



**UN EBOLA RESPONSE MPTF  
PROJECT Quarterly PROGRESS REPORT  
Period (Quarterly Report): 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016 to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017**

<b>Project Number and Title:</b> #38- Title: Reintegration of Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS) Volunteers Burial Teams	<b>PROJECT START DATE<sup>1</sup>:</b> 23-06-2015	<b>AMOUNT ALLOCATED by MPTF</b> <i>(please indicate different tranches if applicable)</i> \$ USD 1,975,639.87	<b>RECIPIENT ORGANIZATION</b>  United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
<b>Project ID:</b> 00095545			
<b>Project Focal Point:</b> Name: Ghulam Sherani E-mail: <a href="mailto:ghulam.sherani@undp.org">ghulam.sherani@undp.org</a>	<b>EXTENSION DATE:</b> 31-05-2017	<b>FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS</b>	
<b>Strategic Objective (STEPP)</b> Improved mental health of SLRCS volunteers through enhanced treatment and management of stress and/or trauma related disorders  SLRCS volunteers that undergo the re-skilling, vocational training or business development stream having recovered livelihoods and are able to engage in income generation activities  Improved access of SLRCS volunteers to financial services  Improved Reskilling and reintegration programmes for the wider ERW	<b>PROJECT END DATE:</b> 31-05-2017	<b>EXPENDITURES</b>  \$676,488.55	<b>IMPLEMENTING PARTNER(S):</b>  The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)  Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS)
<b>Mission Critical Action</b> MCA - Description			
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Sub-National Coverage Areas:</b>		

<sup>1</sup> The date project funds were first transferred

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Sierra Leone, West Africa	<p>Full list of countries and/or districts</p> <p>Kenema District, Western Area, Port Loko District, Kambia district, Bombali District, Koinadugu District, Tonkolili District, Moyamba District, Pujehun District, Bo District, Kailahun District, Bonthe District and Kono District</p>
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**QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT RESULTS MATRIX**

OUTPUT INDICATORS					
Indicator	Geographic Area	Projected Target (as per results matrix)	Quantitative results for the (three months) reporting period	Cumulative results since project Start (quantitative)	Delivery Rate (cumulative % of projected total) as of date
<i>Description of the quantifiable indicator as set out in the approved project proposal<sup>2</sup></i>					
# of SLRCS volunteers completing psychosocial assessment	All the 14 Districts	800	0	800	100%
# Red Cross Staff trained in Community Based Psychosocial Support (CBPSS)	All the 14 Districts	28	28	28	100%
# of SLRCS volunteers trained in Psychological First Aid	All the 14 Districts	60	0	60	100%
# of SLRCS branches with a referral system to specialized mental health services	All the 14 Districts	14	14	14	100%

<sup>2</sup> For more project details please see narrative below.

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# of SLRCS volunteers undertaking counselling sessions	All the 14 Districts	800	0	800	100%
# of SLRCS volunteers referred to specialized care and treatment and receiving on-going support	All the 14 Districts	200	0	1	0.5% <sup>3</sup>
2) Assessment # of SLRCS volunteers completing skills/educational/interest assessment	All the 14 Districts	800	0	800	100%
(3) Livelihood # of SLRCS volunteers receiving career skill development training	All the 14 Districts	62	55	55	89% <sup>4</sup>
Proportion of SLRCS volunteers streamed through the career skill development training that successfully complete the training	All the 14 Districts	75%	89% (55/62)	89%	89%
# of SLRCS volunteers receiving vocational training	All the 14 Districts	225	0	223	99% <sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The initial target was set at 200 volunteers, however, after conducting the psychosocial assessment only one volunteer was referred for specialised treatment. The low number could be attributed to the effectiveness of psychosocial support interventions offered to the volunteers through individual and group sessions thus they were able to cope with the situations and return to their normal lives.

<sup>4</sup> 55 SLRCS SDB/IPC volunteers underwent career advisory placement training conducted at CAPS centres at Fourabay College in Freetown and Eastern polytechnic in Kenema. At the time of the training seven volunteers did not turn up owing to the fact that three volunteers were already in employment and four did not attend because they had gone to their rural homes in remote villages and could not be reached.

<sup>5</sup> The two volunteers worked in Bombali district during the EVD response; however, the volunteers could not be reached owing to relocation to Liberia immediately after the end of the outbreak.

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Proportion of SLRCS volunteers streamed through the vocational training that successfully complete the training	All the 14 Districts	75%	57% (128/223)	57%	57% <sup>6</sup>
# of SLRCS volunteers receiving business development training	All the 14 Districts	405	0	405	100%
Proportion of SLRCS volunteers streamed through the business development training that successfully complete the training	All the 14 Districts	75%	0	95% 385/405	95% <sup>7</sup>
Market assessment and analysis emergent industries/livelihood areas	All the 14 Districts	800	0	800	100%
# of SLRCS volunteers returning back to tertiary studies	All the 14 Districts	108	0	108	100%
(4) Financial inclusion # of SLRC volunteers receiving planning and advisory services	All the 14 Districts	800	800	800	100%
# of SLRC volunteers receiving financial management advice linked to UNDP's small and medium enterprise development and	All the 14 Districts	800	800	800	100%

<sup>6</sup> 75% of those streamed through vocational training are anticipated to successfully complete one year or six months training program depending on the course they selected. Currently, 57% of the volunteers that undertook vocational training have successfully completed the training. The bulk of the remaining volunteers are completing their training in April, May and July 2017.

<sup>7</sup> 95% of the volunteers who opted for BDS stream successfully completed the training; however, the remaining 5% that never completed the training were noncommittal, citing reasons such as unavailability of transport refund, training allowance, meals during the training among others.

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recovery programmes					
# of SLRCS volunteers receiving training on financial inclusion and access to financial services such as savings, credits, insurance etc.	All the 14 Districts	800	800	800	100%
<b>EFFECT INDICATORS (if available for the reporting period)</b>					
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Geographic Area</b>	<b>Projected Target (as per results matrix)</b>	<b>Quantitative results for the (three months) reporting period</b>	<b>Cumulative results since Project Start (quantitative)</b>	<b>Delivery Rate (cumulative % of projected total) as of date</b>
Proportion of SLRCS volunteers with signs of stress and/or trauma related symptoms reporting an ablation of said symptoms after treatment	Nationwide – 13 districts	50%	0	1 (1/1)	100% <sup>8</sup>
Proportion of SLRCS volunteers that require on-going care for trauma and/or stress associated symptoms still receiving treatment	Nationwide – 13 districts	50%	0	1 (1/1)	100% <sup>9</sup>
Proportion of SLRCS volunteers that were referred to specialized mental health care that complete the treatment and management of their condition	Nationwide – 13 districts	50%	0	1 (1/1)	100%

<sup>8</sup> It was estimated that 50% of the volunteers with signs of stress and/or trauma related symptoms would report ablation of said symptoms after treatment. Only one volunteer after psychosocial assessment showed signs of stress or trauma related symptoms and has received treatment and recovered.

<sup>9</sup> The volunteer who was under treatment recovered fully and currently there is no volunteer undergoing treatment.

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Proportion of SLRCS volunteers in the career skill development stream successfully joining the workforce	Nationwide – 13 districts	50%	5% (3/62)	5%	5% <sup>10</sup>
Proportion of SLRCS volunteers in the vocational development stream gaining a vocational skill	Nationwide – 13 districts	50%	57%	57%	57% <sup>11</sup>
Proportion of SLRCS volunteers in the business development stream having established small or	Nationwide – 13 districts	50%	0	0%	0% <sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> 5% (3/62) of the volunteers that opted for CAPS stream were already in employment at the time CAPS training was being conducted. 89% of the volunteers that opted for CAPS successfully completed the training and plans are underway to provide internship for them by linking them with some employment organizations. It is envisaged that the internship will provide an opportunity for the volunteers to gain work experience and also provide them the chance to showcase their skills, competencies and abilities hence improve their likelihood of being absorbed in the labour market.

<sup>11</sup> 57% of the volunteers that opted for vocational training have successfully completed the training and the bulk of the remaining volunteers are completing their skills training in April, May, & July 2017.

<sup>12</sup> 95% of the volunteers that opted for BDS stream successfully completed the training. The volunteers developed business plans that are going to be executed once start-up capital is provided. The start-up capital will initiate the process of setting up or expanding the small and medium enterprises envisioned in the business plans.

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medium enterprises						
Proportion of SLRCS volunteers that resume their studies successfully complete their education	Nationwide – 13 districts	50%	12% (13/108)	12%	12% <sup>13</sup>	
Proportion of SLRCS volunteers able to access financial services and savings	Nationwide – 13 districts	50%	100%	100%	100% <sup>14</sup>	
Proportion of SLRCS volunteers able to access loan/micro-credit facilities	Nationwide – 13 districts	20%	0	0	0 <sup>15</sup>	
Proportion of the wider (Ebola Response workers)ERW that are able to access future reintegration and reskilling programs	Nationwide – 13 districts	50 percent of the entire ERW Studies	0	0	0 <sup>16</sup>	

**NARRATIVE**

**Situation Update** (please describe critical changes, if any, in the situation that affect the project (1-2 paragraphs))

***Psychosocial Support:***

A pilot PSS needs assessment was conducted for 108 SDB/IPC volunteers during routine monitoring of PSS interventions in Port Loko, Kambia, Bombali, Tonkolili and Koinadugu districts between 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> of January, 2017. The preliminary results of the assessment showed that none of the volunteers showed signs and symptoms of trauma associated with being involved in the EVD response. It was observed that the volunteers had recuperated and returned to the normal lives. This result is attributed to the continuous support the volunteers received through individual and group sessions since the beginning of the project.

**CBPSS Training to SDB/IPC team leaders in 14 Branches**

28 SDB/IPC team leaders successfully completed a three days training on community based psychosocial support (CBPSS). The training was conducted between the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February; 2017. It is expected that the training will promote individual, family and community resilience and wellbeing. The volunteers from each district did community resource and capacity mapping

<sup>13</sup> 12% of the volunteers that resumed their studies after the outbreak have completed their studies based on the level of education they were prior to the outbreak. From the remaining students, there are some who will complete their studies in 2017, some in 2018 and the last batch that got registered in 2017 will complete their studies in 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Financial inclusion training for 800 SDB/IPC volunteers was completed with support from Ecobank. All the volunteers have access to banking services with the bulk majority already having bank accounts with various banks across Sierra Leone. It is envisaged that the training will improve the volunteer's ability to manage their finances, and thus enhance their capability to access an array of other financial services.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

<sup>16</sup> The project is a pilot and thus the lessons learnt from implementation of reintegration and reskilling of the SLRCS burial and IPC teams will be invaluable in development of policy and reintegration of wider ERWs. This will be done once the project is completed.



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exercise that aided in identifying gaps and vulnerabilities of their communities. The mapping exercise will be useful in strengthening ownership of response efforts in the event of a future crisis. The training also enhanced the volunteers' understanding on the needs of vulnerable groups, concepts of child protection and elements of psychosocial needs mapping.

*Training on referral System to specialized mental health services*

Mental illness is a public health burden. Studies show that as much as 40% of all adults worldwide that attend general health care services are suffering from some kind of mental illness and an estimated 1 in 5 adults will experience a mental health problem in their lifetime. The number of cases of mental health illness tends to be exuberated especially during crisis. The challenge is that most people with mental health problems would never admit to it and those with a mental illness are often discriminated against by their family and community and neither are they treated sympathetically by health workers. It is against this backdrop that the training on referral system to specialized mental health services was organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation for 26 mental health nurses, 14 SLRCS field health officers and 14 Psychosocial support coaches.

The training addressed the role each of the participants has to play in provision of mental health and psychosocial support services based on the professional and legal role each has. The result of the training also was creation of common mental health referral and follow up tools for use by the districts. Particular attention during the training was drawn from Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) guideline for provision of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) in emergency settings that resulted in establishment of a coordination mechanism between the three referral systems (protection, health and mental health).

***Reskilling Support:***

*Continuing Education*

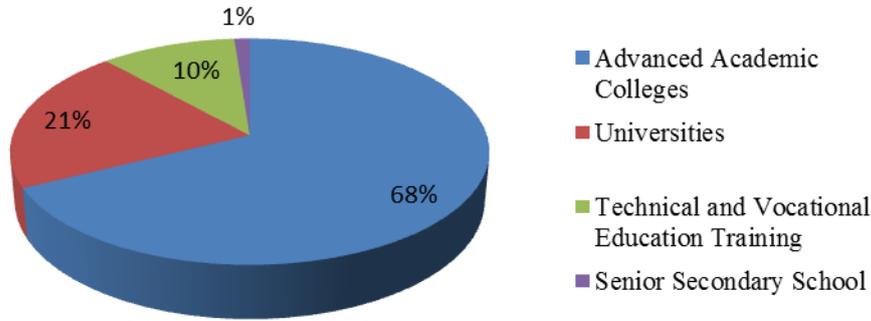
12% (13/108) volunteers that resumed studies in senior secondary school, technical and vocational educational training (TVET) centres and tertiary institutions after the EVD outbreak have completed their studies in their various levels of education. The project provided a one year tuition fee for all the 108 volunteers that resumed their studies and follow up will be conducted to ensure family support and where possible government or district council support will be sort to ensure the remaining 45% (48/108), 33% (36/108), and 10% (11/108) complete their studies in 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively.

The project is also supporting an additional 266 volunteers from contact tracing, psychosocial support, and social mobilization pillars of the EVD response that resumed their studies when the project was expanded to these pillars. The students are currently enrolled in senior secondary schools, Technical and vocational educational training (TVET) centres, advanced academic colleges and universities in the proportions shown below.

***Chart 1: Social Mobilization, Contact Tracing, Psychosocial Support Volunteers Educational Options***

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**Social Mobilization, contact tracing and psychosocial Support**  
**volunteers' educational options**



The students enrolled in the various institutions of learning are being supported with payments of one year tuition fee for the academic year 2016 -2017 and are envisaged to complete their studies in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 based on their year of study they are currently.

The total of 374 (108+266) volunteers that resumed their studies are pursuing WASSCE, HTC, national diplomas, higher national diplomas, degree courses and master programs in various educational institutions across Sierra Leone.

**Vocational Skills Development**

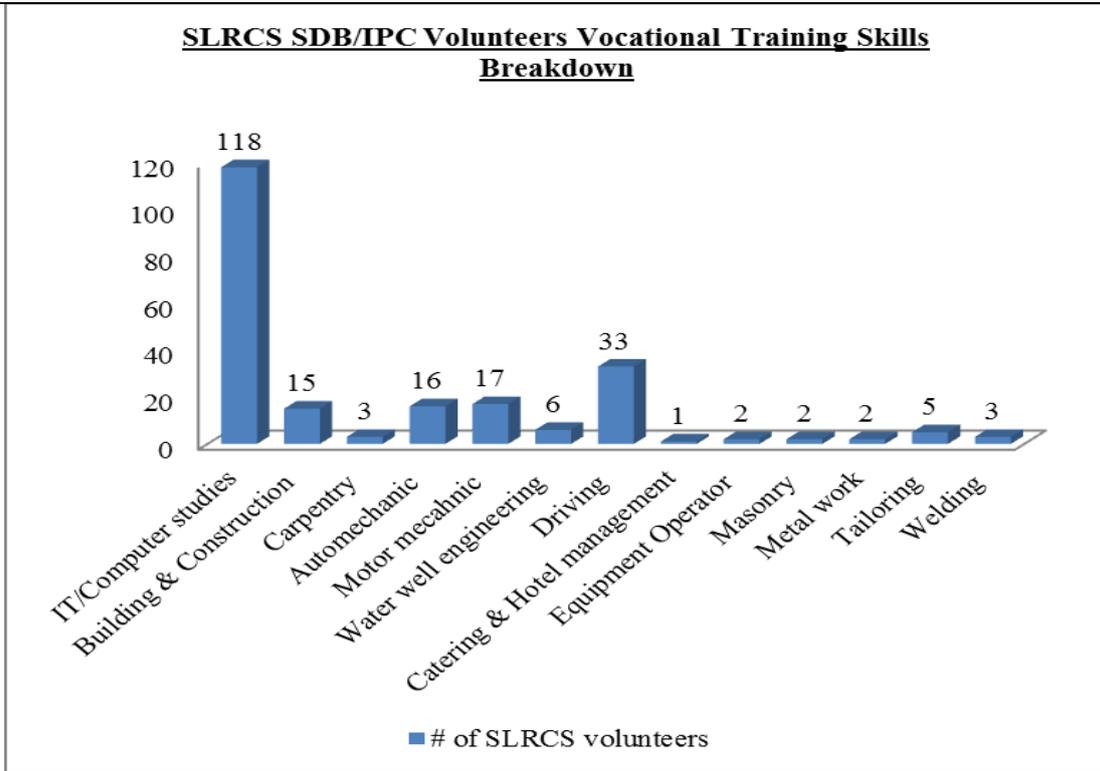
As of February 2017, 57% (128/223) of the volunteers who opted for vocational skills training have completed their one year or six months training program at various vocational training institutions across sierra Leone. The remaining 20% (45/223), 21% (46/223), and 2 % ( 4/223) are expected to complete their training program in April, May, and July 2017 respectively. The chart (**Chart 2**) below shows the breakdown of the vocational skills the volunteers are undertaking.

Once the volunteers complete their vocational skills training, they will be provided with start-up kits that comprise of tools or equipment necessary to operationalize the skills they acquired during the training. The table (**table1**) below provides details of the start-up kits. The volunteer are expected to develop a long term relationship with the training institution for mentorship and also for technical support due to technological changes or advances in their line of training.

The project expansion to other pillars of the EVD responses resulted in additional One hundred and seventy seven (177) volunteers joining the vocational stream. The volunteers have enrolled in various vocational training programs in various institutions across Sierra Leone. The chart (**Chart 3**) below shows the breakdown of the vocational skills being undertaken by the volunteers.

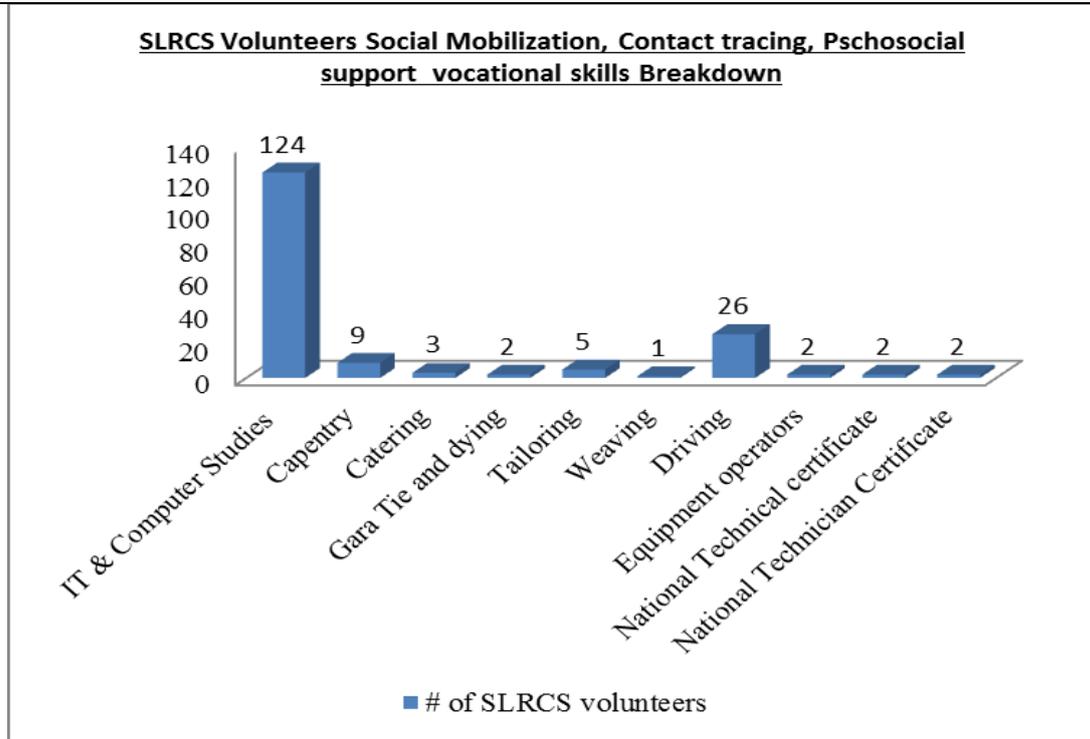
**Chart 2: SLRCS SDB/IPC Volunteers Vocational Skills Training Breakdown**

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**Chart 3: SLRCS Social mobilization, contact tracing, and psychosocial support Volunteers vocational skills Training breakdown**

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**Table 1: Details of start –up kits for SLRCS SDB/IPC, Social Mobilization, Contact Tracing & Psychosocial support volunteers**

Vocational Skills Training	# Of SLRCS Volunteers	Description of Start-Up Kits
IT/Computer Studies	242	Laptops
Building & Construction	15	Building & Construction Toolkit
Carpentry	12	Carpenters Tool Kit
Auto Mechanic	16	Auto Mechanics Toolkits
Motor Mechanic	17	Motor Mechanic Toolkit
Water Well Engineering	6	Water Well Engineering Equipment
Driving	59	Internship
Catering & Hotel Management	4	Internship
Equipment Operator	4	Internship
Masonry	2	Mason’s Toolkit
Metal Work	2	Metal Work Toolkit
Tailoring	10	Tailoring Equipment
Welding	3	Welding Equipment
National Technical Certificate	2	Internship
National Technician Certificate	2	Internship
Weaving	1	Weaving Equipment
Gara Tie And Dyeing	2	Gara Tie And Dyeing Equipment’s
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	

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A total of 400 (223 SDB/IPC +177 Soc.mob, CT & PSS) volunteers are envisaged to complete vocational training by the end of 2017. This will increase the proportion of skilled labour force necessary for self-reliance and self-actualisation and in turn contribute to the progressive development of the society and the economy of the country.

**Business Skill Development (BDS)**

95% (385/405) of the volunteers that streamed through business development successfully completed the training. The training provided the necessary skills in business planning and management. At the end of the training the volunteers developed business plans that have been vetted by the BDS service providers for provision of start-up capital.

The initial plan was to support 150 business plans with start-up capital, however, after a budget review it was agreed to provide start-up capital to all the business plans. The business plans developed by the volunteers are in two categories; either individual or group. The group business plans have varied number of members per group ranging from 3 members to 21 members per group. Provision of start-up capital would be in two categories – individual business plans will be provided start-up capital of SLL. 3,000,000 per business plan while group business plans will be provided SLL.2, 500,000 per member of the group. The start-up capital will be provided on a competitive basis based on the overall assessment by the BDS service providers. The start-up capital will be disbursed in the next quarter in two tranches. The first tranche will be used as an indicator if the business plans are being implemented as intended in the proposals and the second tranche will be the balance of the agreed start-up capital for the business plans.

It is envisaged that the start-up capital will kick start the business already envisioned in the business plans and in the long run lead to establishment or expansion of the small and medium enterprises being implemented by the volunteers.

**Career Advisory Placement Services**

89% (55/62) of the volunteers that opted for career advisory placement successfully completed a four days training at career advisory placement centres at Fourabay college in Freetown and Eastern Polytechnic in Kenema between the 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2017. The training imparted skills, information and insights on career planning and development, job search skills and how to prepare for interviews. These are the critical elements that the volunteers require to gain access to information and links that can lead to securing employment.

To strengthen further the ability of the volunteers to acquire jobs, an eight weeks internship program is being organized for all these volunteers in institutions and companies that provide services in line with the volunteer's skill or career field studied. It is envisaged that the internship will provide an opportunity for the volunteers to gain essential work experience and also provide them the chance to showcase their skills; competencies and abilities hence improve their likelihood of being absorbed in the labour market.

**Financial inclusion**

Financial inclusion training for 800 SDB/IPC volunteers across all the 14 districts branches was completed on 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, 2017 with support from Ecobank. Currently, all the volunteers have access to banking services with all the volunteers having bank accounts with various banks across Sierra Leone. The training imparted skills, knowledge and information required by the volunteers to make prudent financial decisions regarding savings and lending schemes. It is envisaged that the volunteers will apply the skills acquired in improving their access an array of financial services and thus encourage long term engagement with banking and microcredit institutions.

**Monitoring and reporting:**

During the reporting period a number of monitoring missions were carried out to support project implementation and provide quality assurance of the activities being implemented. The following are the highlights of the monitoring missions.

- PS monitoring mission was conducted between 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2017 by IFRC and SLRC in Port Loko, Kambia, Bombali, Tonkolili and Koinadugu district branches. During the monitoring mission PSS needs assessments was piloted with 108 SDB/IPC volunteers and the preliminary result of the assessment showed that none of the volunteers still showed signs and symptoms of trauma associated with being involved in the EVD response. It was observed that the volunteers had recuperated and returned to the normal lives.

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- Support supervision visit was conducted between 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2017 to career advisory placement training centres at Fourabay College and Eastern Polytechnic Kenema. The visit initiated a fruitful discussion on providing internship opportunities for the volunteers that completed the training. The recommendations were based on the need to increase the contact time between the prospective employers and the prospective employees.
- Field monitoring was undertaken between the 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2017 to 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017 to support financial literacy training at Kenema, Kailahun, and Kono and Koinadugu districts branches. During the training the staff echoed that the training was a source of inspiration for the volunteer's and it was generally agreed that the training was essential in promoting individual financial freedom. Some of the staff expressed the wish that the training should have been conducted prior to the EVD outbreak and that it would have made a huge difference in the lives of the volunteers because it could have encouraged a sense of accountability and financial prudence of the money they received.
- An annual business development service (BDS) review workshop was conducted in Makeni on the 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2016. The workshop was chaired by National Youth Commission (NAYCOM) and co-chaired by UNDP. The workshop provided a detailed analysis of the success and challenges in BDS implementation since its inception in 2012. The outcome of the workshop was development of an action plan to improve delivery of results under the program. The workshop was useful in providing information necessary in implementation of the SLRCS/IFRC BDS program.
- Project review workshop for SLRCS branch managers, field health officers, and PSS coaches was conducted in 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2017. The meeting addressed some of the bottlenecks in project implementation and an action plan was developed jointly for the implementation of the remaining planned project activities.

**Key Achievements**

The following are some of the key achievements of the project during the reporting period:

- 28 volunteers across 14 SLRC district branches were trained on community based psychosocial support
- 800 SDB/IPC volunteers and staff benefited from financial inclusion training supported by Ecobank across the 14 district branches.
- 55 SDB/IPC volunteers successfully completed career advisory placement training at CAPS training centres at Eastern Polytechnic Kenema and Fourabay College Freetown.
- 26 Ministry of Health and Sanitation mental health nurses, 14 Field health officers and 14 PSS coaches benefited from training on referral system to specialized mental health services.

**Challenges**

An initial agreement had been reached on proportional distribution of start-up capital to 150 business plans, however, due to adjustment on budget, start-up capital will be provided to all business plans but on a competitive basis. Some of the volunteers still express high expectation on the amount of capital to be provided and a few others have demonstrated unconcealed intentions in implementation of the business plans. This poses a threat in actualization of the intended objective of using the grant to establish small and medium enterprises. To address this, the team has come up with a plan of disbursing fund in two tranches with close supportive supervision to ensure funds are utilized as agreed. This will be coupled with signing a Memorandum of understanding between the volunteers before the fund is disbursed to their accounts.

**Indirect Beneficiaries**

The project as of November, 2016 had reached a total 69,248 direct and indirect beneficiaries through psychosocial support intervention. Psychosocial support activities have been scaled down owing to the fact that the volunteers have recovered from the traumatic experience and carried on with their normal lives. During the reporting quarter a total of 849 (194 females & 655 males) beneficiaries that includes SDB/IPC volunteers (172 female & 628 male), mental health nurses (7 males & 16 females), PSS coaches (11 males & 2 females) and field health Officers (9 males & 4 females) were reached through financial inclusion, CBPSS, referral system to specialized mental health services and career advisory placement trainings.

**Table 2. Indirect Beneficiaries**

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No. of Indirect Community Beneficiaries reached via CBPSS and Individual PS Counselling – Figures stand for extended family members		November, 2016 Cumulative	December 2016, January & February, 2017
<b>Women</b>	-	19567	194
<b>Girls</b>	-	17180	0
<b>Men</b>	-	18048	655
<b>Boys</b>	-	14453	0
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>69248</b>	<b>849</b>

Annex: 1



Training Photos of the Project

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Annex 2: Project Case Studies

**CS 1 : Millicent N Gbangbaya, Female Safe and Dignified Burial Team Volunteer : Vocational Training Stream (computer software)**



MILLICENT N. GBANGBAY, 24 years is a former volunteer of the Safe and Dignified Burial (SDB) in Pujehun, Southern Sierra Leone. She is one of the eight hundred beneficiaries of the UNDP/Red Cross Re-skilling and integration project for Safe and Dignified Burial and Infection Prevention and control (IPC) volunteers who were the front-line fighters against the deadly Ebola virus that enveloped Sierra Leone and its immediate neighbors including Guinea and Liberia in 2014.

Millicent opted for one year computer soft and hardware package at the Growth Vocational Training Centre amidst numerous options available at the Centre. Reminiscing on her time as a SDB volunteer, she discussed the valuable role she played as a female volunteer in the burial process;

*“As a female volunteer, I played a very unique role during the Ebola crisis in the burial team. Whenever there was any community female death I was always the first to enter and placed corpse in a dignified position before my male colleagues can proceed with the collection procedures. I was a petty trader before I joined SDB of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society”* She revealed *“Collecting dead bodies in Ebola epidemic operations is a very risky job but I took the venture in order to give honor to the dead and to further draw the attention of the world to Red Cross humanitarian activities”*

Disclosing her ordeal encountered with her community she mentioned *“Initially, when I joined the SDB my family and community members shunned me, I took refuge at a friend’s house that was also incited against me and finally threw me out. I ended up renting a room where I stayed alone”* She sobbed as she reflected on the past horrible days and added *“My monthly incentive from the Red Cross really salvaged my situation.*

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Explaining her personal view of the UNDP/SLRCS Re-skilling and integration program she said *“The re-skilling project is a very good package for us and I have particularly chosen computer application software as a skill”* Laughed broadly in manifestation of her appreciation for the course. *“I chose computer course because the prerequisite for all advertised job today is tied on at least basic knowledge in computer software applications”*

*“I am very grateful to the SLRCS and UNDP for all that I have achieved and the capacity development I am going through. I am currently living an independent and respectable life. I am not very rich but am living an average life of my own and am more than sure that this will be an advantage to my career”*

In her conclusion she said *“I am pleading to UNDP through the SLRCS to kindly extend this opportunity to colleagues who were in other pillars during the Ebola response like Social Mobilization, Contact Tracing and Psycho Social Support that have not benefited from this scheme so that we all have equal opportunity for an independent and sustainable life”*

**CS 2: Mohamed Rodgers, Safe and Dignified Burial Team Volunteer: Vocational Training (Carpentry)**



MOHAMED ROGERS, 26 was doing Carpentry and Masonry apprenticeship at an unequipped workshop before the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in Pujehun town, Southern Sierra Leone. Following the EVD crisis, Mohamed volunteered to be a member of the Safe and Dignified Burial team of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society in Pujehun Branch. With support from the UNDP/Red Cross re-skilling and integration Mohamed is now practicing formal vocational skills in carpentry in Pujehun.

In a relax mood with a pencil behind his right ear and his left hand resting on the plane, he revealed *“I volunteered to be part of the Red Cross Safe and Dignified Burial team because there was a desperate need to salvage the already ugly situation at the time”* Revealing further he said *“Initially, when I opted to give my service as volunteer to collect and bury dead bodies my family members frowned at my idea but I explained to them the realities that if we don’t do it for our community who will? That made them to accept my participation as SDB volunteer”*

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Suddenly he stopped for a while and shook his head reflecting on the past. *“I had desperate urge for the tedious apprenticeship I was doing before I joined the burial team. With this in mind I usually reserved some of my monthly incentive for the pursuance of this career after Ebola. It was very challenging because I already had a child and a wife at home to take care of including extended family members”.*

He further added ;

*I chose carpentry because it was a career I had started before Ebola stroke. I was looking for an opportunity to restart this career and if by chance I had this opportunity provided by UNDP/Red Cross, it is the right time for me to fulfill my dreams”. I am sure that after this one year program I will certainly live an independent life.*

**CS 3: Jestina M Fonnie, Female Safe and Dignified Burial Team Volunteer: Business Development**



JESTINA M FONNIE, 27. Nurse by profession and a mother of two, Jestina was one of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS) Beneficiary Communication (Ben. Comm.) Volunteers attached to one of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Safe and Dignified Burial (SDB) in Matru, Bonthe District, Southern Sierra Leone.

Jestina explained why she took part in Safe and Dignified Burial as a Ben Comm. Volunteer;

*“I was concerned when some community members were reluctant to take up the challenge at the time of the epidemic when people were dying at random, though risky but needed some dignified burial”* Summarizing her role she said *“As Ben Comm. Attached to the SDB team, my role was to pacify family members and general public and explain the process involved in the collection and burying of dead bodies before the collection and burial”*



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Jestina further detailed the reaction of her community to the volunteer role and the support she received by the Red Cross to overcome such misunderstanding and hostility ;

*“I was shunned by my community including when they realized that I was attached to the burial team but I was rescued by the Red Cross by renting an apartment for SDB members who were ostracized by either their community or family members. With the support of the Red Cross Branch Psycho Social Support focal point, I have been peacefully accepted in my community and I have constructed a house with two rooms from the monthly incentives received during the EVD operations”*

Jestina is part of the UNDP/Red Cross Re-skilling and Reintegration Scheme and is enrolled in the popular Business Development courses offered throughout the country.

Commenting on the livelihoods support scheme she said ;

*“This re-skilling project is a timely and useful opportunity for us. I can describe it as an appropriate expression of appreciation for the crucial role we played during the fight against a faceless enemy called Ebola and this scheme will surely add more value to my Nursing career.”*



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