EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

14\textsuperscript{th} February marks 6-months since a devastating mudslide and flooding in Freetown caused over 1,000 deaths and over 3,000 displacements. February fieldwork by Street Child social workers to assess families’ current situations reveals:

- National and international aid efforts made a great short-term impact;
- But 44\% of affected families have no current source of income (only 5\% of whom said they had no income prior to the disaster);
- 41\% families are stressed about how they will afford to retain their children in education
- Help rebuilding livelihoods is essential for most disaster-hit families
INTRODUCTION

In the early hours of 14th August continuous heavy rains triggered flooding and severe mudslides in the Regent and Lumley areas of Freetown killing over 1,000 people and displacing over 3,000. Six months on from this devastating event, Street Child, in conjunction with our local partner Street Child of Sierra Leone (SCoSL), has created this report with the primary aim of assessing the current needs of the communities residing in the mudslide-affected area.

As emergency funding has ended and as the NGO presence in the area is diminishing, hundreds of families continue to live in the affected areas, many of whom still have no home or income to sustain their families let alone send their children to school. However, very little data exists on the current situation of these communities, making the development of programmes and establishment of funding priorities difficult. As such a survey of 317 households has been undertaken to gain an initial picture of the challenges being faced by families currently living in affected areas.

The survey was conducted by trained SCoSL social workers in four severely affected areas, Kapinga, Kamayama, Juba and Regent. 317 households were randomly selected across the three sites in order to gain a cross sectional overview of the situation on the ground.

Findings show that the mudslide has largely affected income generation amongst those surveyed, with 44% of families now having no income or depending on a family member for support. This is a drastic increase from the 5% who were in this position prior to the mudslide.

The survey also showed an encouraging number of children in school, with 84% of children from families surveyed were currently enrolled and attending school. However, when assessing the likelihood of dropping out of school, the numbers are less promising. 41% of families surveyed were identified as either having children out of school or at risk of dropping out of school - suggesting that whilst enrolment rates are currently relatively high, the sustainability of this continuing is less clear.

Overall the study has provided much needed indication of the impact of the mudslide on families in the post-emergency context. What it shows is that there is significant work to be done to help families rebuild their livelihoods in order to provide for their children and send them to school. We look forward to continuing to work with these affected communities to make this a reality.
BACKGROUND

At 5am on the 14th August 2017, thousands of tonnes of rock and water tore down the mountainsides surrounding Freetown, devastating communities and flooding nearby areas. Over 1,000 people were killed and three times this number lost their homes and businesses.

In response to this emergency, centres were established where victims congregated in Regent, Kamayama, Kaningo, Colvert and Dwazark. Street Child had a strong presence in each of these areas and distributed emergency supplies including ready-to-eat food packages, water, toiletries, blankets and clothes. In addition to this Street Child’s trained social workers were able to provide psychosocial support to victims and help to share crucial wash messaging to stop the spread of diseases such as Cholera.

SIX MONTHS ON:

Following a period of busy relief work in which NGO’s and government ministries provided support, there has slowly been a shift in focus away from these communities. The government, via the Office of National Security (ONS), undertook a programme of registering victims who each received £200 in cash and living essentials such as rice, cooking oil, soap, blankets and cooking utensils. However, many were unable to register at the time or missed the registration period and therefore have not benefitted from this support.
SCoSL social workers have continued to work with the communities currently residing in the mudslide affected areas and fed back to Street Child the high level of need that existed for these individuals. However due to a severe lack of information on mudslide survivors, it has been difficult to identify what the specific needs of these communities are. Without this information, establishing which groups to target and how best to utilise funds is challenging. As such it was decided that 6 months on from the original event an initial survey should be conducted to try and answer some of the most pressing questions.

STREET CHILD’S EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Local NGO Street Child of Sierra Leone (SCoSL) was one of the main front-line responders in the aftermath of the disaster. With generous support from DFID, UN WFP, GoSL ONS, Street Child UK, US and EU branches as well as several other INGOs, SCoSL:

- distributed 87,142 ready-to-eat food packages
- provided 5,874 packs of clothing, 2,094 towels and 3,236 toiletries
- reached 9,727 with community sanitation advice
- provided 13,242 wet food meals and 1,105 bedding packages

Street Child would like to recognise the extraordinary efforts of the Street Child of Sierra Leone team of 86 staff who worked 10 hours a day, 7 days a week for 4 weeks to provide the emergency support that was so desperately needed.

METHODOLOGY

15 social workers were charged with undertaking this survey - these were individuals who had worked in the mudslide-affected areas throughout the response and who had strong ties with communities. Social workers split into two teams covering Kaningo, Kamayama, Juba and Regent, some of the worst affected areas. Houses were randomly selected for interview alongside the mudslide area in order to provide a cross-section of communities and teams moved carefully through these to avoid duplication.

The survey questions were designed to look at the situation of households before and after the mudslide. A focus was made on establishing changes in income sources for households as well as looking at child school enrolment. The team met daily following their work in the field to compile and compare data. This allowed us to use the results to inform the next day’s activities and identify any issues that were occurring.
An unforeseen challenge that was encountered during this data collection was that the government, and other organisations, had recently surveyed the victims with no follow-up support or assistance. Social workers were met with resistance from some victims who felt that they were being exploited by the international community. However, in the majority of cases the positive reputation of Street Child in communities allowed teams to overcome this.

Another secondary issue that arose, was in relation to social workers collecting contact details of victims. As government support from the ONS has been distributed via mobile phone, the inclusion of a question asking for the victim’s phone number led to the assumption that funding would be provided. Again, social workers were largely able to mitigate this and explain the purpose of the exercise, but in future, care will be taken to avoid such confusion.

Lastly, it must be noted that a limited sample size of 317 households have been assessed, in only three areas, and therefore caution must be exercised when generalising these findings. What can be gleaned however is a starting point for identifying the needs of some of those affected and a basis for further research to build on.

**KEY FINDINGS:**

44% Of Families In The Affected Area Have No Form Of Income Or Are Reliant On A Family Member/Partner

Change in income sources was the most clearly evident issue for the cohort assessed. While not surprising considering the large-scale loss of property, the number of families lacking an income source has increased significantly. Compared to the situation before the mudslide where only 5% of families had no source of income or were reliant on a family member, this number has increased to as much as 44%. The chart below summarises the changes in income source before and after the mudslide. A significant decrease in the number of families engaged in petty trading and an increase in those with no source of income can be seen.
41% Of Families Had Children Who Are Out Of School Or At Risk Of Dropping Out

In the areas surveyed, social workers spoke to 317 families, identifying a total of 909 children, 140 of which were out of school. This somewhat surprisingly shows that 84% of children surveyed were found to be in school. Which is encouraging and demonstrates the resilience of families and the positive work done by the government and international community to mitigate the impact of the mudslide on enrolment.

However, while this enrolment figure is promising, retention has been identified as more problematic. When conducting their assessments social workers identified 41% of families as having children that were either at risk of dropping out of school or out of school. Meaning that although a large proportion of children are currently in school, the longevity of this enrolment can be questioned.

This is strongly linked to loss of income sources, with many children’s education currently being provided by family members or other members of the community. For families with no means of generating their own income, or with income that is not sufficient to cover their children’s education, a question can be raised over how long their children will continue to be enrolled in school.
It is also interesting to note that 27% of children from families who did not receive government support via ONS were identified as out of school in comparison to 12% of children from families who did receive this support. This suggests that government support may have had a positive impact on school enrolment, although the sample size makes drawing conclusions like this difficult.

136 Families Identified As In Need Of Immediate Emergency Support

Social workers were asked to assess whether the vulnerability of families qualified them for ‘immediate emergency support’ from Street Child. Based on a number of factors, including living conditions, income, health status, and child school enrolment, almost 43% of those surveyed were identified as eligible.

Almost A Third Of Families Lost Their Homes, Property And At Least One Family Member

When asked ‘what did you lose during the mudslide?’ 29% of families surveyed indicated that they had lost everything. Families surveyed were often found to be experiencing multiple forms of vulnerability. In addition to the psychological trauma of losing a loved one, many were having to rely on neighbours or family members for housing and had no source of income. When designing programmes, it is important to remember this and work to address these issues in a combined approach.

Lack Of Access To Government Schools

While not formally included as a question in the survey, social workers found a number of families who were unable to send their children to school due to absence of a government school in their area. After losing their income sources families are no longer able to send their children to expensive private schools near their homes. The programme design needs to take into account the access families have to an affordable school.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While this study has shown some interesting trends, a larger more comprehensive study will be needed to see if these findings are replicated across mudslide affected communities. It does however act as an interesting starting point on which to build future research and begin to identify some of the challenges that are being faced by those residing in mudslide affected areas.
Although an encouraging number of children are still enrolled in school, for many families the inability to generate income, coupled with loss of property for many has led to a situation in which a large number of families have children who are at risk of dropping out of school. This confirms previous findings by Street Child in the 2016 ‘Girls Speak Out’ report which highlighted poverty as the main barrier to education. In response to this it is recommended that a livelihood programme such as the Street Child ‘Family Business Scheme’ be initiated to help families generate a stable income and keep their children in school. It is also recommended Street Child provide educational support packs for those who are lacking the educational materials needed for schooling. Lastly given the number of families who identified the absence of affordable government schools in their area as a significant barrier to their children’s education a needs assessment should be conducted to look at the lack of access to affordable schools.