

THE METHODIST CHURCH SIERRA LEONE

Report of the Appeal to support Methodists in Sierra Leone that are adversely affected by the COVID-19 outbreak- 2020

HOW IT ALL STARTED: What started as an outbreak in China near the end of 2019 has now developed globally into a pandemic. **COVID19** is a highly infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered corona virus. Sierra Leone recorded its first case of COVID-19 on 31st March 2020. Since then the number of confirmed cases has skyrocketed to more than 1,000. The latest update as at Wednesday-June 10, 2020 shows 37 New cases; 1,062 (Females 533 and Males 529) Confirmed cases; 375 patients at Isolation centres; 637 recovered; 50 deaths and 1,672 in quarantine.

The government of Sierra Leone has re-positioned itself to contain the spread of the disease. Among these measures, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation has been provided with resources in terms of medical supplies, laboratory testing kits and training of staff on precautionary measures at strategic locations within the Country. Furthermore, the Head of State Dr. Julius Maada Bio has declared a 12 month public health emergency. A proclamation unanimously endorsed by the members in the house of Parliament. Other measures taken by the government include the closure of all educational institutions until further notice; closure of all land borders, sea and air flights` into the Country. An emergency **COVID19** response taskforce has been established by the President.

THE PROPOSED ISSUES TO ADDRESS: Despite all these laudable initiatives by the government in a bid to prevent and control the disease, the COVID-19 outbreak has affected all segments of the Population and is particularly detrimental to members of those social groups in the most vulnerable situations. Early evidence indicates that the health and economic impacts of the virus are being borne disproportionately by poor people especially those living in remote rural communities.

Majority of our Church communities including the Ministers and their family members are being seriously affected by the economic impact of the disease. With the suspension of church services and restriction on movement of people, most people are finding it extremely difficult to feed their families.

Government has undertaken some humanitarian assistance to minimize the economic hardship of selected community members. Dry ration in the form of rice and condiments have been supplied to primary school children in remote communities as part of the school feeding programme.

Also, the government through the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) has provided some social safety net by providing rice and cash transfer to the physically challenged persons across the Country. Unfortunately our Church members did not benefitted from any of these humanitarian supports.

However, in order to protect and support our Church community, the MCSL management has embarked on a fund-raising drive. Locally some magnanimous church members in Freetown made generous financial contributions toward the appeal. The funds have been used by the management of the Conference office to procure and distribute hygiene kits including veronica buckets, bowls, face masks, soaps and food supplements to more than 160 Methodist family heads including Church Ministers across the Connexion.

THANKS AND APPRECIATION

MCSL would like to appreciate our partners in the UK: *Methodist Church in Britain, Methodist Church in Irelands, Circuits/societies in the UK (Market & Lime Light Church), individuals (Rev Richard Jacksons & Co and Members within the MCSL)*. All We Can also responded to our appeal to vie some budget lines items in our strategic plan to augment the budget of this drive. We herewith expressed our thanks to the Methodist Church in Britain and our partners for the continued financial support that made this intervention possible despite the difficult times of COVID-19 crisis globally. The relief items reached the most vulnerable people within our connection – societies, circuits and districts. We continue to pray and hope that Almighty God heals the world of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic and may God bless all our contributors abundantly.

The initial drive was focus on providing Personal Preventive Equipment (PPE) for Ministers within the connection, however, with additional support from friends within and outside Sierra Leone the thrust was broaden with the following objectives:

- To provide Personal Preventive Equipment (PPE) to 125 Ministers within the connection;
- To provide Personal Preventive Equipment (PPE) to 185 societies across the connections;
- To provide Personal Preventive Equipment (PPE) to schools (Primary – Class Six and Secondary schools) and clinics across the connection
- To provide food items for 125 Ministers, Catechist/Lay Pastors and within the connection

With the financial support provided by Methodist Church in Britain and other partners within and outside Sierra Leone, Methodist Church Sierra Leone (MCSL) was able to meet these objectives in phases.

Phase 1: MCSL reached out to a total of 125 Ministers within the connection in July 2020.

Phase 2: MCSL reached out to 185 beneficiaries within the connection in August 2020 – societies, schools and clinic within the connection were provided with PPE items and Ministers and catechist/Lay Pastors within the connection were provided with food items supplements (rice, sugar, Ovaltine, coffee, tea leaf, milk, salt, magi cubes, vegetable oil, tomato paste and onions).

185 communities (Societies, Schools and Clinic) benefited from the PPE Items, while **135** direct beneficiaries/families with a family having an average of six (6) people hence a total of **810** people benefited from the relief support. Each beneficiary (Phase 2) *received 50kgs of rice, ½ bag onions, 1 dozen of tomato paste (tins), 15kgs of salt and sugar, 1 gallon of vegetable oil, box of magi cubes, box of tea bags, 1 tin Ovaltine/Cocoa flour, Sackets of coffee and milk (15 Sackets each).*

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

A planning meeting involving the MCSL management and District Chairmen was held to plan for the funds received from MCB and other partners. It was resolved that the PPE items be distributed to Ministers in the Western District and subsequently, Bo/Kenema and Kono/ Kailahun districts for phase one. Phase two was agreed to include the PPE for societies/schools and clinic and with food supplements for ministers and catechist/ Lay Pastors. These relief items were distributed in the three connectional districts and a truck was hired to transport the items because of the long distance between districts.

Each district has various Circuits/societies, schools and clinics in their respective districts:

- **Kono/Kailahun** had 14 Circuits, over 100 societies, 120 schools (Primary 102 and secondary 18) with one clinic- Nixon Memorial hospital. Over 100 societies, 50 schools and thirty- five (35) ministers/catechists/ lay pastors benefited from the phased out distribution done in June and August 2020.
- **Bo/ Kenema** had 7 Circuits, over 30 societies, 30 schools and two institutions within its district. Over 25 societies, 30 schools and twenty - five (25) ministers/catechists/ lay pastors benefited from the phased out distribution done in June and August 2020.
- **Western District** had 12 Circuits, over 36 societies, 8 schools and 1 clinic within its district. All the 36 societies, 8 schools and clinic benefited directly for the PPE Items distributed. 50 Ministers in the district and 20 staff at the Conference office benefited directly from the PPE items and Food supplement respectively.

The beneficiaries selected were comprises of church/societies, schools/institutions, clinics/ hospitals and ministers and staff in each of the above districts.

TARGETED BENEFICIARIES: **Direct:** Church Ministers and their families About 120 family heads across the Connexion (3 Synod Districts). **Indirect:** Members of the MCSL

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The beneficiaries appreciated the relief support citing that with the support they had received their families and friends will not go hungry during the rainy season and the intermittent lockdown period. The items provided ensure that basic needs (soap, face mask, hand washing bucket and food supplements) were addressed to keep themselves safe from the deadly COVID-19. The beneficiaries also appreciated the time of intervention quoting that the support came at the time they needed it most.

The schools show much appreciation for the timely intervention of MCSL as items supplied by the Government of Sierra Leone were not adequate for the school population. With these additional supplies (2 set of PPE items per school) the school authorities were able to apportion the items per class.

The societies, though the items were received during the ban on church activities, yet they are sure of having PPE when churches reopen soon. They expressed thanks to MCSL and its partners for such a laudable and timely intervention.

The above statements are clear indications that the relief items distributed served their purpose of; provision of PPE items personal hygiene items that will keep the population healthy and emergency food supplies to the targeted beneficiaries within our connection.

COORDINATING TEAM

The team was well coordinated through the leadership of the Conference Office management, District Chairmen and Circuit Superintendents of the various circuits. The distribution exercise was coordinated by Rev. Samuel Stober – Taylor (MCSL’s Strategic Plan Facilitator) and Bro Francis Musa (MCSL’s Development Secretary) who were on ground with full support from the Presiding and Administrative Bishops, together with the Synod Chairmen and their respective staff in their district. Circuit Superintendents, Circuit Ministers, Youth representatives and leaders of the various circuits/societies were also informed of the project from the outset unto the implementation stages.

CHALLENGES

The long distances between Circuits/ societies within district was a challenge, however, the phased out distribution include a minimal sum to augment the transportation cost from the distribution points to their respective societies/ circuits.

Additional beneficiaries that were not budgeted for prior to the distribution exercise; venerable groups; Local Pastors within the Societies/Circuits and District were also serviced. Also the Paramount chiefs and Town chiefs within the sections/chiefdoms our societies/circuits are situated were also included as courtesy from MCSL; thus they were all issued with PPE items. This created some budgetary implications; the budgeted sum was remitted in phases as they were coming from different sources, time, etc.

Photo Gallery of Distributions



Chairman of Bo / Kenema District receiving PPE Items for Ministers within his district
