

ARET 2024

ARET is very appreciative of the support received which enables three small communities in rural Sierra Leone journey towards being more self-sufficient.

Overview

2024 was another unsettled year in Sierra Leone with political tension following a 'failed coup' in November 2023. Sadly, the country is still a low-income country despite its wealth in natural resources. Many people in Sierra Leone live in multi-dimensional poverty exacerbated by psychosocial distress experienced during catastrophic events. More recently there is deep concern about dramatic increase in drug misuse. Local surveys report that 31% of users had no formal education. Stubbornly high inflation rates have led to food insecurity, increased poverty, and unemployment.

While ARET has a limited budget, our efforts significantly benefit the local communities we serve. We are grateful for our supporters and project leaders who provide guidance and monitor initiatives, working selflessly to bring hope to their communities.

Shieldra 2024

The school in Amputee Village now accommodates Shieldra pupils progressing to Junior Secondary Education, this ensures access to education for children up to the age of 14 years. All teachers have either completed or are completing their Teaching Certificates.

Alpha Kallon, B.Ed., is pursuing a Master's in Education at Bo University. We look forward to him using his advanced knowledge to support education in Sierra Leone.

Jane Cole, B.Ed., supervises Shieldra School and leads the women's group running the Afri-Scot shop, which sews school uniforms. After a break due to her daughter Christina's sudden death, Jane has resumed her midwifery studies.

Gadsona Cole, Jane's daughter, is now enrolled in a medical degree. Gadsona is dedicated to improving healthcare in Sierra Leone. She emphasises practical experience, empathy, communication, and cultural sensitivity in her training, aiming for a career in compassionate and effective healthcare.

Given Sierra Leone's very low ranking in medical provision, evidenced by global data, ARET is delighted to finance Jane and Gadsona's studies. We have every confidence that they will 'give back' by serving their community and country.



Rogbonko



In Rogbonko we funded three students to attend Makeni University and we are pleased to report that they are now in their second year of their studies. ARET previously funded a forest school which offered weekend tutorial and reinforcement classes. We believe there is a desire to restart the forest school.

Boxes

There are many crafters in the UK who donate handmade items to ARET. The excellent quality of the items means that they are in great demand. More recently, items suited to babies have been delivered to rural maternity units as these units have little in the way of supplies. Being presented with boxes full of baby sheets, clothing, and blankets is emotional for the staff and can be evidenced on our Facebook videos. Some midwives have been put in situations where they have torn clothes they are wearing to clean and wrap newborns. Hand-knitted toys are gifts for the visiting toddlers.

Boxes also contain second-hand clothing, often surplus donated by charity shops. These are made available to those who are in need.

Our thanks go to all those who donate and to our Ambassador, Abdulai Sankoh, who tirelessly picks up boxes after they are cleared by customs and delivers them to where they are needed.

Banga Farm Community

The Roadside School continues in its role of preparing children of all ages to enter formal education. The very basics, the 'three R's', are taught. The Banga Farm Village urgently requires a local school as taking public transport to the nearest school is not an option for most families, due to the costs associated. However, it is suggested that having a basic roadside school visible to all, highlights the need for a dedicated school.

There is a waiting list for the Roadside School, and some of the pupils whose parents can afford the bus journeys have enrolled in schools in the neighbouring villages. The community is very involved in this project.

Provision of Clean Water Banga Farm

A major project for 2024 was installing clean water for the village. The water from the river was adequate, but the dumping of garbage further upstream has meant that the water has become unfit for human use. Currently, there are three standing taps with large storage tanks. The water is piped from a local reservoir. The Banga Farm Community was commendable in their participation and support. They have taken responsibility for the upkeep of the equipment. Equally commendable is that the additional taps and tanks were placed closer to the more vulnerable sections of the community.



Summary

Sierra Leone is ranked among the least happy countries in the world due to challenges such as corruption, unemployment, inequality, and rising living costs. To improve, the country must focus on reforms that address these issues and prioritise the needs of its citizens. It can be challenging to tackle systemic issues of poverty and even harder for people to live with them. It is therefore important that the work of small charities like ARET does not go unnoticed. Current global reports show that households led by individuals with little education are among the multidimensionally poor. Our focus on education ensures support reaches the right people directly. While the struggles of those we assist can feel overwhelming, the steps we take to encourage community involvement and ownership are meaningful and important.

There is little indication that 2025 is going to be any better, but we thank everyone who supports us, and the work we do is supporting a better future for the people of Sierra Leone.



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