and decision making. They are maturing in accepting the role and importance of women in the decision making process and are willing to maintain that stance. They are still in need of external support from WHI and other development partners as they are still maturing in terms of community self-independence.



Distribution of Seeds

The Kenenday community members are predominantly agrarian, engaged mostly in subsistence farming with the cultivation of the main staple crop of rice as well as peanuts, pepper, cassava, and sweet potatoes. The VDC selected the most vulnerable members of the community to receive agricultural seeds and as a result ensure food security. The criteria included female headed households, households with high proportion of children under five, elderly and lactating mothers, and households with people living with disabilities. Twenty-eight women each received two bushels of peanut seeds and 28 men each received two bushels of rice seeds as a loan. By providing this seed, harsh repayment terms to vendors are eliminated. Peanut seeds were exclusively given to women and rice to men as growing rice requires more physical work. The first harvest is expected in September for peanuts and December for rice. Farmers will pay back the community seed bank and the next selected farmers will receive the seed loan.



COVID-19

In early April, Sierra Leone began an inter-district partial lock down and curfew from 9pm to 6am to prevent the spread of COVID-19. All non-essential inter-district travel was strictly prohibited and retail trade was limited to only the sale of food items, water, medicine, fuel, and other essential utilities. Citizens were advised to stay at home and strongly encouraged to wear face masks when out in public. All schools were closed. On June 23rd, President Julius Maada Bio announced the curfew would be adjusted to 11pm to 6am and the ban on inter-district travel was lifted. Commercial flights resumed. Grades 6, 9, and 12 returned to school from July - September to complete the previous school year and take national exams.



Completed Activities: July - December 2020

Agriculture Training

WHI conducted a two day participatory training exercise for 20 selected farming households with facilitators from the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI). The objective of the training was to improve agriculture productivity resulting in greater food security and potential for additional income. The farmers learned through group work and brainstorming exercises. Outcomes of the training included:

- Identifying where to find improved seed varieties
- Learning preparation techniques for improved rice and ground nut production
- Learning different types of fertilizers and rates they can be used
- Mastering an integrated approach to pest and disease management
- Designing a farming calendar with dates of activities for each crop
- Highlighting the value of crop rotation as an option to manage soil fertility



Hygiene and Sanitation Training

Twenty community members participated in a three-day hygiene and sanitation training conducted by the Bombali District WASH engineer and coordinator of the School of Midwifery. The training covered the following topics:



(1) Understand the cycle of fecal contamination through a field visit; (2) Learn hand washing practices with soap, water safety techniques, including handling and treatment, and feces management; and (3) Identify small doable actions to move people toward total behavior change through sanitation clean-up campaigns. Members were selected to be Village Community Health Promoters (VCHP). Their role is to support community members in discussing and raising issues regarding hygiene, sanitation, and other related issues on a bi-weekly or monthly basis.

Latrines

The construction of three VIP latrines (photo top right) was completed providing a private sanitation system with a chimney to ventilate and prevent flies from leaving the pit and spreading disease. The community helped excavate the pit for each latrine. The latrines are designed with a slab that can be moved when the pit is full. The community previously learned about knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) in the hygiene and sanitation training. The latrines will help decrease open defecation and continue to improve the health of the community.

A member of the community, K. Kamara (pictured in second photo in front of the old latrines), shared *"I wonder if we would have still continued to live in shame and discomfort, thinking that all is well and normal in the way we live our lives in our community, had not World Hope come to enlighten our perceptions of community health and practices and facilities. Our "best" latrines could only be found in the compound of the Town Headman and the Chief Imam which are the only facilities offered to important visitors. By basic standards, these types of latrines are very deplorable and a disgrace to our community, but for us, we never saw anything wrong with this until during our discussions and reflection sessions during our sanitation and hygiene training exercise. Running to the bush for an easy "quickie" for both adults and children was just a normal defecation exercise to ease ourselves, now we bow our heads in shame, whenever we reflect on what that training exercise opened our eyes to. We are thankful to WHI for not only helping us to understand our collective responsibilities for the health of our community, but for also providing us with community latrines which would improve our community and reduce unhealthy related diseases."*

COVID-19 Update

COVID-19 created new stress with school closures, family confinement, and economic vulnerability. Due to the vulnerability of children, one of the WHI social workers traveled to partner communities to conduct a survey of the impacts of COVID-19 and a child protection training. Regarding COVID-19, individuals were aware of the measures to prevent the virus, such as washing hands and regularly using soap and water. The children's physical and mental health was not reported to have been influenced negatively by COVID-19.

To better protect the children in Kenenday, the VDC was trained on child protection, child welfare, child neglect, child rights, parental rights, and safeguarding against sexual abuse in the community. VDC members were tasked to report and refer all abuses to appropriate authorities.



What's Next?

It will be another exciting year in Kenenday as the construction of a borehole well is scheduled for 2021. This life changing investment will impact Kenenday and the surrounding communities who travel here for water during the dry season. There will also be a showing of the Jesus film with evangelism by the Wesleyan Church and Pastor Andrew connecting this tangible source of water to the source of Living Water. In 2022, construction on a secondary school for grades 7-9 will begin. The importance of a school was highlighted again by the WHI social worker who traveled to Kenenday and noted the risks for younger children traveling 7-10 miles to school.



We are grateful for the compassion and support your church is offering Kenenday!

WHI staff carefully balance training and community infrastructure projects to achieve sustainable development. The Village Partnership program allows for a continuous process of improvement for an impoverished community delivering opportunity, dignity and hope.



Contact Us:

WorldHope.ca | 877-482-1499
1830 Mountain Road, Suite C
Moncton, NB E1G 1A9
info@worldhope.ca