**M4-CS1**

**Case study: SRHR in Sierra Leone, Restless Development and UNICEF**

**About the project**

UNICEF Sierra Leone commissioned partner civil society organisation, Restless Development, to undertake a needs assessment with young researchers. The assessment focused on out-of-school children i.e. those who have dropped out of school, those who have never attended school, or those who have participated in non-formal school programmes. The information collected was used to produce a set of guidelines for life skills programmes delivering non-formal HIV education.

* The study was designed to address a natural lack of cohesion regarding efforts targeting out-of-school children in Sierra Leone.
* Out-of-school children have limited accessibility and community structures to learn about life skills. Most life skills education for the prevention of HIV/AIDS undertaken by many organisations is only targeted at young people in school.

As a result, Restless Development and UNICEF aimed:

* To generate accurate, gender-disaggregated information on the situation and needs of out-of-school youth using recognised research methods (as three times as many girls were out of school than boy).
* To identify current strategies, opportunities (partners and structures) and challenges to reach out of school youth.
* To provide transferable skills and experience for the young people involved
* To inform and generate a more unified programme approach

**What happened?**

Twenty young people (18-22 years) were given the skills to directly implement research in 20 communities: focus groups, discussions, 64 interviews, consultative meetings, piloting and producing questionnaires. An agreement was discussed and made by UNICEF and Restless Development regarding parameters and objectives of the project and the data to be collected. Target groups for the research included street children, child sex workers, child labourers, child-led households , school dropouts and child miners. This was followed by a training of young researchers on methods and confidentiality, then 10 days of research, data collection and analysis. Finally the report was presented to a delegation of UN agencies, NGOs and other civil society groups.

This was a cost effective way to collect information and ensured a wide geographical coverage, ultimately meaning UNICEF was able to better implement programmes for out-of-school children. In addition, it provided an opportunity for young people to develop skills and experiences, realising their own potential to undertake professional research. Out-of-school children remarked they found it easier to talk to young people than to adults

**Lessons were learned:**

* Adequate training and support for youth is essential; hire experienced implementing partners and M&E personnel.
* Ensure roles, expectations and responsibilities are clearly outlined for young people during the recruitment process.
* Personnel need time to think through and deliver how data and analysis will be disseminated after project completion to ensure influence.
* There are costs to consider – training costs, travel to the fields, food/accommodation for the young people .