

Project number	39907232
Title	Evaluation of educational program

Countries

Sierra Leone

Summary

This evaluation was commissioned by PMU as a learning exercise for FREPDRA, PMU and the contact Church in Huskvarna. The objective was for two consultants to assess the results and impact of FREPDRA's programme in the education and informal education sectors in the four communities of Koindu, Kono, Makeni and Port Loko.

The formal education component involved the construction of two schools, the training of seven teachers as well as the funding of teachers' salaries in the four schools. The informal education component focused on raising the community's awareness in the fields of HIV/AIDS, children and women's rights.

The evaluation shows that the objectives of the formal education component have largely been met, apart from the number of expected pupils which was unrealistic from the beginning and has further diminished due to delayed operations and transformation of two of the Primary schools into Junior Secondary schools. The global impression of the schools is that they are well managed and respond to a real need in the communities. The academic results in the two primary schools are very high and make them leaders in their regions.

A serious concern however is the financial situation of these schools, since the funding from the government requires a 5-7 year period of auto financing to begin with, which none of the schools might be able to manage before the end of the programme period. In addition, the government from 2007 has frozen all new accreditations of government-funded schools, making the future somewhat uncertain. The imminent financial crisis has highlighted the issue of ownership of the schools between the partners. Who, in a worse case scenario, will be responsible to sort out the crisis and assist the schools in difficulty? Other concerns are weaknesses in the capacity and training of the School Managers who seem poorly prepared for such a challenging situation and require appropriate training.

In regards to the informal education component, FREPDRA has targeted approximately 200 persons and offered them information on social issues linked to HIV/AIDS prevention and transmission, children and women's rights and civic education. The aim here has been to raise the community's awareness in the hope of encouraging parents and community leaders to send their children to school, but also with the overall aim of achieving positive social change within the four communities. Although the methodology of the activity is creative and has led to certain changes being clearly observable at the level of individuals and of the community (changes in perceptions and understandings, and certain changes in behaviour), the evaluation has found that the absence of an exhaustive contextual analysis has hindered FREPDRA in developing more targeted objectives and strategies, and consequently also in reaching long-term, sustainable changes. The fact that the activity is still so young, and that FREPDRA has not received much support from its partner PMU in planning and developing the activity at the onset of the programme, explains these weaknesses.

Generally, the review raises questions about the quality control and monitoring of the programme in the context of PMU's high turnover of staff. Indeed very little support has been offered to FREPDRA in this phase of its programme, and the changes at the level of PMU's programme staff have prevented it from having a consistent interlocutor with whom to discuss and move certain issues forward. The formal education component is in need of serious attention and consolidation in order not to jeopardize previous investments that provide appreciated and relevant support to needy communities in

one of the poorest countries in the world. The informal education component requires a robust and systematic accompaniment in order to equip FREPDRA with the appropriate tools (context analysis, strategies, monitoring systems etc.) to carry out a relevant and sustainable intervention in this domain.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the recommendations for the formal education component are the following: Firstly; to manage the upcoming financial crisis for the schools in the programme, secondly; decide on the scope of partnership for the next few years, thirdly; the need for PMU to create a functioning M&E-system and fourthly; clarify roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders involved in the project. For the informal education component, the recommendations are to: firstly; carry out a thorough contextual analysis to provide hard data on which to base a new phase for this programme. Secondly; reflect on the nature of change FREPDRA wishes to reach in the communities it works in. Thirdly; define a new set of objectives and indicators which will become useful working tools to plan and monitor progress on activities. Fourthly; envisage a transition phase to test out different types of methodologies and strategies to reach the most effective and sustainable results. This internal reflection should be assisted by PMU.

**Recommendations** Based on the findings and conclusions, the recommendations concern the following areas: Firstly; to manage the upcoming financial crisis for the schools in the programme, secondly; decide on the scope of partnership for the next few years, thirdly; the need for PMU to create a functioning M&E-system and fourthly; clarify roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders involved in the project.

1. Partners should review and update objectives, targets and indicators to have a common understanding of the current situation, what the project is supposed to achieve and help monitoring progress as the project is coming to an end. Changes in targets should be explained and justified, including taking responsibility for internal shortcomings as to make learning possible.
2. In the current situation described above with a likely financial crisis approaching, it should be a priority to focus all energy on consolidating the schools that already have been established and that are threatened by the upcoming end of project. This means not planning for any new schools at this time.
3. FREPDRA should initiate a discussion with PMU as soon as possible, about a transition phase possibly consisting of training modules of school managers in general management, planning, and financial management to be able to run the schools properly. This could make up a project of capacity building and emergency funding to avoid jeopardizing these investments.
4. Develop simple result based management keeping track of and follow up on key objectives and targets, such as number of pupils, gender rate, number of books, funding dependency etc providing clear figures for responsible managers.
5. Develop the advocacy capacity and activities in order to do real civil society work and not service delivery, challenge government to take responsibility for education. Take initiatives and use the existing the educational network to become a voice that demands accountability of the government.
6. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all the actors involved. The schools have been built by Swedish tax payers' money, now legally owned by FPMSL, in the future subsidized by the government, offered to the communities who are involved in the management. Who is responsible to secure future funding? Can the community halls used for formal and informal education, church activities

also be used for income generating?

7. When government assistance for the existing schools is secured, adding more schools could be realistic, provided realistic plans, structures and human resource are in place to manage an increased workload and secure funding. The current project has shown that correct planning is crucial, surprises require contingency plans and moving into secondary schools is already a new set of challenges.
8. PMU needs to implement mechanisms that mitigate turnover of staff and secures tracking of project documents, status of reports as well as appropriate and timely feedback on reports. A study visit of the systems at use in the Swedish Mission Council and the Swedish UN-Association may be relevant.