



One day I will do something else...

**Enterprising Youth in the Diamond Fields: Creating Livelihood Opportunities in Kono and Tongo Districts, Sierra Leone**

February 2010 – September 2010

## Background

Street Kids International is a non-profit agency founded in Canada that is a global leader in developing and disseminating the strategies and tools needed to give marginalized youth around the world the choices, skills, and opportunities to make a better life for themselves. We team with youth workers to develop locally relevant, innovative training programs using award winning animations that engage kids about sexual health, drug use and youth entrepreneurship. Building on demand for and our experience in livelihood development for youth in post-conflict situations, Street Kids proposed the project “**One day I will do something else...**” to address the needs of youth involved in artisanal mining.

In 2009, The Funding Network-Toronto generously provided \$13 960.23 in support of this project and has enabled Street Kids’ to develop a critical new tool – a workshop that supports young people in exploring alternate livelihood pathways. The project was co-funded by the Diamond Development Initiative and the budget provided details the percentage of the budget that was covered by the donation from the Toronto Funding Network.

Out of the youth involved in mining, only 40% are in school and the rest have either never attended or have dropped out according to a study in the Kono District<sup>1</sup>. Research also shows that young people with alternate livelihoods tend to stay in school due to the flexibility of their schedule. The conclusion is that occupations other than mining if made available, result in more regular school attendance.

## Project Description

A 3-day participatory workshop entitled “Someday I will do something else...” was developed in partnership with the Network Movement for Justice and Development (based in Freetown) and Street Kids International to assist youth in determining their livelihood alternatives. Two workshops were held in the Kono and Tongo districts with a total of 60 youth participating. Through the workshop, youth identified that they were indeed interested in doing something else, examined their local communities and current assets for alternative opportunities and determined strategies to overcome barriers. Gaps identified included a lack of training that meets market needs, a lack of access to credit and a lack of business skills training available to low literacy youth. The conclusions will serve to assist local government, CBOs and international NGOs in determining

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<sup>1</sup> Boas, Morten and Anne Hatloy. *Living in a Material World: Children and Youth in Alluvial Diamond Mining in Kono District, Sierra Leone*. FAFO, 2006.

programs that will promote an income diversification and resultantly, increased scholastic performance in areas where artisanal mining is the primary income source.

*"I learned a lot from the workshop, I left my home to come here and thought mining was the answer. I now know that mining is not the only way out."*

– Workshop participant

### Outcomes and results

Outcome #1: Provision of a framework for effective education and livelihood training programs through active youth engagement.

The workshop "One day I will do something else..." developed as a result of this project is an engaging tool that can be used with youth to determine alternative opportunities for livelihood within their communities. The tool requires a half day of training for facilitators and 3 days with youth and is available for organizations to use who are interested in engaging youth in determining personal aspirations, conducting a local market survey and introducing the concept of entrepreneurship and business development skills. The use of the workshop is easily replicated in other locations and is suitable for low resource settings.

Outcome #2: Identification of self-employment opportunities that facilitate school attendance.

- Opportunities identified during workshop participation include: motorcycle driver, farming, tailor, carpenter, garment dying, selling products in market. The most popular aspirations identified were farming and driving.
- Challenges and gaps identified by youth in accessing opportunities: a lack of reliable power; families wanting to share in the profits of business, making it difficult to save enough to expand the business; a lack of access to capital to start a venture or invest in agricultural tools; lack of skills and education; in the rainy season the transport of goods to market is difficult

*"Without mining there is still hope to do something different"*  
–Workshop participant

Outcome #3: Identification of a viable market for a skill or trade common to youth in artisanal diamond mining.

- Agriculture and agro-business sector has the potential to absorb a large number of unskilled youth, this finding is backed up by a recent World Bank publication.<sup>2</sup>
- Rather than subsistence farming, many youth expressed interest in making money through farming (value add to products or cooperative farming involving more lucrative crops)
- Many of the trades currently offered at vocational training institutes do not reflect market demand, nor are they necessarily offered with supporting business development skills, it is recommended that a market survey is used to inform any youth livelihood program
- Market surveys can be adapted to engage youth in the process, giving youth an opportunity to learn more about local opportunities and relevant businesses

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<sup>2</sup> Pia Peeters, Wendy Cunningham, Gayatri Acharya, Avril Van Adams. *Youth Employment in Sierra Leone: Sustainable Livelihood Opportunities in a Post-Conflict Setting*, World Bank, 2009.

Findings and feedback indicate that youth were enthusiastic about participating in the workshop, having their voice heard and were able to identify viable alternative livelihoods within their communities. Ultimately the findings from this project have laid the groundwork for a framework for developing innovative youth livelihood interventions that contribute to the economic well-being of families involved in artisanal mining.

### Challenges and Lessons Learned

- There is much potential in involving youth in researching the livelihood opportunities available in their communities (rather than having organizations doing it for them), youth were appreciative of being asked for their opinions and ideas and the learning was evident;
- A peer learning component could be very useful and would be integrated to reach youth beyond those who participate in the workshop (ie. youth have “homework assignments” to involve their peers in brainstorming livelihood possibilities);
- The workshop would be best suited to use at the beginning of a project to engage youth in identifying livelihood alternatives and it is important to ensure that there is funding to follow up on the workshop (ie. provide training/apprenticeships/mentorship for youth to support them in moving to a sustainable livelihood)
- Gender: the workshop could be adapted to better target girls/women involved in the mining sector

### Next Steps

Utilizing the findings from this project, Street Kids is in the process of applying for 5 years of funding for work in Sierra Leone from CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency). The tool that was developed will be used throughout the five years to engage young people in thinking about alternative and viable livelihood opportunities. Once young people have chosen a livelihood pathway, Street Kids and our partners in Sierra Leone will provide the training and support needed for these youth to realize their potential.

*“The workshop for me was a sign of hope that there is the possibility of an alternative to mining.” -  
Workshop participant*

Pictures (these pictures have been reduced in size for the purpose of the report, originals can be sent upon request, additional pictures are also available):



Youth and children involved in mining Tongo Fields



Chief Tamba (researcher) interviews youth in Tongo



Researcher surveying youth miners



Agenda for pilot workshop in Kono