Project Proposal
Sierra Leone: Livelihoods for Ebola-Affected Families

REQUEST FOR SUPPORT

ChildFund International is a child and community development organization working in 29 countries worldwide to protect every child’s right to grow up safe, healthy and ready to reach his or her full potential. After working with impoverished and marginalized families for more than 75 years, we know that basic economic stability is the foundation upon which all families provide for their children and enable them to thrive. In order to help 150 families in Sierra Leone gain lasting economic stability and all of its life-changing benefits, we are seeking $128,000 toward the Livelihoods for Ebola-Affected Families project.

In the Moyamba District of Sierra Leone, this initiative will provide 150 female heads-of-household with 12 months of vocational and life skills training to help them recover from the financial devastation of the recent Ebola crisis. Having grown up during their nation’s brutal decade-long civil war, these women have no education or marketable skills, and now, having lost at least one breadwinner to Ebola, they are struggling to provide for their families on their own. What’s more, many have also taken in young family members or neighbors orphaned by the outbreak, adding to an already urgent situation. Together, we can prepare these women to deliver much-needed services in their communities while earning an income that will contribute to the well-being of their families and the recovery of local economies reeling from months of government shutdowns.
We greatly appreciate your consideration of the Livelihoods for Ebola-Affected Families project and hope to build a partnership with you that will have a lasting, positive impact on children and families in need.

SIGNIFICANT NEEDS IN SIERRA LEONE

Across Sierra Leone, Ebola has become synonymous with devastation. A crisis on many fronts, it has affected well over 12,000 families and taken more than 3,900 lives. For more than a year, economic activity has been severely disrupted, and agriculture – the primary source of income for 4 out of every 5 households – has been put on hold. Families living in the communities that ChildFund supports have always struggled to make ends meet. But now, having lost at least one breadwinner to Ebola, many young, poor, uneducated mothers have become their households’ sole providers. Many of these women have also opened their homes to young family members and neighbors orphaned by the outbreak, stretching thin resources even farther.

For generations, Sierra Leone’s most impoverished mothers have lived on the edges of their communities, unsupported and unheard. Now more than ever, the toll taken by the Ebola epidemic has made income assistance absolutely vital. Without thoughtful and culturally appropriate interventions, these women face a future of abject poverty that will pass on to their children and further inhibit the growth that this West African nation so desperately needs. Over the next year, ChildFund will invest heavily in the kind of market-based vocational training that will lead to long-term, sustainable income sources for poor and isolated families. In doing so, we are contributing not only to the financial health of individual families, but to the economic recovery of entire communities.

SOLUTIONS WITH CHILDFUND

ChildFund is uniquely prepared to meet the needs of Sierra Leone’s most impoverished and underserved citizens. Working in close collaboration with grassroots organizations who know their communities best, we have served the country’s most marginalized families since 1985. Over the course of 30 years, ChildFund has reached over 255,000 children and their family members, and we have been on the front lines of family reunification and welfare throughout the Ebola epidemic. In 2013 alone, we reached 2,000 households with vocational training in fields such as agriculture, carpentry, hair dressing, auto service, welding and electrical engineering. Prior to the onset of the Ebola crisis, a vocational training project in Moyamba District reaching 150 poor, single mothers saw excellent attendance and strong support throughout the community, and confirmed the high number of young mothers eligible for and eager to take part in this kind of initiative. As the district comes out of the Ebola crisis, the need for vocational training opportunities tailored to young, single mothers is even greater.
Project Goal and Objectives

The goal of the Livelihoods for Ebola-Affected Families project is to empower 150 impoverished, single mothers in Moyamba District, Sierra Leone to improve their standard of living, better provide for the children in their care and contribute to the economic recovery of their communities. To this end, the project will realize the following objectives:

1. Provide participants with vocational skills in high-demand industries that demonstrate strong local growth potential;
2. Provide participants with business management training and life skills training to support the success of small business ventures; and
3. Divide participants into small groups to facilitate peer support, joint ventures and group investments.

Project Activities

Select Participants

Project participants will be selected by a committee composed of ChildFund staff, local partner staff, village elders and representatives from local women’s groups. In order to qualify, participants must be young mothers under the age of 24 who have lived in Moyamba District for at least one year. Preference will go to those who have lost several family breadwinners to Ebola and/or are struggling with physical disability.

Define Training Needs

This project will begin with a market assessment to identify local opportunities with the most viable options for small business development. Following the assessment, ChildFund and our partners will select 5 – 7 areas of vocational training that are best suited to fostering participants’ long-term success.

Deliver Ten Months of Vocational Training

Partnering with reputable vocational institutes in Moyamba District, ChildFund will provide 150 women with full-time (40 hours per week) vocational skills training in the industry of their choice. Based on our long-standing relationships with communities in this area, we anticipate including some or all of the following services in participants’ range of options: soap making, bread baking, produce sales, groundnut¹ and sesame cultivation, gara fabric dying,² tailoring and hairdressing.

¹ “Groundnut” is an umbrella term that can refer to either American groundnuts (peanuts) or African groundnuts (Bambara nuts), two similar plant varieties.
² “Gara” is a traditional craft in Sierra Leone similar to batik or tie-dying.
Deliver Two Months of Business & Life Skills Training

In addition to specific vocational skills, business management and life skills are essential to the success of small business ventures. For this reason, a final two months of training will cover entrepreneurship, business planning, leadership, financial management, marketing and professional communication skills.

Support Small Business Launch

During their final two months of training, participants will prepare to launch their own small businesses with the help of modest startup grants. They will also be organized into small support groups that will become crucial sources of business advice and moral support, and will enable members to pool their profits together for higher impact investments. If desired, group members may also choose to launch shared businesses and combine their startup grants from the get-go.

Project Participants

Over the course of 12 months, this project will directly benefit 150 impoverished mothers in the Moyamba District of Sierra Leone who have been deeply affected by the Ebola crisis. In addition, participants’ families and the children they care for will all benefit from a higher standard of living. Collectively, the women who take part in the Livelihoods for Ebola-Affected Families project will also provide important products and services for their communities while contributing to their economic recovery after a full year of shutdowns, curfews and travel bans.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

ChildFund Sierra Leone’s Program Manager will be responsible for overseeing all project activities, measuring progress toward objectives, and determining if any changes in the project’s design are necessary. Many different members of the community, including local partners, representatives from vocational institutes and program participants, will be empowered to participate in the monitoring and evaluation process. ChildFund will host monthly project review meetings to address any issues and document successes; accompanying progress reports will be submitted to ChildFund headquarters.

SUSTAINABILITY

In each community that we serve, ChildFund works with local partners to develop the most locally appropriate and culturally relevant solutions to the needs of highly deprived and vulnerable populations. A key element in achieving this goal is building sustainability into program plans from the very beginning.
The Livelihoods for Ebola-Affected Families project prioritizes sustainability in a number of ways. First, we work within the context of local markets in Moyamba District and match them with participants’ areas of interest, ensuring that vocational trainings are relevant to women’s true income-generation prospects. Also, by using vocational institutes run by local experts, we ensure that participants are able to continue receiving advice and mentorship, even if ChildFund concludes its work within a particular community. Grouping participants together is also important to long-term success, as it provides entrepreneurs with several partners on whom they can rely for support, problem-solving and innovation.

Finally, focusing on mothers initiates an element of intergenerational sustainability, as studies show that mothers who are given an opportunity to increase their income tend to spend a majority of the surplus on their children’s healthcare, education, food and other basic needs. With greater support and better resources at home, children grow up primed to become more active, informed and productive adults ready to pass the same resources on to their future children.

CONCLUSION

For heavily deprived mothers living in Moyamba District, having a sustainable source of income is a basic need – but it’s about more than economic security. It’s about self-confidence and self-esteem; it’s about having the ability to steward their own futures and contribute meaningfully to the recovery of their communities. Over the last few decades, the people of Sierra Leone have survived one challenge after the next. It is time to provide young, single, impoverished mothers with the knowledge and skills needed to be a part of the nation’s gradual forward momentum. With your gift, you can prepare 150 young, impoverished mothers to provide for themselves and their families, stimulate the recovery of local markets, and invest in the health, education and wellbeing of the next generation.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present the Livelihoods for Ebola-Affected Families project. We hope to be able to work together toward a healthier and more prosperous future for some of Sierra Leone’s poorest and most marginalized families.

QUESTIONS

Should you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Ebony Mosley, Department of Philanthropy, via phone or email, (804) 545-3620 or emosley@childfund.org.