



Final Evaluation of the Project

Increasing Access, Retention and
Performance in Primary Education



**Implemented by Child to Child &
The Pikin-To-Pikin Movement
Kailahun District, Sierra Leone, 2011-2016**

Institute for Development (IfD)

Acknowledgements

This report draws from the project data and the annual reports prepared by The Pikin to Pikin Movement (PtP) and Child to Child (CtC) project staff, in addition to primary data collected for this Evaluation. We acknowledge their contribution to this report particularly in their willingness to provide more information as key informants.

This report would not have been possible without the contributions of the following members of the IfD Evaluation Team:

Lead Evaluator	Regina Bash-Taqi
Study Design	Mohamed Kanu
Development of child-friendly participatory tools	Lorilei Beer
Field supervision and quantitative data analysis	Osman Sillah
Desk review and qualitative data analysis	Natalie Pedersen
Report Writers	Meredith Dyson Philip S. Amara
Data Collectors	Lansana Sheriff Memunatu Bindi Claude Koroma Victoria Foryoh Philip Kongoley Emmanuel Amara Magrete Sia Kelli

Table of Contents

Acronyms	iii
List of Tables	iv
List of Boxes	iv
Executive Summary	v
Introduction and Project Description	1
Pre-Ebola	1
Redesign of the project due to Ebola outbreak	4
Project Final Evaluation	5
Objectives	5
Method	6
Limitations	8
Findings	10
Project achievements against the original aims and objectives	10
Effectiveness of radio activities as a vehicle for skills promotion in children	27
Assessment of the project’s implementation	34
Strengths and weaknesses related to programme management and implementation ..	34
Effectiveness of project monitoring in informing the shape and delivery of activities over the period of the grant.....	35
Impact and sustainability of the project	36
What significant achievements has the project brought about in the lives of target beneficiaries	36
Durability / sustainability of the project’s achievements	37
Aspects of the project that have been least successful and/or most difficult to achieve in the project timeframe	39
Efficiency of use of resources	40
Assessment of the partnership between CtC and PtP	40
Interagency communication and relationships.....	40
Partners’ perceptions of the programme.....	41
Commitment to develop the partner’s capacity	42
Conclusions	42
Recommendations for future programming	46

Acronyms

CFS	Child-friendly schools
CR	Comic Relief
CSC	Community Sensitisation Committee
CtC	Child to Child
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
GRS	Getting Ready for School
LSE	Life Skills Education
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology
MOHS	Ministry of Health and Sanitation
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs
NPSE	National Primary School Examinations
PtP	Pikin-to-Pikin Movement
RRC-ETI	Resilience Research Centre - Evaluation and Training Institute
TOR	Terms of Reference
YF	Young Facilitator
YL	Young Learner

List of Tables

Table	Page
Table 1: Methods Used to Respond to Each Evaluation Objective	6
Table 2: Sampling of Each Data Collection Tool	7
Table 3: Young Learners Reached	12
Table 4: Young Facilitators Reached	13
Table 5: Young Facilitators' Perceived Academic Progress	14
Table 6: Parents and Caregivers Reached by the Project	18
Table 7: Teachers Who Participated in the Project	22
Table 8: Teachers' Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices relating to Good Teaching and Learning Skills	23
Table 9: Observation of Teaching Practices in Project Supported Schools	25
Table 10: Number of People Reached by the Radio Programme intervention	29

List of Boxes

Box	Page
Box 1: Key Findings for Outcome 1 of the Original Project Design	10
Box 2: Key Findings for Outcome 2 of the Original Project Design	12
Box 3: Key Findings for Outcome 3 of the Original Project Design	17
Box 4: Key Findings for Outcome 4 of the Original Project Design	21
Box 5: Key Findings for Outcome 5 of the Original Project Design	26
Box 6: Key Findings related to the effectiveness of the radio programme	27
Box 7: Key Findings related to the project's implementation	34
Box 8: Key Findings related to the impact and sustainability of the project	36
Box 9: Key Findings related to the partnership between CtC and PtP	40

Executive Summary

Child to Child (CtC) and local partner, The Pikin-To-Pikin Movement (PtP), implemented the *Increasing Access, Retention and Performance in Primary Education* project in three chiefdoms of Kailahun district, eastern Sierra Leone, for five years (from 2011 to 2016). The project was funded by Comic Relief with a budget of £1.2 Million. Kailahun district is one of the worst performing districts in education in Sierra Leone; it achieves a mere 20% pass rate at Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and has one of the highest pupil to teacher ratios in the country at 36:1[1].

The original project design used the Getting Ready for School (GRS) approach, which pairs students in P4 through P6 ('Young Facilitators' or YFs) with young children in the year before they should enter primary school ('Young Learners' or YLs). YFs were trained to deliver a one-year curriculum to prepare YLs to enter primary school by increasing their literacy, numeracy, and social skills. In addition to the pure GRS approach, the project aimed to train teachers in the Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) methodology to better prepare schools to receive YLs when they enrol and to promote retention. Community Sensitisation Committees (CSC) were formed to work with parents and guardians to promote enrolment and retention of children in school, especially for girls. Finally, a life skills curriculum was developed for YFs to address concerns about drop-out rates related to child labour, child abuse, and early sex / teenage pregnancy.

In 2014, the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak hit the country and schools were closed for the 2014/2015 school year. At that point, the project was completely redesigned to adjust to school closures and protect children from the spread of EVD, while still pursuing the project's objectives. CtC and PtP developed a radio education programme which continued to focus on literacy, numeracy, and social skills for children aged 4-6 years, retention and continuation of learning for all primary school aged children, and life skills and EVD prevention messages. In addition to broadcasting radio programmes, the project also organised listening groups and trained teachers from the project schools to facilitate the groups, supporting students to discuss the topics after the show. Some programmes also targeted parents with messages about positive parenting, parent-child interactions, and the importance of education. Call-in sessions after the broadcasts allowed further opportunity for engagement between the project implementers, key education stakeholders in the district, children, and parents.

In July 2016, CtC commissioned the Institute for Development (IfD) to conduct a final evaluation of the *Increasing Access, Retention and Performance in Primary Education* programme. The objectives of the evaluation were to study the effectiveness of the original project; the effectiveness of the redesigned radio program; assess the overall implementation of the project; assess the sustainability of the project; assess the project's efficiency; assess the quality and effectiveness of the partnership between CtC and PtP; and finally, to make recommendations for future programming.

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Data was collected from YLs and YFs, parents and guardians of YFs and YLs, CSC members, teachers from participating schools, Young Listeners and Young Journalists who participated in the radio programme, and key staff from the project partners – PtP, CtC, and Comic Relief. This evaluation was conducted in only one of the three implementation

v

chiefdoms (Kissi Kama), because this chiefdom was used for the project's pilot phase, and the other two chiefdoms had very limited exposure to the original project's interventions before it was halted due to the EVD outbreak. The baseline survey, however, was conducted only in the other two chiefdoms, because implementation in Kissi Kama had already begun at that time. Thus, this evaluation is not directly comparable to the baseline, and while some descriptive reference has been made to the baseline, *no statistical inference was possible between the two.*

The project demonstrated many significant achievements. In relation to the objectives of the original project, coverage of all of the interventions was high, and it is likely the project would have attained its full coverage targets had it not been interrupted by the EVD outbreak. Over three years, 3,344 out of the intended 5,000 pre-school aged children participated as Young Learners, of which 42% were girls, approaching but not quite reaching the project's goal of 50% girls' participation. In addition, 2,621 Young Facilitators were engaged, reaching 75% of the project's total target. Of these, 47.2% were girls, meeting and even slightly surpassing the project's goal of 46% of YFs being girls.

The most significant achievements of the project are around the educational objectives – enrolment and preparedness of YLs, and self-confidence of YFs both in their academic achievement and in their active participation in school and in their communities. The YLs showed increased school readiness: teachers who worked with these children in their first year of primary school (P1) reported that the YLs had better literacy, numeracy, and social skills than children who had not been exposed to the programme. Participating schools in Kissi Kama further reported up to 35% increase in enrolment in P1 over the life of the project. Students who served as YFs show high levels of confidence in their own academic achievement, increased confidence in their participation and leadership roles in classroom activities, and higher comfort interacting with teachers and their parents. They also demonstrate high future aspirations for themselves and a sense of civic duty in their communities.

Parents and guardians show an appreciation for their children's schooling and report interacting with their children's school, talking to their children about their school work, and helping children to get to school on time, all of which indicate parental support for their children's education. Community Sensitisation Committees were active and engaged. Although CSC members were last trained over four years ago, an impressive 88.2% of them reported that they would continue to use the skills they learned from this project in the future. Project staff reported that the advocacy carried out by CSCs in their communities led to positive change in attitudes towards ECE and girls' education, and was instrumental in reducing barriers in communication between children and teenagers and their parents.

Teachers and students reported appreciating and being open to more child-friendly methods and child-centred approaches in the classroom. Two-thirds of teachers agreed that it is a teacher's role to help all students in their class to be successful and three-quarters believe that it is the teacher's responsibility to find a way to meet the learning needs of all children in the class. Similarly, YFs overwhelmingly disagree (68.6%) that learning is all about taking notes and memorising them, and they recognise that they also learn from classroom discussions (90%). Observations by PtP staff during project implementation, and by data

collectors during this evaluation, witnessed the use of child-friendly methods in some classrooms.

The radio project introduced in response to the EVD outbreak was significant in maintaining access to education for children in not only the intervention chiefdoms but throughout all of Kailahun district, while schools were closed. Both the BBC and the UN Girls Education Initiative have highlighted this project as an innovative and 'best' practice in maintaining access to education during the EVD outbreak. The radio programme was very popular and participation was generally high.

Many parents appreciated the radio programme, and some listened to the programme with their children. The radio project was reported to have improved parental support for learning, and on-time enrolment.

There was a clear effort to consider gender in the design and content of the programmes. There was gender balance in the participation of boys and girls in the radio programme. While most of the presenters were male, there were female guests and 'role models' included in the programmes. The content of the radio programmes included an emphasis on early childhood education particularly for girls, male support for learning, good parenting skills, gender-based violence, and teenage pregnancy. Qualitative data gathered during the review shows that the project influenced changes in attitude towards early childhood education, especially an increased prioritisation of girls' education.

Another strength of the project's implementation is that it built on effective partnerships already developed by PtP in Kailahun with external stakeholders, including the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST). As a community-based organisation, PtP stressed the importance of community ownership throughout the project life cycle. The strength of their community engagement has been seen through the effectiveness of the Community Sensitisation Committees, Community members had a high regard for the project, for PtP as the implementer, and supported its achievements.

CtC and PtP had an effective working relationship. CtC listened to PtP and incorporated their inputs into the project's design and implementation. CtC also offered many capacity building opportunities to PtP. Both partners worked together to use the results of project monitoring to review and make adjustments to implementation plans as necessary. CtC was also bold, did not put limits on the conception of what could or could not be accomplished, and was committed to the meaningful capacity building of its partners (PtP and local stakeholders). This combination resulted in a dynamic and successful partnership.

While the results of the project are overwhelmingly positive, the evaluation did find some challenges and areas where future projects could improve. These include:

- The positive results in increasing enrolment in primary school under the original project had one adverse consequence: Schools were not prepared to receive the additional students who enrolled due to the GRS component of the project. In some cases, P1 students had to sit on the floor and share learning materials because there were insufficient resources available. Organisations providing school-feeding services had not planned for these increases in enrolment in their quantification of

food supplies, and some schools were stretched to feed all of the students.

- Despite parents' self-reported support for their children's schooling, absenteeism from school to work in the farm remains common among YFs, and close to a third of YFs surveyed were unsure if they will return to school the following year. Causes for not returning to school included families' inability to pay fees, and families' need for children's labour for farming.
- YF interventions were intended to include life skills training, in response to the needs assessment. However, the roll-out was initially delayed from year 2 to year 3 because PtP was overwhelmed by project activities and the research component, and it was ultimately cancelled due to the EVD outbreak. While the radio project did attempt to include some of the life skills issues, it was not able to address them as fully as had originally been planned. Issues around child protection, child rights, gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy, peaceful conflict resolution, and others remain highly relevant in this context.
- Despite the gains in attitudes and practices related to child-friendly teaching methods, traditional attitudes including a reliance on lecturing, memorization, and teacher-led approaches, persist: almost two-thirds of teachers surveyed (63.6%) agree that classroom learning is most effective when it is lecture-based; around half also agree that teachers should just explain facts to students, and only a third of the teachers surveyed agree that students have better academic achievement in classrooms where teachers encourage students to participate. Further, 70% of YFs surveyed agree that teachers know everything and should tell students what to do at all times. This calls into question whether the short-term changes in attitudes and behaviour will be sustained without further intervention.
- The M&E system developed by the research partner was very rigorous, however, some staff felt that it was not appropriate for the context of the project implementation. One key informant noted that the data collection demands were so heavy, that it impacted PtP's ability to implement the project. In practice, the research design was too demanding and could not be fully implemented.

Based on these findings, the evaluators have made a variety of recommendations for designing future programmes. The full set of recommendations is included at the end of this report. Some essential recommendations are highlighted here:

- Any project that increases 'demand' for education services should simultaneously work with the education system to proportionally increase 'supply' i.e. train more teachers, build classrooms, provide teaching materials, ensure school feeding programmes quantify sufficient food supplies, etc.
- There is a need to balance the research and data needs with the reality of the implementation environment. If future projects want to prioritise research and evidence generation, they must appropriately plan for the additional resources

(human, financial, logistical, etc.) required to make this possible without impeding implementation of the programme.

- The most feasible path to sustainability of the programme's intended outcomes is to incorporate them into the country's educational system: shifting the culture of education to more child-centred approaches, and expanding access to, and demand for, ECD and ECE. Programmes must define their approach to advocacy at a policy and strategy level in the project design phase. This could also include advocacy and participation in policy and strategy initiatives related to child protection and social welfare to reduce child labour and improve the environment for girls.

Introduction and Project Description

Child to Child (CtC) is an international child rights organisation. In 2011, it partnered with Pikin-To-Pikin Movement (PtP), a child-focused Sierra Leonean NGO whose name means 'Child to Child' in the local Krio language, to deliver a 4.5-year project funded by Comic Relief, a UK donor. The project was titled "*Increasing Access, Retention and Performance in Primary Education*," and the budget was £1.2 Million. It was implemented in the Eastern district of Kailahun in Sierra Leone, which borders Liberia and Guinea. Kailahun district is one of the worst performing districts in education in Sierra Leone; it achieves a mere 20% pass rate at Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and has one of the highest pupil to teacher ratios in the country at 36:1[1]. The project then ran as intended until March 2014, when it was interrupted by the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak.

Pre-Ebola

The objectives of the original project were to prepare pre-school aged children for on-time school enrolment, improve retention rates and enhance academic performance, using a community-based Early Childhood Education (ECE) model known as Getting Ready for School (GRS), which was developed and piloted in partnership with UNICEF in six countries from 2007-2010. GRS uses a CtC participatory approach which pairs one or more older children already enrolled in primary school (Young Facilitators) with several pre-schoolers in the year before they enter the school system (Young Learners). Using an early learning curriculum, Young Facilitators (YF) systematically deliver a series of activities to build and develop the numeracy, literacy, and social skills of the Young Learners (YL).

GRS aims to support children in making a successful transition from home to school. It comprises three key elements:

1. The child's readiness for school through the acquisition of core academic and socio-emotional competencies.
2. The school's readiness to receive the child, through creating a child-friendly environment and fostering teaching practices that support a smooth transition of children into primary school in an atmosphere that advances and promotes learning for all.
3. Families' readiness for school and the degree to which parents and caregivers understand and have positive attitudes towards their children's education; are willing to be actively involved in their children's early learning and development; and support their child's transition to school.

Ultimately, the main outcome of the GRS approach was young children entering primary school with school readiness skills. Based on a wide range of consultations and needs assessments conducted in Sierra Leone while designing this project, CtC used the GRS approach as the base of the project but also expanded it to address other relevant local issues. The focus on supporting schools was emphasised through teacher training on child-friendly teaching methods. Engagement of families and communities was also strengthened through the establishment of Community Sensitization Committees (CSCs), which were not part of the original GRS approach. Most significantly, in the original GRS model, the older students were engaged solely to support the younger students. However, during the consultations and assessments of the design phase, CtC recognised that older children – those who would be

engaged as Young Facilitators – faced considerable barriers and challenges themselves. High dropout rates and low school achievement were driven by a variety of child rights and protection concerns, including families’ reliance on child labour, gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, early marriage, and high rates of teenage pregnancy. Thus, in addition to the expanded GRS approach, the project added a life skills component targeting the YFs to promote their retention and performance in school, increase their awareness of their own rights, and empower them to make safer decisions for their own lives.

The project outcomes originally set out in CtC’s proposal to Comic Relief were as follows:

1. 5,000 YL will have enhanced their social, numeracy, and literacy skills in preparation to enter primary school. During the first two years of the project, 90% of these YL will enrol on time, 50% of them girls. By the end of the project period, 100% of YL will enrol on time, 50% of them girls. Drop-out rates will reduce (targets to be set after baseline).
2. 3500 YF will develop active learning skills leading to improved academic performance in P6. They will have enhanced self-esteem and confidence. Through participation in life-skills education, they will have improved knowledge about teenage pregnancy, sex education and child protection and will have developed life-skills to assess risk and manage peer pressure. They will have practical strategies to keep themselves and their peer safer. Boys comprise 54% of this group. Targets for girls will be set after baseline.
3. 3000 Parents and caregivers from participating communities will understand the importance of ECD. They will actively encourage and effectively support their children – including their girls – through their primary education. They will understand and actively promote their children’s rights. They will understand the range of harms facing their children, particularly the girls. They will understand their role in child protection and will have better strategies to safeguard their children. They will support their children’s participation in activities intended to develop their life skills and reduce their vulnerabilities. They will advocate for better ECD and life-skills education for their children.
4. 150 teachers understand the community-based ECD model and can effectively engage, teach and support YFs to carry out the learning activities with the YLs. Teachers use child-friendly methods to teach and are better able to engage with and motivate the children. They are knowledgeable about and feel confident engaging with the children about sensitive topics including child protection, teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. They feel confident facilitating children’s participation in CtC life-skills educational activities. They are more motivated and have greater job satisfaction.
5. 20 master trainers (PtP field and management staff) are expert trainers on child rights, participation and protection; implementation of CtC community-based ECD; child-friendly, participatory teaching practice; CtC approaches to life skills education. They lead advocacy efforts to promote the ECD and life skills education model across SL, in partnership with stakeholders including UNICEF and Plan International. They manage a pool of trainers capable of delivering TOT workshops to schools and other organisations seeking to implement community-based ECD and life-skills education. They actively advocate to policy-makers to introduce these approaches within all primary schools.

The project design included a significant research component, and the Resilience Research Centre – Evaluation and Training Institute (RRC-ETI) was brought on in 2011 as the project’s research partner. RRC-ETI worked closely with CtC and PtP to conduct a baseline survey and developed terms of reference, the theory of change, logic model, and monitoring systems for the project. According to documentation from the RRC-ETI, the original project’s programme design comprised five key components (TOR July 2013 p. 12):

1. School readiness and success
2. Child-friendly schools
3. Life skills education
4. Child rights
5. Community sensitisation

The RRC-ETI also laid out a set of Project Goals (TOR July 2013 p. 12):

1. Introduce a community-based model of ECD in the three chiefdoms and prepare pre-schoolers to enter primary school. Increase on-time enrolment, retention, and enhance academic performance
2. Improve classroom teaching and learning practice
3. Deliver life-skills education to older children on topics including child protection, sex education, and teenage pregnancy, to reduce vulnerabilities and risky behaviour and improve life choices

Finally, the RRC-ETI provided a comprehensive Theory of Change for the project, with anticipated outcomes related to the goals stated above, and a set of activities that were expected to lead to those outcomes. Although it was not finalised until 2013, this theory of change is largely in line with the original project design described in the CtC proposal to CR in 2011 (TOR 2013 p. 16):

Anticipated Outcomes:

1. Schools will be better prepared to receive children
2. Teachers will have enhanced teaching practice and engage more effectively with parents/caregivers and the wider community
3. Members of the community, particularly members of the CSCs and parents, will understand the importance of ECD and advocate for better education for their children
4. Parents will improve the quality of their parenting and increase their support for academic and life-skills education for their children
5. Children’s literacy skills / academic performance, school enrolment and retention will increase
6. Children’s health and well-being will increase
7. Issues such as teenage pregnancy, early marriage, and child abuse will decrease

Activities that will facilitate the achievement of the outcomes:

1. Training Master Trainers on CtC and ECD teaching practices
2. Master Trainers training teachers on the CtC approach to ECD practices and life skills education
3. Teachers training Young Facilitators to carry out the ECD activities

4. Engaging participant children and young facilitators in a range of CtC activities intended to promote active learning, develop their life skills and reduce their vulnerabilities
5. Creating Community Sensitization Committees (CSCs) and training members on advocacy skills
6. Implementing community sensitization activities to engender more positive attitudes towards education and support for children's activities in the project

The project's Logic Model shows that the project intended to influence key changes in four areas at three socio-ecological levels through the goals, outcomes, and activities stated above (TOR July 2013 p. 17):

1. Structural / Policy and Education System Change (macro-level)
2. Community/Family Development (mezzo-level)
3. Children and Youth Literacy Skills (micro)
4. Children and Youth Life Skills (micro)

Finally, this led to a defined set of performance indicators, with targets defined based on the data collected as part of the baseline survey. The performance indicators formed the core of the project's monitoring system. The full monitoring framework is available in the RRC-ETI TOR July 2013, p. 44-51.

Redesign of the project due to Ebola outbreak

However, the disruption caused by the EVD outbreak led to a reconfiguration of the project. The project was redesigned and revised to switch the focus from a community-based ECE model that requires one-on-one contact with beneficiaries, to an innovative child-centred educational radio programme that responded to the needs of the prevailing health emergency: *Pikin-To-Pikin Tok* (i.e. "child to child talk"). The reconfiguration of the programme to an educational radio project was necessary to minimise the risk of EVD transmission amongst community members and staff; to uphold the Government ban on public congregation and implement the "no touch policy"; and to reach a large number of beneficiaries.

The radio project was designed to combine a series of educational, entertaining and inspiring radio programmes *for children*, co-created and co-produced *in partnership with children* to share messages from children to children, from children to families, and to friends and communities. The *Pikin-To-Pikin Tok* radio programmes had three strands; "Story Time," "Under the Mango Tree" and "Messages through Music". The "Story Time" programmes used traditional stories that often had moral lessons to address issues facing children. The programme was also used to teach numeracy and literacy skills to preschool-aged children. "Messages through Music" used simple songs to promote healthy behaviours such as hand-washing. The "Under the Mango Tree" programmes addressed emerging issues related to Ebola such as stigma, social exclusion, disability, and sexual violence[2]. Some of the radio programmes also targeted parents with messages about positive parenting, parent-child interactions and relationships, and the importance of ECE for young children and continuing education for older children.

To ensure that children could listen to the programmes, 252 radios were distributed to specific communities, 21 large MP3 radios were distributed to teachers in the 21 original project schools, and children were formed into Listening Groups. Teachers were trained to facilitate the listening groups and guide discussions with participants about the programme's themes following each listening session. Each radio programme was followed by a call-in session where children could call in to comment on the issues, and in some cases, parents also used this mechanism to discuss parenting issues. Children were trained to serve as Young Journalists and presenters, thus the revised project reinforced the child-led approach of the original project design, in line with CtC's principles.

In addition to adapting the ECE project to an educational radio project, Pikin-To-Pikin Tok incorporated Ebola response interventions. These included dissemination of hygiene promotion materials such as buckets, faucets, soap, and chlorine to target communities at the peak of the Ebola virus disease transmission. Project staff were also trained on Ebola response and provided with personal protective equipment (PPEs)¹.

The partnership with RRC was suspended as part of the reconfiguration of the project because some of the funding allocated for the evaluation was redirected to the Ebola response and radio programming. This significant change was approved by Comic relief. It also would not have been feasible to do subsequent significant data collection as was required for the research because of the disruption in communities caused by the EVD outbreak. When the project was redesigned in response to the EVD outbreak and restructured around the radio programme, a new theory of change was developed. While the activities and immediate outcomes changed, the overall goals and expected final outcomes are similar to and aligned with those from the original project.

Project Final Evaluation

The *Increasing Access, Retention and Performance in Primary Education* project concluded in July 2016. CtC contracted the Institute for Development (IfD), a Sierra Leonean specialist qualitative and mixed methods research firm, to conduct the final evaluation of the project.

Objectives

In accordance with the final evaluation terms of reference provided by CtC, the objectives of this evaluation are to:

1. Assess the project achievements against the original aims and objectives (see original project outcomes in the previous section)
2. Assess how effective radio activities are as a vehicle for skills promotion in children
3. Assess the overall implementation of the project including:
 - a. Strengths and weaknesses related to programme management and implementation
 - b. Effectiveness of project monitoring in informing the shape and delivery of activities over the period of the grant
4. Assess the impact and sustainability of the project to determine:

¹ Terms of Reference for an End of Project External Evaluation of Increasing Access, Retention and Performance of Primary School

- a. Significant achievements the project has brought to the lives of target beneficiaries
- b. The durability/sustainability of the achievements over time, assuming no further inputs
- c. Aspects of the project that have been least successful and/or most difficult to achieve in the project time-frame
5. Assess efficiency of use of resources
6. Assess the partnership between CtC and PtP, with reference to:
 - a. Interagency communication and relationships
 - b. Partners' perceptions of the programme
 - c. Commitment to developing the partner's capacity
7. Recommendations for future programming, based on learning from this project (i.e. methodologies recommended for replication and expansion, recommended adjustments to existing methodologies, etc.)

Method

This evaluation was a mixed methods study using both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods

Table 1: Methods Used to Respond to Each Evaluation Objective

Research Question	Tool(s) and/or Data Source(s) Used
Project achievements against original aims and objectives	Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with partner staff (CtC, PtP, CR) Teacher Observation Tool Surveys of YFs, CSC members, parents and caregivers, and teachers Project annual reports from CtC to donor, years 1, 2, and 3 (2012, 2013, 2014) Follow-up FGDs with YFs
Effectiveness of Radio Activities	YF / YL Participatory Evaluation Tool Follow-up FGDs with Young Listeners and Young Journalists KIIs with project staff Surveys of YFs, parents and caregivers, and teachers Project annual report from CtC to donor, year 4 (2015) Review of audio recordings of radio programme by IfD Life Skills consultant
Assessment of project implementation	KIIs with CtC, PtP, and CR staff Project annual reports to donors
Impact and sustainability of the project	KIIs with CtC, PtP, and CR staff Analysis of data from other tools
Efficiency of use of resources	Financial reports
Assessment of partnership between CtC and PtP	KIIs with CtC and PtP staff Project annual reports to donors

The project beneficiaries were all from Kissi Kama, and those sampled had similar socio-demographic characteristics and other attributes, with gender parity where possible. Table 1 below provides a list of the sub-samples.

Table 2: Sampling of Each Data Collection Tool

Research / Data Collection Tool	Target Group	Number Reached through Project	Number Sampled for this Evaluation
YFs/YLs	Young Facilitators	2,621	45
Participatory Evaluation Tool	Young Learners	3,344	120
YFs Survey	Young Facilitators	2,621	102
Parents Survey	Parents and caregivers of YF and YL	2,815	202
CSC Survey	CSC members	144	34
Teachers Survey	Teachers teaching in target schools and either teaching former YLs in P1, or training and overseeing YFs (teachers of P4-P6)	150	55
Teachers Observation	Teachers teaching in project target schools	150	35

This evaluation utilised a child-led participatory tool to ensure that children’s voices were heard. 45 Young Facilitators and 54 Young Learners were involved. Young Facilitators were trained to conduct focus groups with Young Learners. The focus groups were observed by members of the evaluation team to judge whether Young Learners displayed the skills the programme aimed for them to acquire. Six focus group discussions were held with Young Learners and were facilitated by Young Facilitators. Data collectors focussed on recording behaviours of YFs and YLs rather than the content of the FGDs. Follow up FGDs with YFs, YJs, and YLs captured the perspectives and voices of the children.

A consultant with expertise in life skills education was recruited to assess the radio project. Observations of teaching practices in classroom observations were done. Key informant interviews with parents, project staff and other stakeholders were conducted by data collectors recruited and trained by IfD. Quantitative data was collected by a team of six data collectors, two from the IfD existing pool and four from the project area who were recruited with support from Pikin-To-Pikin Movement. The data collectors were fluent in Kissi, the local language spoken in the chiefdoms targeted by the project. One data entry clerk was employed to enter the data in the field. Key informant interviews and focus group data were transcribed by transcribers in the Institute for Development (IfD) pool.

The data collectors were trained for three days. The training involved role-play and discussions on possible translation of the questions in Krio and Kissi. The last day of training

was used for pretesting and refining the questionnaire. Data collectors practised sample selection and interviewing real respondents. This helped to build data collectors' confidence and led to a modification of some aspects of the questionnaires.

Inputting of the data was done in the field. Edited questionnaires were keyed into SPSS and analysed using the same programme.

Confidentiality of information was strictly maintained to protect the privacy of the participants using code identifiers rather than names. Only authorised individuals had access to the data.

The data collection tools were initially developed and delivered in parallel. As drafts of this report were produced and reviewed, it became clear that it would have been useful to administer the tools sequentially so that the quantitative surveys were followed by the qualitative methods to fill the gaps that the closed-ended surveys could not provide. Following two rounds of reviews of the initial draft report by CtC, the need to capture more in-depth data representing the views of the children became evident. To this end, in February 2017, the Lead Evaluator and the field supervisor designed a follow-up round of data collection, specifically targeted to dig deeper into the 'why' questions raised by the quantitative surveys and to investigate further the remaining inconsistencies revealed by different data sources. This follow-up data collection consisted of:

1. 3 FGDs with Young Listeners and Young Journalists who participated in the radio program, and had also been either YFs or YLs in the original project
2. Semi-structured interviews with one head teacher and two classroom teachers, one of whom was also a listening group facilitator
3. Interview with two PtP staff and site visits to PtP's offices in both Kailahun and Freetown

Limitations

The evaluation is intended to assess the accomplishments of both the original project design and the revised radio project in response to the EVD outbreak. The original project design was halted in March 2014. As such, at the time of the evaluation, two and a half years had elapsed since the original project was halted. In the revised project, the outcomes and targets changed. The CSCs from the original project were no longer supported, and no additional training was provided to teachers on child-friendly teaching methodologies.

The revised project focused mainly on the Young Facilitator and Young Learner target groups, with a goal of increasing school readiness and developing life skills specifically related to the effects of the EVD outbreak. The validity of the assessments of the original project may thus be limited by the poor recall of respondents of project activities that ended over two years ago. This limitation relates most specifically to the project outcomes and activities focused on CSC activities and teacher training in child-friendly methods.

This study was only carried out in one of the three chiefdoms where implementation was carried out, Kissi Kama. This decision was made because the project was only rolled out in the other two chiefdoms in year 3 of the project, and implementation was halted very shortly thereafter, meaning that the other two chiefdoms had very limited exposure to the original

project's interventions. Since Kissi Kama, as the pilot chiefdom had extra two-plus years of exposure to the project interventions, the evaluators decided to focus on this chiefdom. However, because Kissi Kama had started earlier, the baseline survey collected data only from Kissi Tongi and Kissi Teng. The demographics of the three chiefdoms are very similar, with largely equivalent linguistic, ethnic, religious, social, and economic make-up of the population. While it can be reasonably assumed that Kissi Kama is very similar to the other two chiefdoms, direct inference about Kissi Tongi and Kissi Teng based solely on the data from this evaluation is not possible. Also, because the baseline data was collected from the other two chiefdoms, the data from this evaluation is not directly comparable to the baseline data. The evaluators do make some comparisons between the data from this evaluation and that from the baseline because, as described previously, there are many similarities between the three chiefdoms, and it can be assumed that Kissi Kama largely resembled Kissi Tongi and Kissi Teng before project implementation began. *However, this does not represent statistically significant comparison or analysis and is used descriptively only.*

Output level data was gathered from CtC's annual reports to CR for 2012 – 2015. It is understood that these reports were in turn based on reports submitted from PtP to CtC. Therefore, the project's annual donor reports are used in this evaluation and are assumed to be true and accurate, but in some instances have not been independently verified. The evaluation team further attempted to verify some data directly with schools – such as data on increased enrolment in P1 among children who took part as YLs, academic performance of YFs, and teacher training and performance – however, this information was not readily available. As part of the follow-up round of data collection described previously, the IfD lead evaluator and field supervisor spoke with three teachers and reviewed enrolment data in two sample schools as a way to assess the plausibility of the data provided by PtP and CtC reports, and the team was generally satisfied that the data available is likely to represent an accurate picture. However, no detailed trend analyses or attributions were possible in relation to changes in absolute enrolment or shifts in gender ratios of enrolled students as a result of the project.

As described in the previous section the EVD outbreak significantly affected both the ability to implement the original project and the design of the follow-up evaluation study; it was not possible to conduct more complex statistical analyses given the mid-course adjustments to the project design and implementation.

Finally, the evaluation team used direct classroom observations to verify teaching practices/methods as provided in the ECD model. This method is obtrusive and could lead to teachers modifying their teaching methods due to the presence of observers. However, this method is able to demonstrate whether the teachers learned the methods, even if it is not able to conclusively speak to their continued use. Triangulation from surveys and FGDs with students is used to verify teachers' more routine practices.

Findings

Project achievements against the original aims and objectives

Pikin-To-Pikin Movement delivered the early childhood education project in 21 schools in the three chiefdoms of Kailahun district: Kissi Kama, Kissi Teng, and Kissi Tongi. The project was implemented in two phases. First, a pilot comprising of the set of activities defined in the project log frame was implemented in Kissi Kama chiefdom to test the implementation arrangements. Following the pilot, training materials, training methods, advocacy strategy and other project processes were reviewed and adopted before the project was rolled out in full. However, implementation was halted due to the EVD outbreak just months after expansion beyond the pilot chiefdom into the two new chiefdoms. Some activities were started and then put on hold, while others were not conducted.

The original project design included five anticipated outcomes. The following section assesses the project's achievements against each of them.

Outcome 1: 5,000 YL will have enhanced their social, numeracy, and literacy skills in preparation to enter primary school. During the first two years of the project, 90% of these YL will enrol on time, 50% of them girls. By the end of the project period, 100% of YL will enrol on time, 50% of them girls. Drop-out rates will reduce (targets to be set after baseline).

Box 1: Key Findings for Outcome 1 of the Original Project Design

- The project achieved its goal of 50% of enrolled YFs being girls.
- Most YLs acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills through the programme; those who showed lower achievement had lower attendance records.
- Teachers observed children who participated as YLs to have better social, numeracy, and literacy skills than children who did not participate in the programme.
- Participating schools in the pilot chiefdom saw significantly increased enrolment.
- However, the project did not address supply issues, and schools' resources were stretched to accommodate the additional children. Some classrooms did not have desks, leaving children to sit on the floor, and school feeding programs had not quantified sufficient food supplies.

In the first year of the project, 360 YLs were enrolled in Kissi Kama chiefdom. According to the year 2 report, all 360 of the YLs supported in year 1 enrolled in P1 on-time and were actively participating in their classroom activities. Of these, 53% were boys and 47% were girls. This approaches the project's goal of 50% of children enrolled being girls. By the end of year 2 of the project (2013 annual report), an additional 935 YLs in Kissi Kama were reported to have acquired basic numeracy, literacy, and social skills, and were being enrolled in primary one. Of these, 63% (n=588) were boys and 37% (n=348) were girls, falling short of the target of 50% of beneficiaries being girls. Only 25 out of the expected 35 sessions took place with YFs between July and September 2013, when the school opened. In year 3 of the project, an additional 2,000 YLs across all three chiefdoms were reached with project interventions, and the proportion of female participants increased to 43%. However, due to the EVD outbreak, only 15 out of the intended 35 GRS sessions were completed before the project was halted. Additionally, while all of the 2,000 YLs were reached during the 15

sessions, only 86% of them (n=1,717) were observed to have acquired some basic numeracy and literacy skills. The remaining 14% of the YLs (283) had poor attendance and did not fully benefit from the intervention. Over the first three years of the project, before the initial intervention was halted, a total of 3,344 YLs participated in the programme to develop their numeracy, literacy, and social skills, reaching 67% of the original project's target. Of these, 42% were girls, approaching, but not quite reaching, the project's goal of 50%.

Teachers noted a difference in the performance of children who participated in the GRS programme and those who did not. Teachers found that YLs have better social, numeracy, and literacy skills, which makes the teacher's job easier. According to the CtC 2014 annual report to Comic Relief, in the 2013/2014 school year, all participating schools in the pilot chiefdom saw significantly increased enrolment of approximately 35% over previous years. However, many of these schools face limited resources and this brought them to at- or over-capacity levels of enrolment. Schools were not able to accommodate the children; some were sitting on the floor, and school feeding programmes designed before this intervention were stretched beyond their planned capacity to serve all of the enrolled children. **While the project was successful in increasing its 'demand' for primary school services, it did not seem to consider the 'supply' of these services, and whether the schools it was channelling students into had the capacity to absorb them.**

PtP staff members reported that they met regularly with the MEST district-level Deputy Director's office to raise these issues. They cited an example of PtP providing some cupboards for schools to store materials and how through sharing of this information with MEST and continued advocacy, MEST subsequently supplied additional cupboards and other teaching materials to schools, even beyond those involved in the project. PtP also advocated to the communities to support the schools for example with the building of temporary classroom structures. However, there were still gaps and no evidence of resolution to the problems of insufficient seats and capacity of school feeding programs. **Since school infrastructure improvements and school feeding programmes are often led by UN agencies or other NGOs rather than directly by MEST, in the future it would be important for both CtC and PtP to collaborate with these other organizations, understand what resources they have available, make sure others understand the possible and expected impacts of their project, and work together to make sure the programmes are complementary** (i.e. one does not create additional or undue pressure on another).

Follow-up visits to two project schools in February 2017 confirmed that enrolment increased steadily over the course of the project's implementation timeline. One school reported that their enrolment was made up of 40% girls and 60% boys, while the other showed 51% girls and 49% boys. While project participants and staff reiterated these improvements, it was not possible within the scope of this evaluation to determine how many of those children enrolled on time and whether this represents an increase in on-time enrolment compared to children who did not participate; nor was it possible to assess YLs' academic performance directly and compare them to children who had not participated. The evaluation team requested this data from the schools directly but it was not forthcoming within the timeframe available.

The Evaluation Team was also not able to assess dropout rates. This was discussed with the project team but there was no definite recall of whether the target for dropout rate was set after the baseline and no routine data on children dropping out was seen. This data was not readily available in schools.

Table 3: Young Learners Reached

Project Year	Total YL	Male	Female
1	360	n = 190 52.8%	n = 170 47.2%
2	936	n = 588 63%	n = 348 37%
3	2,000	n = 1,142 57%	n = 858 43%
Total benefitted as of 2015 annual report	3,344 = 67% of project target	n = 1,941 58%	n = 1,403 42%

Outcome 2: 3500 YFs will develop active learning skills leading to improved academic performance in P6. They will have enhanced self-esteem and confidence. Through participation in life-skills education, they will have improved knowledge about teenage pregnancy, sex education and child protection and will have developed life-skills to assess risk and manage peer pressure. They will have practical strategies to keep themselves and their peers safer. Boys comprise 54% of this group. Targets for girls will be set after baseline.

Box 2: Key Findings for Outcome 2 of the Original Project Design

- 75% of the intended number of YFs were engaged before the project was halted due to the EVD outbreak, and enrolment reached the goal for girls' participation.
- YFs report increased self-confidence in their performance – most notably in language and science, but less in mathematics.
- Older children enjoyed helping younger children and their peers to learn and felt that participating in the programme helped them to improve their own academic performance.
- While students show positive attitudes towards learning and want to continue schooling, many are not certain that they will be able to do so. A high risk of drop-out due to school fees not being paid, the need for child labour at home and on farms, and early marriage remains.
- Students who served as YFs are more willing to participate in class and have more confidence communicating openly with teachers and their parents.
- YFs have high aspirations for finishing school and having a well-paid job later in life. They also show an increased sense of civic duty and desire to contribute to their community.
- YFs report having low conflict resolution skills; this could be included in future life skills education programmes.

Over the first three years of the project, before activities were halted due to the EVD outbreak, 2,621 YFs were engaged, reaching 75% of the project's total target. Of these, 47.2% were girls, meeting and even slightly surpassing the project's goal of 46% of YFs being girls.

The year 2 (2013) annual report found that YFs were already beginning to see the benefits of

participation in the programme. One YF reported that her reading skills had noticeably improved:

“It has improved my reading skills in such a way that, even when my parents get letters, I can read them for my parents rather than calling on someone else to read the letter...” (female, 14 years old).

Another stated:

“It has improved my writing skills and built confidence in me” (male, 13 years old).

By year 3, YFs were reported to have acquired enhanced self-esteem and had improved their own literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers observed the improved performance of YFs in class and saw increased confidence in their own academic performance. Further, PtP monitoring visits found increased interaction between YFs and their teachers.

However, because of the EVD outbreak, the Life Skills sessions that were planned for the YFs were not able to take place. YFs trained in year 3 also included eight children with disabilities, including speech and hearing impairments and mobility difficulties. Significantly, enthusiasm for the project was so great in year 3 that more children volunteered to be YFs than there were spaces in the project, and PtP implemented a ballot system to ensure a fair selection process. This shows that **older children saw the benefits of participating in the programme and were excited to both help younger children learn, and improve their own educational performance and life skills.**

Table 4: Young Facilitators Reached

Project Year	Total YF	Male	Female
1	180	n = 100 55.6%	n = 80 44.4%
2	216	n = 116 53.7%	n = 100 46.3%
3	1,659	n = 896 54%	n = 763 46%
Total benefitted to date as of 2015 annual report	2,621 = 75% of project target	n = 1,385 52.8%	n = 1,236 47.2%

The life skills education activities were not implemented as originally planned, as the intended start of their roll-out coincided with the timing of the EVD outbreak, and they were put on hold. Therefore, no results are expected in relation to this component of Outcome 2, and it was not a focus of this evaluation.

The baseline assessment for this project collected data from 340 students in P5 and P6 (240 YFs in Kissi Tongi and Kissi Teng, and 100 students in the same classes in a control group),

using a comprehensive survey tool. This tool was not administered in Kissi Kama because project implementation had already started there. The final evaluation administered the same tool to 102 Young Facilitators in Kissi Kama because, due to the interruption of EVD, students in Kissi Kama had the most ‘exposure’ to the project’s interventions. The results are discussed below. Although the baseline was not carried out specifically in Kissi Kama, the demography and characteristics of the chiefdoms are very similar – so even if comparisons are not strictly applicable, presentation of the two sets of data does present a sense of the status of indicators in Kissi Kama compared to what they were in nearby chiefdoms at the start of the project.

To gauge students’ confidence in their own academic performance, Young Facilitators were asked about how they feel about their progress in language, mathematics and science. The majority (80%) felt good about their progress in language. Only half reported feeling good about their progress in math, but 70% felt good about their progress in science. **Compared to the baseline, self-confidence has increased most in language, moderately in science, but decreased in mathematics. This may be linked to the break in schooling during the EVD outbreak when children were out of school for almost a year. Compounding this, when school did resume in the 2015-2016 academic year, two academic years were collapsed into one, putting immense pressure on students.** Project staff report that children have complained about the stress this has caused, and this is a likely reason for children feeling less positive, or self-confident, about their progress in some academic subjects.

Table 5: Young Facilitators Perceived Academic Progress

Statement of academic progress	Baseline data (%)	Current Study % (Good + Fair)
Feel good about progress in language	67	80.4%
Feel good about progress in maths	69	51%
Feel good about progress in science	64	70.6%

Attitudes towards learning were generally positive during the final evaluation, however, this does not necessarily translate into an intention to continue schooling. The majority of YF respondents (70%) reported being happy with their current or previous school, although 30% indicated that they are not happy with their school. Slightly fewer (60% - 31% yes and 29% sometimes) feel a sense of belonging at their school, while 40% responded that they do not feel they belong at their school. Almost all YFs (96%) reported that they enjoy learning always or sometimes. Furthermore, 95% reported they always or sometimes try their best in school. However, **only two-thirds (68.6%) intend to continue their education next year, while over 30% do not intend to do so, indicating a persisting high risk for drop-out among YFs.**

To better understand these issues, the IfD lead evaluator conducted follow-up focus group discussions with 21 children who had participated in the project. They overwhelmingly reported being happy with their schools. They report that they learn a lot – particularly mentioning reading and writing and that they like their teachers. One male student stated that “...*the school really helps me; what I did not know before I know it now.*” A female student also said “*[t]o become smart... that’s why I like this school.*” They report feeling safe

in their classrooms (“they don’t beat children”), and that they appreciate teaching methods such as learning songs and prayers.

Most of the FGD participants stated that they expect to continue going to school next year; however, some expressed concerns that it might not be possible due to a family’s inability to pay school fees. The students are aware that some teachers are not on the payroll and request fees from parents, and some parents do not want to pay those fees. One student understood the problem this way: *“Teachers are not paid and parents don’t take the paying of fees seriously. The parents need to help the teachers because it is the fees that they use to meet their own needs.”* The students were also aware of some children dropping out of school due to illness, pregnancy, and child marriage:

“Sometimes a man comes forward for her; he says Pa I want a wife. Where he has a lot of girl children he says just look and pick one. When the man takes her, he removes her from school and they go to the marital home. He gives the father a little something.”

This was explained by a male student, showing that boys are aware of the particular threats to their female classmates. FGD participants also noted that child labour – particularly a family’s need for children to work on the farm – accounted for some instances of absence, although it was not associated with dropping out of school altogether. This was corroborated by the teachers who were interviewed. One teacher explained a situation in which the head teacher of the school had to meet with the chiefs during the farming season, asking him to speak with families to convince them to release their children from the farms so the children could come to school.

Almost all (95%) of Young Facilitators surveyed reported that they like teaching friends or helping younger children to learn compared to 80% in the baseline. 90% believed that helping other students or younger children learn also helps them to learn as well. This represents an increase from 75% during baseline and shows that their **participation as YFs has influenced the way they see their own education and learning process**. One female student who participated in the follow-up FGD sessions reiterated how it can be helpful to study with peers:

“I tell my friend you are bright; I am bright; I want us to work together.”

A male student corroborated the value of students helping each other: *“When we are given topics in class, I get up and sit next to my friends – what I don’t know he helps me and what he does not know I help him.”* Another FGD participant gave an example of students helping each other to learn to spell, one covering the words and testing the other.

Two-thirds of YFs reported fondness for leading classroom activities (69%) and most like expressing their opinions in class (90%). This is considered an indication or demonstration of self-confidence. Teachers who participated in the project have further reported that **students who served as YFs have become more confident and willing to participate in class**, and seem more comfortable interacting with their teachers. Key informants also reported that children were previously too shy to speak with teachers or parents to discuss

issues with them, but now no longer fear to do so, and have the confidence to use their voice.

'...first children were not bold, they were not confiden[t] in even walking or talking with their parents but this project has help(sic) broken some barriers, now these barriers ha[ve] been broken they can really sit by their parents; they can really hear out, vent out burning issue to the community' – Key informant, PtP Staff, Sierra Leone

'For the schools in general, children before this time were shy even to talk to their masters, to talk to their parents, bring up issues or challenges in their communities, but since the intervention of this project, children no longer have fears neither timid in that respect. Whatever the issues they have they make sure {they} voice it out to their teachers, to their parents or guardians....' – Key informant, PtP Staff, Sierra Leone

Similar to the baseline, a high percentage (92% in this study and 90% in baseline study) reported it was important to complete secondary school. 92% in both this evaluation and the baseline study) said it was very important or a bit important to go to university. The respondents also clearly indicated that what they learnt in school would be useful for later life (78% Yes and 18% sometimes). **Future life aspirations are high**, 88% reported that it was very important to get a well-paid job on leaving school and 82% thought that it was important to stay in good health. 92% thought it was important to help out in the community. Almost all YFs (94%, of which 72% very important and 22% a bit important) believed community or volunteer work is important. While this exact indicator was not presented in the baseline report, it did show that about 78% of those interviewed at baseline (both YFs from Kissi Teng and Kissi Tongi, and those in the control group) had a future aspiration to contribute to their community. This indicates that **there is an increased sense of civic duty among YFs who have gone through the programme** than among those at the beginning of the programme and those in the control group. Thus, future aspirations and a sense of civic duty were high in nearby chiefdoms at the baseline and were found to be high in Kissi Kama in this study, and participation in the programme has likely increased both future aspirations and civic duty among YFs who were active in the programme.

On conflict resolution, 62% of the students surveyed responded that when things don't go their way, they cannot fix it without hurting themselves or other people (for example hitting others or saying nasty things), implying that over half of the respondents lack positive conflict resolution skills. It was previously noted that the LSE component of the programme was not implemented; but even if it had been, conflict resolution had not been a topic that was specifically included in the curriculum. Based on this finding, **future projects should consider adding positive conflict resolution skills in their LSE curriculum.**

Outcome 3: 3000 Parents and caregivers from participating communities will understand the importance of ECD. They will actively encourage and effectively support their children – including their girls – through their primary education. They will understand and actively promote their children's rights. They will understand the range of harms facing their children, particularly the girls. They will understand their role in

child protection and will have better strategies to safeguard their children. They will support their children's participation in activities intended to develop their life skills and reduce their vulnerabilities. They will advocate for better ECD and life-skills education for their children.

Box 3: Key Findings for Outcome 3 of the Original Project Design

- CSC members reached 94% of their intended number of parents before the project was halted due to EVD, although in 2 of the 3 chiefdoms the parents were only exposed to the programme for less than a year.
- Two-thirds of CSC members understood the goals of the project and just over half reported that their role was made clear to them at the start of the project. CSC members were last formally engaged in the programme in March 2014 – two and a half years prior to data collection for this evaluation. Understanding of the programme was likely higher at the time of implementation, and these figures represent high rates of retention of the project's goals and CSCs' roles this far on.
- Most parents understood the programme and its objectives.
- Parents report being supportive of and involved in their children's schooling. However, students reported high absentee rates and have concerns about having to drop out due to parents' demands on their time for labour at home and on farms, not being able to afford fees and early marriage for girls.
- Parents commonly talk with their children about developing good relationships and their health, but rarely about practising safe sex.
- The project identified and attempted to address significant child protection and abuse concerns, but this component was not implemented due to delays in start-up and subsequently the EVD outbreak. Child protection and abuse issues remain of significant concern and should continue to be addressed in future programming.
- The project increased parents' and communities' understanding of the importance of early childhood education. It also led to the higher prioritisation of girls' education.

In the first two years of the project, 36 members were recruited into three Community Sensitisation Committees (CSCs) in the pilot chiefdom of Kissi Kama. According to the Year 2 donor report, they visited and sensitised 1,200 parents and guardians in their communities (700 female and 500 male). By the end of year 3, an additional 108 CSC members in Kissi Tongi and Kissi Teng had been added to the original 36 from Kissi Kama, resulting in a total of 144 active CSC members across the three chiefdoms. All 144 were trained in advocacy, facilitation, and culturally sensitive awareness-raising. Among them, they reached 1,472 parents and guardians of YFs and YLs, with key messages about the importance of on-time enrolment of young children in P1, knowledge of child protection issues, support for children's schooling, respect for children's views, and monitoring of children's activities both at school and at home.

The target for the year, however, was to reach 2,750 parents and guardians, but only half (53.5%) of this target was reached as activities were halted mid-year due to the EVD outbreak. According to the 2015 annual report, 94% of the anticipated number of parents and guardians (2,815 of the intended 3,000) were reached with knowledge and skills in child development and child protection. However, two thirds of those (in Kissi Tongi and Kissi Teng) were only exposed to the programme for a partial year, and thus the quality and

meaningful retention of the project’s key messages are likely to be low.

Survey data collected as part of this evaluation showed that two-thirds (67%) of CSC members understood the goals of the project and just over half (59%) reported that their role was made clear to them at the start of the project. Project staff indicated that a refresher training for CSC members was planned to increase their understanding of the project and their role in it, but was not implemented due to the EVD outbreak. Considering the CSCs have not been engaged since March 2014 – over 2.5 years prior to this evaluation – and never had the opportunity for refresher training, the proportion of CSC members who had a good understanding of the project was likely higher at the time of implementation than it is now. Indeed, the year 2 report notes that “CSC members are very positive about their sensitising role. Many CSC members have expressed delight at witnessing the desired change in attitudes of the majority of community members they have visited.” Future programmes should continuously monitor participants to ensure they understand the programme they are being asked to implement, otherwise, low quality results can be expected.

Table 6: Parents and Caregivers Reached by the Project

Project Year	CSC Members			Parents and Guardians Reached		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1	30	13 (43.3%)	17 (56.7%)	143	90 (63%)	53 (37%)
2	36	18 (50%)	18 (50%)	1,200	500 (41.7%)	700 (58.3%)
3	144	70 (48.6%)	74 (51.4%)	1,472	874 (59%)	598 (41%)
Total benefitted to date as of 2015 annual report				2,815 = 94% of project target	1,464 52%	1,351 48%

Of the 202 parents interviewed as part of this final evaluation, 84.2% felt they knew enough about the programme their child was participating in, showing high – but not universal – understanding of the programme and its objectives. Similar to CSC members, **parents and guardians had not been targeted with direct sensitization about the programme since mid-2014, so over 80% recall and understanding of the programme represents a positive result. This is likely due to higher-than-expected parental involvement in the radio program, which would have extended parental engagement in the project and knowledge of its objectives beyond that of CSC members.**

A majority (82%) of parents and guardians stated that they help their child apply what s/he learns from the programme. Three-quarters (74.3%) of the parents interviewed state that they communicate with school or project staff about their child, and a similar level (77.2%) say they help their child get to school on time. Most parents say they support the decisions made by teachers and project staff (84.2%) and are involved in helping to make the school better (87.6%). These results indicate high *self-reported* parental involvement in children’s education and in helping their children succeed in school. It should be noted, however, that the baseline study in the two other chiefdoms also reported a positive attitude of parents;

they reported high involvement in story-telling, singing and playing with their children and being interested in their school attainment.

Parents overwhelmingly reported that it is common for parents to talk with their children about how to develop good relationships with others (89%) and how to care for their bodies (79%). However, when it comes talking to children about how to practice safe sex, the opposite is true – three-quarters of parents disagree that parents usually discuss sex with their children, and only 17% say that they do. While this highlights the need for a project like this one, which addresses life skills including practicing safe sex, parents did not see that this has made a change thus far, with only a quarter (24.8%) reporting that parents who have children in the PtP programme now talk to their children more about how to practice safe sex. However, since the LSE component of the project was not rolled out due to the disruption caused by the EVD outbreak, and LSE topics were not addressed fully in the radio programme, this is likely due to low levels of exposure to the programme rather than ineffectiveness of the programme itself. **Future programmes should continue to pursue strategies of LSE and parental engagement to improve communication between parents and their children about topics such as safe sex.**

From the survey of Young Facilitators, 90% of them reported that their parents knew where they were some or most of the time, although only half thought their parents know a lot about them. Most (70% yes and 20% sometimes) talk to their families about how they feel. Furthermore, 95% reported feeling safe with their families (80% yes and 15% sometimes). This corroborates the above finding of general parental support for children. The vast majority (80% yes and 15% sometimes) reported that their families care about them when times are hard (for example when they are sick or have done something wrong) while 5% thought that such family care is not always assured. A majority (60%) reported being treated fairly. Over half (60%) of the respondents indicated that they have chances to show others that they are growing up and can do things by themselves, and 90% reported that they have chances to learn things that will be useful when they are older (like cooking, working and helping others).

While the project's needs assessment found significant child protection and abuse concerns, the results from YFs show that children mostly feel safe and protected with their families and in their schools. However, **the concerns about child abuse, exploitation, labour, and lack of protection are well-known and well-documented by child rights organisations working in Sierra Leone and are known to have been exacerbated during the EVD outbreak.** Children's low reporting of these issues may be due to either an unwillingness to talk about them in a formal setting or a lack of awareness of their rights and an acceptance of their treatment as 'the norm.' In either case, **these concerns remain significant and should be addressed in future programming.**

On a less positive note, 80% of YFs reported missing school in the past year in order to work or help at home. Over half (56%) of YFs report missing more than a week, and 10% missed more than a month of school to work or help out at home. This is slightly worse than at the baseline, when only about three-quarters reported missing school and the majority for less than a week. The EVD outbreak may have contributed to this as parents would have become used to having children at home to help with household chores. This trend likely contributes to the high proportion of YFs reported in the previous section who are not sure that they will continue their education next year (31%).

As noted in the previous section, students who participated in a follow-up FGD to probe these issues noted a high frequency of missing school due to their parents sending them to do farm work. A teacher who was interviewed noted that this is seen as a problem, and at one point the head teacher had to speak with the chief and ask him to communicate with parents about not sending children to the farm when they should be in school. A girl who participated in the FGDs explained that parents could take children out of school as punishment for bad behaviour: “Sometimes when children don’t obey their parents, their parents stop paying their fees.”

While parents have shown some indications of engagement and support for their children’s education, behaviours such as keeping their children out of school for farm work, parents supporting early child marriage, and uncertainty on the part of YFs about whether they will continue their schooling, indicate that there is still a long way to go in changing attitudes and practices towards children’s right to education and keeping children in school beyond the basic education level (P6).

The key informant interviews provided additional context: previously, with limited understanding and knowledge of ECE, little value was placed upon children’s education, particularly the education of girls, amongst stakeholders in beneficiary communities. The use of child labour was commonly reported, with low levels of school enrolment and retention. **The programme is widely recognised as instilling positive attitudinal change and knowledge of the importance of ECD, amongst parents, guardians, and community members.**

‘...most parent (sic) can now admit to us that initially we never knew about the importance of education or Early Childhood Development or how can we even prioritise girl child education’ – Key informant, PtP Staff Member, Sierra Leone

The key informant interviews found a specific positive outcome that has been seen in parents’ and guardians’ attitudes towards the value of the education of girls. Reprioritisation of the value of ECE and timely enrolment of children has been reported to have occurred, with a corresponding reduction in drop-out rates. Further, **the original project design, by engaging parents, community leaders and other community stakeholders, has resulted in higher prioritisation of girls’ education:**

‘...a community that was really ..vulnerable in a sense {of} education is not a priority to these people. .. parents .. [i]n the community was just looking at education only meant for boys and not girls. But through this intervention, it has really motivated the parents to send in their children most especially the girl to school, on time enrolment has taken place, it has also increase (sic) the knowledge of the children likewise the parents for them to really send their children to school. But before then they were not really looking at education as priority for their children’ – Key informant, PtP Staff member, Sierra Leone

Outcome 4: 150 teachers understand the community-based ECD model and can

effectively engage, teach and support YFs to carry out the learning activities with the YLs. Teachers use child-friendly methods to teach and are better able to engage with and motivate the children. They are knowledgeable about and feel confident engaging with the children about sensitive topics including child protection, teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. They feel confident facilitating children's participation in CtC life-skills educational activities. They are more motivated and have greater job satisfaction.

Box 4: Key Findings for Outcome 4 of the Original Project Design

- 38% of teachers engaged in the project were female, significantly higher than the proportion of teachers who are female in the Eastern region (in which Kailahun is located) and nationally
- Both teachers and students appreciate child-friendly teaching methods and are open to using them in the classroom. Teachers were observed by both PtP staff and the evaluators using CFS methods in the classroom. However self-reported attitudes continue favour rote learning, lecture, memorization, and other didactic, teacher-centred methods.

In the first half of the project, teachers were trained in the GRS approach. In early 2013 (year 2), a refresher training in the GRS approach was organised for 64 teachers because it had been observed that many did not fully understand how to engage and support the YFs. Many were still using didactic teaching methods, had not adopted the child-centred methods previously introduced, and most significantly, the YFs were adopting these didactic methods rather than the child-centred methods in their sessions with the YLs.

Further, it was not clear whether teachers were supporting YFs to plan the YL sessions, as was expected of them. Among the 64 teachers who participated in the refresher training were 34 who had not been included in the initial training. **The organising of this refresher and the inclusion of additional teachers shows the project's willingness to recognise implementation challenges and adapt or add additional activities to address them.**

Of the 64 teachers who participated in the refresher, only five were female. Nationally, only 27% of primary school teachers are female, and the Eastern province, in which Kailahun district lies, has the lowest rate among the four provinces, with only 20.5% of primary school teachers being female[3]. While it is expected that the project would likely follow a similar trend in having lower female teacher participation than male, the ratio shown in the first two years of the project was much lower than the national or even regional average – 13% in year 1 and only 8% in year 2 (the ratio for Kailahun district specifically was not available to the evaluators). By the third year, the ratio had increased to above the average, at 37% participation, showing that the project likely was aware of this challenge and made specific efforts to include more female teachers. **Overall, 38% of the teachers engaged in the project were female, significantly higher than the regional or national rates.**

Table 7: Teachers Who Participated in the Project

Project Year	Total Teachers Engaged	Male	Female
1	30	n = 26 86.7%	n = 4 13.3%
2	64	n = 59 92%	n = 5 8%
3	95 = 63% of project target	n = 60 63%	n = 35 37%
Total benefitted to date as of 2015 annual report	150 = 100% of project target	n = 93 62%	n = 57 38%

Towards the end of the second year, teachers in the pilot chiefdom, Kissi Kama, were trained in Child-Friendly School (CFS) methods. Project monitoring found that the teachers were very responsive to this training, and **monitoring by PtP found many noticeable changes in classroom settings and teaching methodologies, including use of tangible local materials instead of sole reliance on the blackboard; friendlier and more ‘fun’ classrooms with local teaching**, learning, and playing materials; and activity-based methods being used in the classroom. These improvements were still observed by project staff into 2014 among the teachers trained in Kissi Kama. However, teachers in Kissi Teng and Kissi Tongi, who should have been trained in 2014, never received the CFS training due to the EVD outbreak.

Teachers self-report a mixed understanding and use of child-friendly and child-centred teaching methods. In the survey conducted for the final evaluation, two-thirds of teachers agreed that it is best when students work on assignments alone to show how much they know and that it is a teacher’s role to help all students in their class to be successful. Three-quarters believe that it is the teacher’s responsibility to find a way to meet the learning needs of all children in the class. This shows that **teachers are aware of their responsibilities towards students, and have some intention to meet the learning needs of students in their class. However, they may not know how to do that effectively**: almost two-thirds of teachers (63.6%) agree that classroom learning is most effective when it is lecture-based. Only half of teachers believe students should receive feedback on assignments to help them improve (56.4%) and that all students should be helped to participate in class discussions (52.7%). Around half also agree that teachers should just explain facts to students; that teachers should give students problems with specific, correct answers and ideas; that allowing students to talk during class is disruptive; and that students will learn ‘incorrect knowledge’ if they are allowed to work on projects without the teacher.

Only a third of teachers agree that students have better academic achievement in classrooms where teachers encourage students to participate, while half of all teachers interviewed believe this is not at all true. These all show **a deep persistence of the standard within the Sierra Leone educational system of reliance on lecture, memorization, and highly**

didactic and non-child-friendly approaches to teaching.

These mixed findings of teachers' adoption of child-centred teaching techniques were corroborated by students themselves. Among YFs, almost a third (31.4%) agree that 'you only learn things from textbooks' while 38.2% disagree and see learning as not only limited to textbooks. YFs overwhelmingly disagree (68.6%) that learning is all about taking notes and memorising them, and they recognise that they also learn from classroom discussions (90%). However, 70% still agree that teachers know everything and should tell students what to do at all times. This reinforces the above finding that **while other methods are starting to be utilised and appreciated by both teachers and students, rote learning is still seen as "the way to learn," and the classroom environment remains highly teacher-led.**

While students appear to admire the leadership role of teachers, over two-thirds (68.6%) reported that they *would not* like to be like their teachers. This may be due to their perception of the teaching profession – in particular, many of the teachers are not on payroll and students and families often have to make a contribution to support their livelihood. This could affect children's aspirations to enter the profession. Only half of YFs said they would (31.4% yes, 19.6% sometimes) go to one of their teachers if they needed advice on something other than school work, with 49% saying they would not do so. On the other hand, 60.8% reported that they felt being close to at least one of their teachers (41.2% yes, 19.6% sometimes). An overwhelming 90% reported that they care about what their teacher thinks of them always or sometimes, and the same proportion said they always or sometimes have respect for their teachers.

Table 8: Teacher Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice relating to Good Teaching and Learning Skills

Survey Question	Not at all true (%)	A Little bit true (%)	Very True (%)
Classroom learning is most effective when based primarily on lectures, with students responding when called on.	9.1	27.3	63.6
Teachers should give feedback to students on assignment to help them improve their work	16.4	27.3	56.4
It is best when students work on assignments alone to show how much they know	10.9	21.8	67.3
All students should be helped to participate in class discussion	16.4	30.9	52.7
Teachers know more than students, they should just explain the fact to students	9.1	36.4	54.5

Teachers should give students problems with specific, correct answers and ideas	18.2	36.4	45.5
When students talk with others during class time they disrupt the flow of class and learning of other students	18.2	29.1	52.7
When students work on projects without the teacher being involved they usually learn "incorrect knowledge"	14.5	40	45.5
Students also learn important information outside classroom	10.9	40	49.1
The teacher's role is to help all students in their class be successful	7.3	25.5	67.3
Allowing students to talk about their ideas in class takes time away from learning	43.6	32.7	23.6
Teachers should not spend too much time helping students at the bottom of class, It take too much time away from the good students	63.6	21.8	14.5
Teachers should give more time to the best student in class	52.7	16.4	30.9
Students have better academic achievement in classrooms where the teacher encourages students to participate	49.1	18.2	32.7
It is the teacher's responsibility to find a way to meet the learning needs of every student in the class	10.9	14.5	74.5
I am satisfied with my work	7.3	14.5	78.2
I know how to encourage children in sensitive topics like HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, child protection issues	12.7	25.5	61.8
I am able to engage with and motivate children during classroom activities	9.1	16.4	74.5

While the quantitative data from both teachers and YFs showed mixed results and a continued reliance on didactic and teacher-centred methods, as noted above, PtP staff report having observed improvements in child-friendly practices in the classroom after the CFS training was rolled out. Students who participated in the follow-up FGDs reported that they are encouraged to talk, participate, and work with their colleagues in class. One FGD participant noted that *"the teachers tell us that if we have difficulties we should ask them,"* while another explained that *"... sometimes you are reading and you come across a word that you don't know and the teacher says you can ask them or ask your friends."*

Further, an observation of teaching practices in the beneficiary schools was conducted as part of this evaluation. The observers used an observation guide which listed a set of teaching behaviours consistent with those promoted through the CFS training, and which were scored “yes” if observed or “no” if not present. The observers rated all the 35 teachers observed as very good. As shown in the table below, **twelve out of the fourteen teaching practices that the project expected to be adopted and practised in project schools were observed to be implemented by most or all of the teachers observed. This gives some credence to the claim that teachers in intervention schools were using child-centred methodologies.** The results show that teachers who benefitted from the training adopted child-centred methodologies in their classroom practice. However, two critical practices which were a focus of the CFS approach were less widely adopted: the use of local materials as teaching aids, and the involvement of *all* pupils in the learning process.

Table 9: Observation of Teaching Practices in Project Supported Schools

Teaching Practice Observed	Responses (N=35)	
	Yes	No
The teacher’s style of teaching is interactive and students are allowed to speak up	35	0
The teacher allows students to have conversations among themselves	35	0
Individual or group activities such as games are included as part of the teaching	35	0
Students are asked to individually read aloud for the others to hear	35	0
The teacher uses storytelling as a means of conveying the lesson	35	0
Sometimes students are asked to count aloud by the teacher	35	0
The teacher uses puppets or toys as teaching aids during the class period	33	2
The teacher uses local materials like stones, seeds, beads, sticks etc. as teaching aids	10	25
The teacher talks about some health-related topics like cleanliness & washing of hands	35	0
The Young Learners are allowed to ask questions during the class period	35	0
The learners are praised when they ask questions or make a contribution	35	0
The teacher gives activities/homework to the students to be done at home	35	0
The students appear to enjoy the class activities	35	0
The teacher makes good effort to ensure ALL students participate in classroom activities	6	29

When assessing behaviour change outcomes, it is usually the case that self-reported attitudes show higher rates of improvement, whereas actual changes in those behaviours are slower to catch up, and independent observation often finds that people slip into old habits (with or

without realising). **In this case, we see the opposite, with low rates of self-reported attitude change, but more evidence of changes in behaviour: While teachers and students are open to the child-centred methods, they also still self-report holding lecturing, memorising, and other didactic methods as appropriate and important. However, the observation of behaviours by PtP staff and the evaluation team found that teachers were using the CFS methods.** This disagreement between the quantitative and qualitative data could be due to a number of factors. First, teachers knew they were being observed and for what purpose, and thus may have used the methodologies they knew the observers were looking for, even though they may not reflect their usual teaching methods or their beliefs about what constitutes good teaching practice ('observation bias'). Despite this challenge, the evaluation team decided this was a more effective and independent approach than relying on teachers' self-reported practices, which can be even less reliable.

Second, while the teacher observation looked at actual practices, the survey asked teachers about their beliefs. While teachers may be exhibiting some behaviour change due to their participation in the programme, they may still hold onto some of the core beliefs that have been ingrained into them throughout their own education and teaching careers, leading to differences between what they claim to believe and their active approach to teaching today. It must be recalled that the CFS training in Kissi Kama took place in late 2013 – three years before this evaluation, with no opportunity for a refresher in the interim. **Any finding of retention of the knowledge and skills promoted through that training with little reinforcement and after the disruptions in teaching practice from the lost school year during EVD should be considered positive.**

Finally, there is a possibility that there was an error on the part of data collectors in either tool, especially a bias among the observers to see and report positive teaching behaviours as expected in order to show a positive result in the evaluation.

Outcome 5: 20 master trainers (PtP field and management staff) are expert trainers on child rights, participation and protection; implementation of CtC community-based ECD; child-friendly, participatory teaching practice; CtC approaches to life skills education. They lead advocacy efforts to promote the ECD and life skills education model across SL, in partnership with stakeholders including UNICEF and Plan International. They manage a pool of trainers capable of delivering TOT workshops to schools and other organisations seeking to implement community-based ECD and life-skills education. They actively advocate to policymakers to introduce these approaches within all primary schools.

Box 5: Key Findings for Outcome 5 of the Original Project Design

- Twenty-five master trainers were equipped to train teachers in life skills education, however, they were unable to implement teacher training due to the EVD outbreak.
- PtP staff participate in district education forums and collaborate closely with MEST, MSWGCA, and other child rights and education organisations working in the district.

Fourteen master trainers were engaged in year two, however, the donor reports only note their activities in facilitating YF training and monitoring implementation of YF and CSC activities. By the end of year 3, 25 master trainers were equipped to train teachers in life skills education. However, they were unable to put their skills into practice as the activities were

halted due to the EVD outbreak. Due to the change in the project design, it is difficult to assess this outcome any further.

PtP staff have indicated that they participate in district level education forums and work with other education and child rights partners in the district, including MEST, MSWGCA, and Plan International. CtC is currently in discussions with UNICEF about partnering to roll out a new community-based national ECD strategy. If this is then implemented through PtP, this could provide an opportunity for the Master Trainers to serve as a training pool to deliver TOTs and oversee training cascades to schools and other organisations. However, within the data collected as part of this evaluation, there is no indication of whether the Master Trainers or PtP staff more generally have to date become advocates across Sierra Leone or with other partners external to the project.

Effectiveness of radio activities as a vehicle for skills promotion in children

Box 6: Key Findings related to the effectiveness of the radio programme

- The radio programme was popular, and participation was high. More children enrolled in listening groups than was originally intended.
- Young Learners and Young Facilitators have high recall of the radio programmes. They can retell the stories, explain the lessons behind the stories, and share their own ideas about them.
- Young Facilitators and Young Journalists show leadership skills and comfort communicating with younger children (Ys), their peers, and their teachers.
- The programme content and targeting were gender-sensitive. There was balance in the participation of boys and girls in authorship and presentation of the radio programme, and the programme content highlighted issues affecting girls such as teenage pregnancy, male support for girls' education, and violence against women and girls.
- There are examples of children's academic performance improving due to their participation in the radio programme. There are also examples of children who had never been enrolled in school, became enrolled in the listening groups, and are now going to school post-EVD.
- Children report learning about their rights and their responsibilities through the stories in the radio programme. They understand that parents should not hurt their children, and they have the confidence to speak to their parents and teachers about these issues. They also understood messages about their responsibilities, such as respecting their elders.
- Many parents listened to the radio programme, understood and appreciated messages about positive parenting practices and parent-child interactions, and discussed the programmes with their children.
- While the programmes did address some life skills issues, there was potential for confusion or misunderstanding. For listening group participants, these issues were discussed and addressed; but for radio listeners across the district, there is a risk that the key messages could be misunderstood or misinterpreted.

Following the outbreak of Ebola in March 2014, Pikin-To-Pikin Movement in collaboration with Child to Child and with the support of Comic Relief reconfigured the project

interventions to introduce a child-centred radio educational project called “Pikin-To-Pikin Tok” (meaning “Child to Child Talk” in the local Krio language). According to a report of a study conducted by Walker et al ² to document the good practices of the project, the radio project was aimed at “supporting children to continue learning by delivering early years, hygiene, and life skills educational content (co-created with children) through child-friendly radio broadcasts.” Children were trained to act as Young Journalists and supported by an expert production team to produce and present the content. The project’s theory of change asserted that training YFs to serve as journalists, and involving them in the production of the programmes’ content, would lead to improvements in YFs’ language skills, ability to communicate clearly, self-confidence, assertiveness, hygiene knowledge and practices, and life skills. It was also assumed that community members, including parents, would better understand the importance of education when education messages are delivered by children. Children who listened to their peers on the Pikin-To-Pikin Tok shows would be influenced to value schooling and engage in behaviour that promotes health and hygiene, school retention and academic achievement.

42 radio Listening Groups were created in the 21 project schools, each facilitated by Listening Group facilitators who were paid a monthly stipend. The radio programmes included themes on disability and stigma, trauma, sexual abuse, EVD survivors, children retelling stories, and children discussing literacy and numeracy. To ensure that the original focus on young children’s school readiness was incorporated into the radio programmes, children 4-6 years old were included in the radio project. To motivate children to participate, refreshments were provided at the end of radio listening sessions. According to the quarterly report (November 2015-January 2016,) “the inclusion of the 4-6-year-old children into the Radio Programme made the older children (Young Facilitators) more enthusiastic, most especially when they interact with their younger one or siblings after the ‘story time’ sessions.”

The Pikin-To-Pikin Tok radio project has received multiple favourable reviews as an innovative approach to addressing the learning needs of children affected by Ebola. The BBC produced a documentary highlighting how children participated in the production and airing of the content. The project is featured on the UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) website as an example of good practice. The positive impacts of this project were documented by Walker et al in a UNGEI case study of the Child Centred Educational Project. Full details of the project impact are documented in the case study report.

This evaluation utilised a child-led participatory tool to ascertain if YLs and YFs had the skills that the programme aimed to achieve. 45 Young Facilitators and 120 Young Learners were involved. A subsequent follow-up data collection round was organised in February 2017, in which an additional 21 children who had been Young Listeners and Young Journalists participated in FGDs. **Overall, the radio programme was very popular and participation was generally high, with even more children enrolled in listener groups than originally intended. Project monitoring estimates that because of the high coverage of Radio Moa and the popularity of radio in general and especially during the EVD outbreak when people were confined to their homes, the radio programme was able to reach many**

² Walker et al, Case Study, Child Centred Education Programme in Kailahun District, https://www.goodpracticefund.org/documents/CTC_ODI-UNGEI-Final.pdf

more children than the original project intended to engage.

Table 10: Number of People Reached by the Radio Programme intervention

Target Group Reached ³	Total	Male	Female
4-7 year olds across the district	45,727	23,092	22,635
7-14 year olds across the district	45,727	23,092	22,635
Parents	45,188	24,175	21,013
Teachers	36	33	3

Data collected from key informants interviewed including programme beneficiaries corroborates several of the UNGEI case study findings. The main findings from this evaluation are as follows:

Generally good recall and understanding of the key messages. Staff reported incidents of children commonly retelling the stories from the radio show and expressing what they learned through retelling the stories and knowledge not only to their peers but to their siblings, teachers, parents and guardians. This was also observed with Young Facilitators and Young Learners as part of this study. The observations from the original tool and from the follow-up FGDs showed that **Young Learners and Young Facilitators alike showed high recall of the radio programmes, with near universal active participation of both YFs and YLs. Most were able to retell a story and share their ideas.**

Children were able to recall specific stories, such as “Three Goats,” “Crocodile and Monkey,” “Kanumasala and Manso,” and “Spider and Monkey.” **They recalled and articulated the moral lessons behind the stories**, such as the importance of obeying elders, the importance of sharing with friends, and how to problem solve and stay safe. One 8-year-old female young listener recalled learning that “For example, I like to walk with people who are smart because if you [are] walking in the bush or the road and something happens to me and I fall, instead of leaving me by the roadside and going to town, someone who is smart would try and carry me to town.” YFs were able to present to the groups and take a leadership role. The observations corroborate earlier evidence of confidence to participate in YFs. It also provides further evidence that YFs listened to the programmes and were comfortable to share what they learned from the programmes. The level of recall was particularly impressive as this data was collected six months after the end of the project.

Children were able to articulate key messages from the radio programmes about the importance of going to school, and that teachers will provide a lot of support to students in the learning process. They learned that children should go to school because if you go to school and learn, then in the future you will be able to help your family.

“I like the radio programme because it told you that even if you can’t write if you come to school the teacher will hold your hand with the

³ Figures drawn from “Special Initiative End of Year Report FINAL. Autumn 2015”

pen and teach you how to write - Male young listener

“The programme told us to advise other children who were not coming to school, to advise them to come to school -Male young listener.

They even mentioned that there are ways you could try and talk to peers who have dropped out to try and convince them to come to school.

Finally, they learned key messages about Ebola and were able to recall ways to prevent its spread. Children who participated in the FGDs talked about the fact that during Ebola they learned from the programme that when you use the toilet you should wash your hands and even when there is someone close to you who is sweaty if you touch that person you should go and wash your hands. They were also advised during Ebola that *“if someone is eating and they call you [invite you to join them], you should not do it because you don’t know if the person has Ebola. If you eat food that someone has bitten that has Ebola, then you will get Ebola. But if someone gives you food that is not bitten then you could go wash it and eat it.”* -- Male young listener.

Gender considered in programme content and targeting. Although most adult presenters of the radio programmes were males, data collected during the review shows that **there was gender balance in the participation of boys and girls in the co-authorship and presentation of the radio programme. The programme content strongly focused on teenage pregnancy, early childhood education particularly for girls, male support for learning, good parenting skills, and reduction in violence against women, particularly girls.**

Use of role models to influence behaviour and reinforce messages on child development. Role models, including high profile male and female personalities within and beyond the district, were used to reinforce messages on child education and development. Feedback received from Listening Group Facilitators interviewed reveal that **the use of role models had a positive influence on boys and girls who were the target audience.** The content reviewed featured a head of an orphanage; youth chair lady; grandmother who gave good parenting advice; a Head Teacher who encouraged fathers not to compromise but to report child abuse cases and support learning; Mrs. Edwin from Campaign for Good Governance who gave good advice on child labour, the need for girl child education, and parental support for early childhood education; a speaker from Success Beyond Circumstance, Jenifer, who worked with traumatised children and provided good advice on child rearing skills. However, almost all programmes were led by men.

Qualitative data showed that the wider community has provided an enabling environment through supporting the programme. Following the radio programme, there have been examples of teachers engaging the children on particular issues affecting them and helping them to create a short dramatisation to explore this issue. The radio programme provided support to younger children to be able to increase their learning while encouraging their personal empowerment and understanding of how to keep them safe, openly discuss issues affecting their lives with their parents, and negotiate peer issues.

Child motivation to go to school and learn: One key informant illustrated the positive impact of the radio programmes with a real life experience of a boy named Fayia, who he said was an orphan. Without parental support, he had no opportunity to go to school. When he saw his colleagues listening to the radio as part of the radio Listening Group he became interested, initially attracted by the food, which was shared after the group sessions. But after listening to one of the stories about the “hungry goat,” he became more interested in the messages and wanted to be involved. *“He approached the coordinator and asked to be enrolled in the listening group and in school. Since then he has been regularly attending school, despite all the odds against him.”*

Another example of the project’s success was reported by a teacher interviewed. He reported, *“A school boy was academically underperforming, but as he took part in the radio programme listening group, his academic performance improved to the point where he was able to pass the NPSE exam and went on to attend a good secondary school in Kenema District.”*

Improvement in parent-child interactions and parental support for learning: **The project has given voice to the children involved with the project, improving their self-confidence to engage in conversation with adults, including parents.** The project put children centre stage by adopting a child-friendly and participatory approach. Young Listeners who participated in the follow-up FGDs were keenly aware of the messages about parenting and parent-child interactions that were written into the radio programmes and understood that these showed that children have rights and should be treated well by their parents.

One young listener recalled hearing a radio programme about a lady who was beating her child, even though she had been advised not to. The young listener said that beating a child will not lead them to be well-trained; there are ways that you could punish a child that would help them to realise what they have done that was bad. Another child said that parents were advised not to shout at their children. “I told my parents but they still persist in shouting! I don’t like that.” The children in the FGD then talked about strategies they use when their parents are upset and shouting – one girl described moving away from her parents until they are less angry. Another child said parents should always encourage their children so they will turn out well: *“when you encourage your child that’s when they would come close to you but if you don’t they will be scared of you.”*

In addition to their rights, children also reported learning about their responsibilities through the radio programmes: *“When they [elders] talk, you should not talk;” “When they come, you should give them a bench to sit;” “When they are angry and they tell you off you should not answer back” (i.e. talk under your breath).*

Project staff directly observed how children in the listening groups were affected and had increased confidence to interact with their parents and other adults.

“Children themselves come up with issues that are actually burning issues affecting them including the gender roles where there has been persistent discriminatory practice against girls,” said one PtP staff member who was interviewed as a key Informant.

“First children had little boldness and confidence in even walking or talking with their parents nor did parents recognise the need for children to contribute to discussions but this project has helped [to bridge] some barriers”, said one project staff interviewed. “Children that benefited from the project interventions have improve[d] in confidence to sit by their parents to have a discussion on issues affecting them,” he concluded.

“When community members listen to the radio programme and hear children expressing themselves, they are impressed. Some want their children to be like the children they hear on the radio providing a motivation for adult support for children’s involvement in project activities. Thus, the project has gained momentum in these communities and many are calling for it to be scaled up,” reported another project staff member who lives in one of the beneficiary communities.

According to the 2015 annual report and explanations from project staff during this evaluation, some radio programmes were designed with parents in mind and included messages on positive parenting, positive parent-child interactions, and the importance of both ECD and continuing education for older children. The post-show call-in sessions of these parent-focused programmes provided opportunities for parents to call in and for children to advocate to their parents. While listening groups for parents were not specifically organised, in some cases parents were invited to the children’s listening groups, particularly when the parent was not supportive of their child’s attendance. As a result, **almost two-thirds of parents interviewed as part of the survey agreed that parents listened to the radio programme (64.4%), and most liked it (59.4%). Parents overwhelmingly felt the radio programme helped their child to learn (77.2%), and over half (55%) discussed it with their children.** This shows that even though the CSC advocacy efforts ceased in March 2014, and the radio programme listening groups did not specifically include parents, **many parents are engaged, interested in, and supportive of, their children’s learning, even when formal school is not in session.**

Appropriateness of messaging about life skills topics, including child abuse, early sex and teenage pregnancy. There were appropriate messages on the prevention of child abuse and sexual abuse. Parents (especially fathers) were encouraged not to compromise if their daughters are raped. This was an important message because family compromise is known as one of the factors impeding access to justice for women and girls in Sierra Leone. However, rape was chiefly portrayed as something that Big Men do to young girls *only* and peer rape was not addressed.

With teenage pregnancy, there was little advice, alternatives or hope offered in the radio programmes reviewed. There was very little discussion about alternatives, prevention, or safety; rather, the discussion centred on staying in school.

Some messages were found to elicit and reinforce negative stereotypes about women and girls; Mothers/women were portrayed as greedy or ignorant in some of the stories and also portrayed as responsible for their girls’ “bad” behaviours – sending them out for transactional sex. In one episode, the mother sends her daughter to Freetown to live with her Auntie, who withholds food. In general girls were portrayed as victims (lacking agency). There were

hardly any messages addressing boys' roles with regard to gender parity. It was the intention of the programmes that these portrayals be raised as key points of the listening discussions after the programme, and that the facilitators help children to identify these stereotypes and think of their own local solutions to the issues raised. However, there is little evidence of how consistently or effectively this was done, especially with regard to the timing of the programmes, as many groups had to disperse immediately after the programmed aired. In addition, **for the thousands of radio listeners who were not part of listening groups, there was little opportunity to flesh out these issues, and a significant risk that these listeners may have taken the 'bad example' as the take-away message.**

The children who participated in the follow-up FGDs generally had positive views about gender and gender equality. While they identified roles that men usually do such as tilling the field and roles that women usually undertake such as cooking and weeding, **they were clear that both sexes could do any jobs.** One boy stated, *"Women can cook but me too I can cook, just give me the things!"* Another boy mentioned that women were better at weeding but that men could become good if they practised. One female young listener stated that *"I would say men and women are the same because there are women who brush farms and some men who can cook."*

In fact, in all FGDs, even though there were fewer girls than boys participating, **the girls took noticeable leading roles, and this was comfortably accepted by the boys.** At no point did it seem necessary to state that girls could do what boys could do, or to insist that the boys give the girls a chance to participate; that seemed to be taken as a given.

While these are positive findings of young listeners' attitudes towards gender roles, and it was encouraging to see the boys being supportive of the girls' roles as leaders and see them as having equal abilities, the children did not specifically attribute these ideas to having learned them through the radio programmes.

Foreign production, and multiple translations of the programmes. Another limitation was that the radio programmes were recorded in Kissi, translated into English and then sent to the UK for production before they were aired. The Evaluation team noted that this raises the possibility of loss of meaning since certain Kissi words do not have an equivalent word in English. However, CtC staff explained that audio was often recorded in Kissi, with a translation into English occurring immediately after by a PtP staff member, and that translation was checked and sometimes improved further by the child who was involved. Live calls between the producer in the UK and the Kailahun team allowed the opportunity to clarify the meaning of any phrases that weren't clear, and audio was recorded on Whatsapp and shared for additional clarification. Thus, the project team is confident that despite the translation, the intended meanings of all recordings were preserved.

In contrast to the challenges posed by the foreign production and translation of the programme, **the local partnership with Kailahun-based community radio station Radio Moa for the dissemination of the radio programmes was seen as highly effective and advantageous.** Radio Moa has wide geographical reach, with almost complete coverage within Kailahun district and even some coverage of other districts. This was reflected in people outside the three Kissis requesting an expansion of the project into their area, and even people from Kono requesting the project expand into their district to help their children.

‘..people in the other district like Kono always call asking why is it that the project is only implemented here unlike their own communities, they are interested in the project, want the project to really reach them because their children also are in dying need...., they have seen that children have become bold, they have their self-esteem and confidence in talking’- Key informant, Sierra Leone

Assessment of the project’s implementation

Box 7: Key Findings related to the project’s implementation

- The programme made a concerted effort to work closely with stakeholders and beneficiary communities. This significantly strengthened the programme’s design, implementation, and management.
- The project partners maintained positive relationships and proactive interactions with MEST and MSWGCA. MSWGCA and MEST officials publicly recognised the contributions and achievements of the programme. The implementing partner (PtP) also maintained positive working relationships with other NGOs, INGOs, civil society, and Radio Moa in Kailahun district.
- PtP promoted strong community ownership of the programme and its outcomes through its work with the CSCs, as well as with community leaders. Community members, parents, and teachers had a high regard for the project.
- Project managers from CtC and PtP effectively used monitoring data to make appropriate adjustments to implementation and planning.

Strengths and weaknesses related to programme management and implementation

One of the most significant strengths in programme management and implementation was the concerted efforts made by the programme to engage and work closely with stakeholders and beneficiary communities to strengthen the programme. For example, the programme was officially launched at the district level, with participants including local government. In another example, community meetings were held with parents and teachers to discuss issues affecting children’s education, the outcomes of which were used to develop the Community Sensitisation Strategy.

The review also noted reports of **positive interaction and relationship of the programme and programme staff with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs (MSWGCA) and MEST**, with the programme providing motorbikes for the MSWGCA to strengthen their monitoring of programme achievements, and to support the response of MSWGCA to reports of child trafficking close to the Liberian border. The project reports stated that a local representative of the MSWGCA stated that *“the government recognises the critical role ECD plays in creating a firm foundation for children’s development and the challenges of realising ECD provision in Sierra Leone where many social and financial barriers exist... the community-based Child to Child approach to ECD, which is low cost, is already making a noticeable difference in Kissi Kama with more children enrolling in school and many parents taking a different, more positive view of the role education can play in their children’s life.”*

The positive collaboration and joint coordination with these line ministries expressed in the in-depth interviews resulted in a positive impact on the project, such as sharing of resources,

involvement of MEST in training, and particularly in strengthening accountability and follow-up through joint project monitoring and sharing of project data. PtP also reported that they coordinated with relevant NGO and INGO players in the district, including Save the Children as district lead for child protection issues and Plan Sierra Leone. Interview data also described the relationship with Radio Moa as positive and effective.

Staff members who were interviewed reported that there was close collaboration with beneficiary communities and project participants. **As a community-based organisation, PtP stressed the importance of community ownership, from the design phase and continuing through implementation and monitoring, in a successful project. The strength of their community engagement has been seen through the effectiveness of the CSCs,** and other previously cited instances of working closely with local authorities. Staff felt in particular that the involvement of senior community leaders such as religious leaders, teachers and head teachers, and paramount and section chiefs in the CSC has been critical in the success of the CSC structures.

Teachers also felt they had been included and respected by the implementers throughout the project: *“Even for us teachers, PtP can talk to you and involve you and make you feel important.”* Another teacher stated that *“during Ebola, PtP was the only NGO who took the goods right down to the villages, others left it with the chiefs”* highlighting PtP’s focus on going straight into communities themselves rather than relying on gatekeepers.

These efforts have resulted in the community members having a high regard for the project, supporting its achievements, and this may have helped in the acceptance of the radio programme by the community. Information from parents’ survey also reports that parents like and trust the programme. Such strong community ownership contributes to the sustainability of the programme. PtP’s in-depth knowledge of, and deep commitment to, the communities it serves was a key factor in achieving this successful approach to implementation.

Effectiveness of project monitoring in informing the shape and delivery of activities over the period of the grant

The year 2 (2013) report states that project activities were revised in year 2 to reflect the needs of the local partner. While the project was intended to expand to two additional chiefdoms in year 2, instead it remained only in the first pilot chiefdom. This was in response to findings from field visits that PtP was overwhelmed by the research process, impeding their ability to actually implement programme activities. They required more time to understand the project and increase their staff’s capacity, and thus the expansion to the two additional chiefdoms was deferred to year 3.

The year 2 (2013) report also notes that a field visit prior to the Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) training revealed that while YFs and YLs were enthusiastic about the project, there was a lack of understanding among PtP staff and teachers about the school readiness programme. In response to this finding, the agenda of the CFS training was adjusted to accommodate a refresher on the school readiness programme.

Both of these adjustments to programme implementation showed attentiveness and flexibility on the part of the project’s managers to understand the reality of the working environment and adjust activities in response to the findings of project

monitoring.

Impact and sustainability of the project

Box 8: Key Findings related to the impact and sustainability of the project

- The most significant achievements of the project are around the educational objectives, with increased enrolment and preparedness of YLs, the self-confidence of YFs in their academic achievements, and active participation in school and their communities.
- Close working relationships between the project implementers and MEST may contribute to the sustainability of the changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices around child-friendly teaching methodologies and the importance of early childhood education.
- The work of the CSCs promoted positive attitude changes towards girls' education and child protection issues among parents and other community members. CSC members reported they will continue to use the skills they learned from this project to sustain and expand these outcomes.
- Despite some changes in parents' attitudes about the importance of education for all children, and especially for girls, families continue to face significant economic barriers; absentee rates remain high, and students are unsure about their potential to continue schooling. There is a risk that these attitudes will revert and families' labour and economic needs will continue to trump the importance of the child's education.
- PtP staff live in the communities the programme served, and continue to work there on other projects. This will lend some structural potential for the sustainability of the programme's messages and outcomes.
- Child to Child has made all project materials open-source so that other partners, including NGOs as well as government agencies, can use them in the future.
- Changes in teaching practices are likely to revert to traditional didactic methods without continued reinforcement and support.
- Life skills and child protection interventions were not implemented due to start-up delays and the EVD outbreak. These remain necessary and important and should be taken up by future projects.

What significant achievements has the project brought about in the lives of target beneficiaries

The most significant achievements of the project are around the educational objectives – enrolment and preparedness of YLs, and self-confidence of YFs both in their academic achievement and in their active participation in school and in their communities. The programme showed significantly increased enrolment of YLs in P1, to the extent that participating schools exceeded their capacity. Teachers anecdotally noted that P1 children who had participated as YLs were more prepared for school in terms of literacy, numeracy, and social skills. YFs reported greater self-confidence in their academic performance in language and science. They were also more confident taking leadership roles and speaking out in their classrooms, and in interacting with their teachers.

While some attitudes showed signs of change around teaching practice and the importance of education particularly for girls, the evidence does not yet show meaningful behaviour change in these areas. Longer and more intense intervention will be required to institute

meaningful change in these areas.

Although not among the pre-specified project outcomes, gender parity among teachers can be considered an important pathway to achieving increased number of girls enrolled and retained in school. While the project started out engaging lower than the regional average proportion of female teachers in its first two years, by the end of the project the proportion of female teachers engaged reached 38% - significantly higher than the regional figure of 20%. The project clearly made an effort to include these positive female role models. Future projects should aim to continue this trend and even increase it further to achieve gender parity among teachers engaged.

Durability/sustainability of the project's achievements

Sustainability was given several meanings within the programme. Interview data from staff expressed two interpretations, firstly, with regards to the learning transfer and what knowledge, attitudinal and behaviour change will be left behind in beneficiary communities and within the lives of the children. Secondly, in the relationships and partnerships built with the local government structures and the CSC structures left behind. Through interviews with field staff, it was reported that **there is interest in the radio curriculum being adopted more formally within the school system. The close working relationship with Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) in particular, especially around monitoring of the project, may support the changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices about early child education and child-centred teaching methods being sustained within the school system.** Importantly, the close working relationship with MEST allowed the project to share its materials with MEST at a national level. However, an intervention in three chiefdoms of one district is unlikely to result in radical change in teaching practice across the district or the country – the district MEST office is still largely influenced by trends at the national level. Thus the advocacy and policy/strategy level interventions that were envisioned in the Theory of Change but not significantly implemented would be equally important to support sustainability in this area.

The ECE model seemed to have positively impacted the opinions of Young Facilitators in relation to their knowledge of what readiness for school entails. This is important to sustain the impact of the project's goals -- as these youngsters will become the next generation of parents and teachers.

Another evidence of project sustainability was observed among CSC members, as 88.2% of them reported that they would use the skills they learned from this project in the future. Project staff interviewed expressed that they trained CSC members and that **the work of the Community Sensitization Committees is a success story of the programme.** They believed the impact the CSC sensitisation has had on parents, guardians, and the wider community has been significant, resulting in positive change in attitudes towards ECE and girls' education, as well as the knowledge of child protection issues.

Staff further explained that CSC involvement was instrumental in reducing barriers in communication between children and teenagers and their parents. **Despite the closure of the project, the CSC structures remain in place within the communities. This structural sustainability combined with members' appreciation and retention of the goals of the project shows that some of the project outcomes may be sustained.** This is particularly remarkable as the CSC members were last trained over four years ago. Their continued

interest and enthusiasm in the project's objectives shows that the importance of early childhood education and supporting children to complete their education are messages that connect well with the communities and that communities would like further support to reinforce these attitudes and behaviours.

Some change was seen over the course of the project in parents' attitudes and support for their children's access to education, particularly education for girls, and holding early child education in high esteem as a community and family priority. As seen in the parent survey, 88.5% of parents reported that they support their child to get to school on time – a strong indication of their support for schooling. However, higher rates of absenteeism were seen at the end of the project, likely related to the effects of the EVD outbreak and the long break from formal schooling. In addition, YFs seem unsure about their potential to continue their schooling, with only 70% sure that they intend to return to school next year. **Without further intervention, there is a risk that the positive attitudinal changes could slip away again, and the 'business as usual' practice of allowing the family's labour and economic needs to trump the child's education are likely to continue.** Continued intervention would be necessary to reverse these trends.

The proximity of PtP staff living close to and within the beneficiary communities, and speaking the native Kissi language, is a significant asset to continuing the impact of the project, particularly in relation to on-going sensitisation of parents and caregivers, and advocacy and attitudinal change within the targeted communities.

'... we are living with the people in the community we work... so even though the project may end we are still with our people in the community, we keep sensitising them we can even host session with the children ... and even the teachers facilitators that were trained we encourage them that yes even though the project may come to an end but as these children are not only for the [school] or for you alone but also for the community so if a child benefit(s) from this project and become successful in the future that child may come and really help not only the parents but the community and nation at large so this is some we are really, we hope we continually do. – Key Informant, Sierra Leone

Materials used in this project are available to community and district stakeholders and are open source for use internationally. Other communities or agencies wanting to build on this work will be able to use them. The established partnerships with Radio Moa and MEST will be particularly important in this regard.

'Child to Child is committed to being open source and copyright free so we would also share with other interested agencies what we have been doing, any resources etc.' – Key Informant, CtC Staff Member, UK

'The project is a radio project as something that has been aired out people have the knowledge and this documentation is there. Even the radio station (s) have the documentation we have been airing they have their own so, sometimes when the project is out they continue airing the project ... the knowledge will still remain with people in the community.' – Key informant, PtP Staff Member, Sierra Leone

From interviews with staff, the evaluation team noted that they were keenly aware of the need for sustainability and the responsible exit of the programme. The lack of continuation of funding was expressed as a clear worry, with field staff expressing a limited understanding of what was going to happen after the project closure, hoping that continuation funding would be found, due to the expressed need for the project by the beneficiary communities. Staff reported in interviews that this concern was also expressed by many of the community members, who expressed worry and frustration upon hearing of the programme closure.

While there were positive gains in understanding and appreciation of early childhood education approaches in communities, the outcomes related to actual teaching practice were more limited. As evidenced in the Findings section, there was some attitudinal change among both teachers and primary school students about teacher-centred methods focused on rote learning and memorization, with increasing appreciation for students' participation in their own learning and child-centred approaches; but despite this, there was little evidence of any consistent or significant change in actual practice within classrooms.

Teachers continue to rely on lecturing, while students largely still agree that learning is mostly about memorization and believe their teachers know best. Teaching culture and attitudes toward child development and education are deeply ingrained within the Sierra Leone educational system and society as a whole. Therefore, despite the widespread appreciation for the project's objectives and openness to its ideas, it is unlikely that the CFS and GRS approach, including a shift towards child-centred teaching methods, will be sustained in practice without further intervention. As one key informant stated, *"...the ECD model is really good at many levels... But they cannot do it without handholding and without a political mandate"* – Key Informant, CtC Staff, UK.

Aspects of the project that have been least successful and/or most difficult to achieve in the project timeframe

As discussed previously, one challenging area was changing teaching attitudes and practices towards more child-friendly methods. **While there was evidence that teachers appreciated the new methods and were willing to try them in their classrooms, much more time and intensive support, both from projects like this one but also, and perhaps more importantly, from the MEST and within the structures of the formal education system, are required to actually change the culture of education in the country.** The project model seems to have the potential for effectiveness, as seen in short-term changes in attitudes and behaviours, but teachers' attitudes remain mixed and sustainability is uncertain.

One aspect of the programme that was extremely important, but not fully implemented, was the life skills intervention and a focus on child protection. According to one key informant, the needs assessment conducted in 2011 as part of the programme design phase revealed much more severe child abuse and child protection concerns than were anticipated, as well as high rates of early sex and teenage pregnancy. To address this, the project was adapted from being focused on school enrolment and retention only, to including the additional life skills component, which had not been part of previous GRS programmes. However, due to lower than the expected capacity of field staff, and delays in implementation, the LSE component of the project was delayed from year 2 to year 3, and with the EVD outbreak beginning in year 3, it was never effectively rolled out. The interventions targeting CSCs and parental engagement were also intended to address these issues, but these were similarly

halted early due to the EVD and thus did not have the chance to have their full intended impact.

The project design is to be commended for its intention to address these issues, but given low staff capacity, the complex and wide-ranging intended outcomes, and aborted timeline of the original project intervention, it proved too much for the programme to accomplish. **In future, programmes focusing specifically on child rights and child protection issues may be warranted to better address these crucial issues.**

Finally, the M&E system developed by the research partner was very rigorous, however, some staff felt that it was not appropriate for the context of the project implementation. One key informant noted that the data collection demands were so heavy, that it impacted on the partner's (PtP's) ability to implement the project. The project was adapting a proven method (GRS) to a new context, which was more remote and had lower baseline capacity than other contexts where GRS had been implemented. It also added in new elements beyond the previously tested GRS approach – while GRS in other contexts focused mostly on school enrolment and retention, the project in Sierra Leone added in additional elements of life skills training for young facilitators, training teachers in child-friendly teaching methods, and the formation of CSCs, all of which had not been part of the previously tested methodology. For these reasons, the research component of the project was very important to show the effectiveness of the adapted approach. However, in practice, the research design was too demanding and not feasible. Future programmes must be more intentional in balancing the data and evidence needs of the project with the reality of the implementation context and take care that the research component does not take away from project implementation, as it seems to have done in this case.

Efficiency of use of resources

The organisation has a finance manual that details how to handle bank accounts, payroll, purchases and invoicing. It also describes how management accounts project budgets will be prepared.

The budget for this project was found to be mostly appropriate with amounts allocated for staff costs and project activities in suitable proportions. Underspends were noted in PtP budgets but this seems to have been mostly due to exchange rates (falling value of the Sierra Leone Leone (SLL) against the Great British Pound (GBP)). Significant overspends were noted in monitoring and evaluation where international participants were involved.

Assessment of the partnership between CtC and PtP

Box 9: Key Findings related to the partnership between CtC and PtP

- The combination of PtP as a child rights organisation and CtC with expertise in child participation led to a dynamic and successful partnership.
- CtC listened to PtP's input into programme design and implementation and made adjustments in plans based on PtP's on-the-ground expertise.
- CtC provided PtP with many capacity building opportunities.
- All partners – PtP, CtC, local government agencies, beneficiaries, and communities – report very positive perceptions of the programme.

Interagency communication and relationships

There was collaboration between CtC and PtP throughout the project implementation. The

terms of the partnership were spelt out in a partnership agreement between the two parties. According to the terms of that agreement, both parties expressed the desire to collaborate because such engagement will be “*mutually beneficial as it will enable both organisations to achieve their mission and objectives and will increase the effectiveness and impact of their activities*”. Based on this commitment the partners clearly defined each other’s specific roles and responsibilities and identified the following areas for joint action:

- Develop and undertake annual reviews.
- Develop monitoring and evaluation strategies and agree on targets.
- Ensure project reports and accounts are submitted to donors according to agreed schedules.
- Develop strategies for documenting and sharing lessons learned, and for promoting the partnership and project through their various networks.

A review of project reports provides evidence of collaboration between the two organisations in all the areas agreed.

There were several instances of CtC listening to and taking on board PtP suggestions to make the project better. For example, the project initially intended to train only P1, P4, and P5 teachers in the project activities. However, during the pilot phase, PtP field staff suggested that all teachers in the project school be trained, to ensure that even non-implementing teachers understand the project, and to have backup teachers who could fill in when implementing teachers are absent, transferred, or in the event of death, to avoid slowing down the project. CtC saw the usefulness of this suggestion and approved its implementation.

CtC staff spent significant time (6 weeks) in Kailahun in 2013, and the PtP District Coordinator was invited to the UK to participate in annual meetings. The research partner also consulted in-depth with PtP and used their inputs to refine the research and evaluation tools. This shows positive communication and relationships between the two agencies and demonstrates CtC’s empowerment of the partner organisation to feel ownership of the project’s implementation and achievements.

Overall, PtP is a genuine child protection agency, with a strong grasp of children’s rights, and are highly skilled in promoting community engagement, which is key for sustainability. CtC as a child participation organisation was able to support PtP in learning how to make children’s voices heard. CtC was also bold, did not put limits on the conception of what could or could not be accomplished, and was committed to the meaningful capacity building of its partners (PtP and local stakeholders). **This combination resulted in a dynamic and successful partnership.**

Partners’ perceptions of the programme

PtP staff report having very positive perceptions of the programme. While they appreciate the objectives of increasing enrolment and retention, they speak even more passionately about the programme’s effects on changing attitudes towards girls’ education in the communities and on reforming teaching practice to be more child-centred and participatory. All of the staff interviewed expressed regret over the programme’s closing, and a hope for future funding to continue and expand the interventions in the future.

Commitment to developing the partner's capacity

The programme staff informed the evaluation team that “in November 2013 the CtC Finance Manager travelled to Freetown to mentor the PtP Finance Manager. CtC built (sic) the IT capacity of its partner PtP through training. Additionally, regular telephone conferences were arranged to explore challenges, documents were sent from CtC via email to build further capacity in M&E and Microsoft packages. Laptops, motorbikes, vehicle and digital cameras were purchased to support the technical aspects of the project”. A key informant who was asked to express his opinion about the partnership between CtC and PtP said CtC *“managed not only to support their local partners to participate in the Ebola response but also managed to maintain an educational focus and achieve positive impact.”*

The programme was adapted in multiple instances to support the partner's capacity to implement a high-quality programme. The expansion from the pilot chiefdom to the additional 2 chiefdoms was delayed by a year to allow for the partner to become more comfortable with the approach. The life skills education component was similarly delayed, because the model that was adapted from other contexts, upon training of staff in Kailahun, was found to be too complex for the context. The materials were further adapted to the local context and simplified, to promote higher quality implementation, and an additional refresher training, (not originally planned) was added to further support the partner's capacity development (although this refresher was never conducted due to the EVD outbreak). Finally, CtC normally does not place staff directly in the project implementation unit, but rather provides technical support and allows the partner to implement directly. In this case, upon inception, it was found that the partner in this programme needed additional support, and the exceptional decision was made to relocate a CtC staff member to Sierra Leone so that they could provide support to the partner's implementation team at both headquarters and field level and develop their capacity on an on-going basis.

All of these decisions and actions show a strong commitment from CtC to support and develop the capacity of the implementing partner.

Conclusions

Overall, the original project produced good results during the time it was implemented. Project reports indicate that within the first three years of the project, 67% of the target number of YLs, 75% of the target number of YFs, 94% of the target number of parents and guardians, and 63% of the targeted number of teachers were reached with the project's original interventions. **These high levels of coverage indicate that had the disruption of the EVD outbreak not taken place, the project would have achieved its coverage targets over its intended 5-year life span.**

The project met its gender targets for YFs participation – 47% were girls and 53% were boys, but fell short of its target of 50% of YLs engaged being girls (43% achieved). Given that the achievement was close to the target, if the programme had continued for its additional 2 intended years, it likely could have used this monitoring data to adjust implementation and reach its target by the final year. While gender targets for participating teachers were not set, and there is a low proportion of teachers who are female nationally and within the Eastern region in which Kailahun is located, **the project made a concerted effort to engage female teachers as positive role models.** By the end of the project, 38%

of the teachers engaged were female, far surpassing both the regional and national figures. Future programmes should follow this trend and strive for high female representation - even gender parity - among teachers and a focus on recruiting female role models should be intentionally planned.

There is qualitative evidence that Young Learners benefitted from the ECE intervention. Schools that received YLs who had participated in the programme recorded increased enrolment. Teachers observed that children who had gone through the YL programme had better literacy and numeracy skills when they entered P1, and were better prepared for classroom learning than their peers who had not participated in the ECE programme.

Similarly, there are instances of children who served as Young Facilitators and whose academic performance improved. YFs overwhelmingly self-report increased confidence in their own academic performance after serving as YFs, and a majority of learning, like their school, intend to continue their own education, and both enjoy and see the value of helping their friends and younger children to learn. Children who served as YFs show confidence in participating actively in class and are more comfortable engaging with their parents and teachers about issues that are important to them than they were before participating in the programme. **Thus, there is evidence that the intervention was successful in helping both YLs and YFs develop active learning skills, enhance their self-esteem and confidence, and improve their academic performance.**

However, there is evidence from both YFs and parents that children continue to miss school frequently, and some YFs remain uncertain about their intention to continue their schooling beyond their current level. **The views expressed by project staff that parents' and communities' commitment to the value of education for all children and particularly for girls is not fully supported by the evidence from parents and children themselves.**

The life skills component of the project was not rolled out due to the interruption caused by the EVD outbreak, thus it is not possible to evaluate the effectiveness of this component of the programme.

Community Sensitisation Committees were active and engaged in the project for about two years before the outbreak of EVD halted their activities. They largely understood and appreciated the programme, and engaged close to the intended total target number of parents in their communities by the third year of project implementation.

However, close to a third of CSC members said they were unclear about their roles, which is likely due to a combination of insufficient training initially, and the long time elapsed between the training and the evaluation (four years). Similarly, most (but not all) parents understood the programme their child was participating in. The most report generally supporting their children's education and engaging with their child's school and teachers.

Parents and project staff interviewed report changing attitudes about the importance of education overall, and in particular, the value of educating girls. Children generally report feeling safe with and supported by, their families. Despite this, there is also evidence that **a significant proportion of children continue to miss school at times in order to help out with work or chores at home, showing that the attitudinal changes may not yet have effectively translated into behaviour change on the part of parents and caregivers.**

Traditional, highly didactic and teacher-centred teaching methods are deeply ingrained in the educational system in Sierra Leone. Combined with this, teachers had very limited exposure to the CFS intervention due to the early termination of this component of the project with the beginning of the EVD outbreak partway through the third year of the project. Changing teachers' beliefs and behaviours towards more child-friendly and child-centred approaches will likely take a long time through very deep and targeted interventions, which was not possible given the external and uncontrollable factors of this project. However, there is some observational evidence that these changes are possible with sustained support. Therefore, **while any radical change in teaching methodology cannot be attributed to this programme, the evaluation does find that future projects would be justified in extending the GRS and CFS approaches to achieve the desired outcomes and impact through dedicated and sustained support.**

Students in the 21 original project target schools were formed into listening groups to benefit from the radio programme. In addition, PtP and CtC estimate that as many as 45,700 4-7-year-olds, 45,700 7-14-year-olds, and 45,000 parents and caregivers throughout the district may have benefitted from hearing the radio programmes. Teachers reported that more children than targeted wanted to attend the listening groups, initially because food was offered, but later, once they understood the purpose of the groups, to also benefit educationally.

Project staff and evaluators observed children retelling the stories and conveying the knowledge they gained not only to their peers but also to their parents and families. While parents were not directly targeted with sensitisation about the radio programme, those interviewed for this evaluation were aware of it, many reported listening to it, and over three-quarters of parents felt that it had helped their child to learn while school was not in session, showing that parents were engaged, interested in, and supportive of their child's education through this approach. Both the BBC and the UN Girls Education Initiative have highlighted the programme as a best practice and success story in promoting education during the EVD outbreak.

Overall, the radio programme likely increased children's motivation to learn, and there are reports of children who both newly entered the educational system and improved their performance once school reopened, through the influence of the radio programme.

However, there is concern that some life skills and child protection issues were not dealt with as well as they could have been. Some of the programmes presented negative examples of stereotypes about women and girls, challenges faced by girls, and poor role models. While these were intended to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion in the listening groups and the post-show call-in sessions, there was little evidence about how systematically these issues were addressed and whether the children listening were able to effectively understand the positive messages that were intended to come out of these discussions. In addition, **for the thousands of listeners who were not part of listening groups, there is a risk that they could have understood the negative messages to be those promoted by the programme, without the support of a meaningful facilitated conversation afterwards.** While the call-in sessions should have addressed this, there is little evidence showing how effectively this was done, and the concern remains. Future programmes using this medium should consider a method of making sure the 'lesson' is effectively delivered to

reduce the possibility of this kind of negative outcome or misunderstanding of the key messages.

Operationally, the project effectively cultivated a variety of positive relationships that contributed to its successes. **The relationship between CtC and PtP was strong, with good communication between the partners.** CtC seemed to value PtP's perspectives and input into programme implementation and was willing to change activities' modalities and timelines to support PtP's capacity and needs. CtC also provided some opportunities for capacity building of PtP staff. **Both partners also had strong working relationships with a variety of line ministries at district and national level, including MEST, MSWGCA, and MOHS (during the EVD outbreak).** The partnership with Radio Moa for the dissemination of the radio programme contributed to its wide coverage and potential for sustainability.

The effective partnerships mentioned above have the potential to contribute to the sustainability of the project's outcomes, as district stakeholders and PtP staff remain in Kailahun district, the Kissi chiefdoms, and even within the beneficiary communities themselves. However, the sustainability of the programme's outcomes may be hampered by the general difficulty of effecting meaningful and long-lasting attitudinal and behavioural change. Traditional ideas about early childhood education and girls' education; reliance within the educational system on rote learning, memorization, and teacher-centred methods; and other cultural factors are deeply ingrained among parents, caregivers, teachers, and district and national stakeholders. **While this project has shown that it is possible to change these attitudes and practices, and teachers and parents have shown appreciation for the new approaches, much longer-term sustained intervention is likely necessary before these cultural shifts will take hold in a long-lasting and meaningful way.**

To address these structural issues, the Logic Model developed as part of the project's Theory of Change by RRC-ETI included an intention to intervene for "Structural / Policy and Education System Change" at a macro-level. This implies using evidence generated by the programme to advocate with stakeholders for changes within the national education curriculum to incorporate early childhood education and develop more child-friendly schools and child-centred teaching methods. In support of this, the expected outcomes included seeing the 20 Master Trainers becoming advocates for ECE and CFS within the district and the country. This was presumably also part of the intention of the significant research conducted in partnership with RRC-ETI over the course of the project.

At this time, there is little evidence that these advocacy goals were accomplished. This is likely due to a combination of factors: the unanticipated implementation challenges that led to slower than expected roll-out of the project's originally intended activities, leaving less time for generating evidence and engaging in advocacy; and the disruptions to both the programme, and the country's educational system as a whole, during the EVD outbreak. Combined, these factors seem to have limited the project's ability to carry out its intended advocacy goals. However as discussed above, the only real path to sustainability of the programme's outcomes is to incorporate them into the country's educational system and shift the culture of education to more child-friendly approaches. Therefore, future programmes should continue to take into account at their design phase a concerted effort to drive towards data and evidence, and outline clear activities and targets for advocacy with the goal of influencing the required policy level changes.

Recommendations for future programming

- Any future projects that work to increase ‘demand’ for education services should also simultaneously work with the education system to proportionally increase ‘supply’ i.e. train more teachers, build classrooms, provide teaching materials, etc. It should also work with organisations supporting school feeding programmes to ensure the anticipated increased demand is accounted for in food supply quantifications. Otherwise, there is a risk that more children will enrol, but the resources will not be there to serve them, which could deter future enrolment efforts and increase drop-out rates due to dissatisfaction.
- Future life skills interventions should consider including lessons on positive conflict resolution skills.
- Since the LSE component of this project was not implemented, it is difficult to say whether it would have been effective. However, given very low rates of parents discussing issues such as safe sex with their children, and continuing concerns about child protection issues, these topics should definitely be revisited and included in future programmes.
- Continue to increase the proportion of female teachers engaged in the project to provide role models for girls (where possible given gender breakdown of the teacher workforce)
- Ensure that project participants – particularly community leaders and community stakeholders – fully understand the goals of the project and their expected role in it, in order to promote high-quality implementation and outcomes.
- Radio programmes that are being disseminated widely without in-person follow-up with all the potential listeners must take care to be very clear about the intended takeaway messages. Negative examples and intentional stereotypes can be useful teaching tools to instigate discussion among children and their caregivers, but reliance on call-in shows and very narrowly targeted ‘listening groups’ leaves a risk of many listeners taking away the incorrect message or lesson. The programmes should be sure to build into the content the ‘moral’ or ultimately positive message to avoid the potential for confusion and dissemination of negative messages or reinforcing stereotypes.
- Undertake project capacity assessments in the project design phase to ensure that activities conceptualised are implementable and within the capacity of the implementing partner.
- Focus on improving the quality of training through needs assessments to ascertain the capacity level of participants and preparation of adapted training manuals.
- Develop a clear exit strategy at the start of the project and work towards the achievement of an exit right through the project life cycle.
- Data generation and research are crucial to developing evidence to support future programme planning and advocacy. However, when working with local partners with identified capacity gaps, in rural and resource-poor settings, and implementing complex programmes with multiple target groups and concurrent streams of activity, the additional demands of research and intensive data collection may burden and overwhelm the implementers. There is a need to balance the research and data needs with the reality of the implementation environment.
- The only real path to sustainability of the programme’s intended outcomes is to incorporate them into the country’s educational system and shift the culture of education to more child-centred approaches. Future programmes should continue to define their approach to advocacy at a policy and strategy level from the project design phase. This should include defined activities and targets for engaging in national and district level policy, strategy, and planning initiatives, to ensure the GRS and CFS approaches are

incorporated into national practice. This could also include advocacy and participation in policy and strategy initiatives related to child protection and social welfare to reduce child labour and improve the environment for girls.

- The radio programme was an innovative way to reach a wide audience, and there seems to be interest among all partners and beneficiaries to extend the approach for use even when 'normal' school is in session (i.e. beyond the limited context of the EVD outbreak). However, the process of exporting the production of the radio programmes to the UK is not sustainable in the long term. Future projects could partner with local media outlets to build the capacity for high-quality production capacity within the country.

References

- [1] S. Leone, "Education Country Status Report An analysis for further improving the quality, equity and efficiency of the education system in Sierra Leone THE PÔLE DE DAKAR," 2013.
- [2] "Pikin To Pikin Tok radio programme - Child to Child." [Online]. Available: <http://www.childtochild.org.uk/projects/pikin-to-pikin-tok-radio-programme/>. [Accessed: 28-Feb-2017].
- [3] "Sierra Leone Education Statistics." [Online]. Available: <http://www.fhi360bi.org/user/sierraleone/index.html>. [Accessed: 28-Feb-2017].