

STEER PROJECT

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

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Getting Tozai Children Back To School

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Children love to learn in fun and stimulating environments, a lot of us possibly grew up and went to schools in places we are proud to call “school”. This was however not the case for children in Tozai community of Illela Local Government Area of Sokoto State, Nigeria. When Save the Child Initiative (STEER Partner Civil Society Organization) first visited the community, the dilapidated state of the community primary school was a sorry sight to behold.

The people of Tozai community are predominantly farmers. Children most times follow their parents to the farm rather than to school. Some of the reasons for low enrolment and attendance in schools are not far-fetched; parents have a nonchalant attitude towards western education; government’s neglect over time also resulted in classrooms buildings being dilapidated, with some of the structures at risk of collapsing, putting children at risk of harm or injury. All these have led to parents most parents not wanting to send their children to such a learning environment. Save the Child Initiative, having undergone different trainings on STEER project, including quality improvement, economic strengthening, child protection, parenting, etc., was able to call the attention of parents to the importance of improving the quality of life of their children and ensuring children are in school. Working with the community, it was agreed by all that children need to learn in an enabling environment where they could develop and achieve their full potentials. Working together with members of the School Based Management

Committee (SBMC), Child Protection Committee (CPC), and the Community Quality Improvement Team (CQIT), the protection and safety concerns raised by parents were discussed. Tozai community primary school have a population of 164 pupils (males: 120, females: 44) of which only 40 pupils attended school regularly. Previous efforts to renovate the classrooms through advocacy visits and follow up to the Local Government Education Authority proved abortive.

With renewed joint collaborative efforts, a new advocacy visit was paid by representatives of STCI and the different community groups to the secretary of Illela Local Government Education Authority, Mallam Attahiru Abdullahi Gada, who promised to take the issue up for further discussion at the state level. The advocacy visit yielded positive fruits as resources were eventually mobilized for the renovation of three classrooms in Tozai Community Primary School.

It didn’t take long before the attitude of parents changed. The sight of the beautiful new classrooms was an attraction itself both for children and their parents. Enrolment and attendance increased rapidly. The primary school now has 380 pupils (males: 250, females: 130), out of which 300 attend school regularly. The increase in enrolment and retention led to the provision of more chairs and desks for the pupils. The school’s headmaster, Mallam Ibrahim Abdullahi, expressed his heartfelt gratitude to

STCI, the SBMC, CQIT and CPC for their efforts in restoring children back in the community school.

STCI works with over 8,000 vulnerable children in Illela Local Government Area of Sokoto State. This success was achieved using STEER’s system’s strengthening approach to help families and communities meet the needs of their own children.



Tozai Primary School before renovation



Tozai Primary School after renovation



Tozai Primary School children in their new classroom

Economic Strengthening for HIV Affected Household

Hannatu Peter is a caregiver resident in Kabong community with her three children, one boy and two girls. When Hannatu was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, she thought all hope was lost for her and her children. She was however counselled and eventually linked to the nearby healthcare centre for antiretroviral services.

With support from the community volunteer attached to her household by Mashiah Foundation, Jos, Hannatu has been able to adhere strictly to her treatment regimen, maintaining prompt visitations to the clinic. She is also an active member of the Kauna support group. Her children have provided her with the emotional support needed to live with HIV/AIDS. In her words, “yara na ma suna tamaka mi ni da shen magani, ini da za fita za su tambaya ko na shan magani nawa”. This means “my children are helping, they remind me to take my drugs. Whenever they notice I am about leaving the house without taking it, they are really helpful”.

Hannatu’s initial fears of how she would take care of her children were also allayed through the various Household Economic Strengthening interventions she received through Mashiah Foundation. Hannatu was introduced to trainings on income generating activities and managing finances, and became a member of the village savings and loans association in her community. From the savings group, Hannatu was able to secure a loan to build a poultry business. The business started with 25 birds but has now grown to over 200 birds. Halima learnt how to prepare local feed for the birds and sells the eggs they produce. She also sells the manure from the wastes. With the proceeds from the business, Hannatu was able to build a shelter for herself and her children, pay their school fees and ensure they have adequate nutrition.

Hannatu’s household is one of the over 1000 “more vulnerable” households that STEER CSO partner, Mashiah Foundation has been working with in Jos North LGA of Plateau state, to strengthen their capability to take care of their vulnerable children due to the effects of HIV/AIDS.

Bringing Healthcare Closer to Children and Communities

In Gyero community, Jos South Local Government, Plateau State, the Primary Health Centre (PHC) constructed and equipped by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2014 was abandoned sequel to the crisis occasioned through the attacks by Fulani herdsmen. Healthcare workers simply did not show up again due to the risk posed to their lives. This resulted in community members having to travel to Tanchol and Bukuru express, a distance of about 50 kilometers to access health care services. This greatly limited access to health services, especially by vulnerable households, and few resorted to patronizing local medicine vendors without diagnosis and right prescriptions from doctors.



Gyero community members are now able to receive healthcare in their own community

The Gyero Community Quality Improvement Team (CQIT), a community structure established by STEER CSO partner, Heal The Youth Foundation (HTYF) saw a need to address this problem. As part of its interventions, the team visited the director of health, and the deputy director Social Welfare departments of Jos South Local Government to advocate for the deployment of new healthcare workers to the community PHC.

In April 2016, the Director of Health fulfilled her promise and posted five new health workers to Gyero Primary Health Centre to the delight of the whole community. The health centre is up and running again and community members are able to receive healthcare services without travelling long distance.

Appreciating the work done by the CQIT, Mr. Yusuf Titsi, the chairman of the primary school parents teachers association, said, “we are grateful for the work being done by

STEER project in our community, this hospital would not have been functional without it. This project has shown us that we can achieve more by working together as a group.”

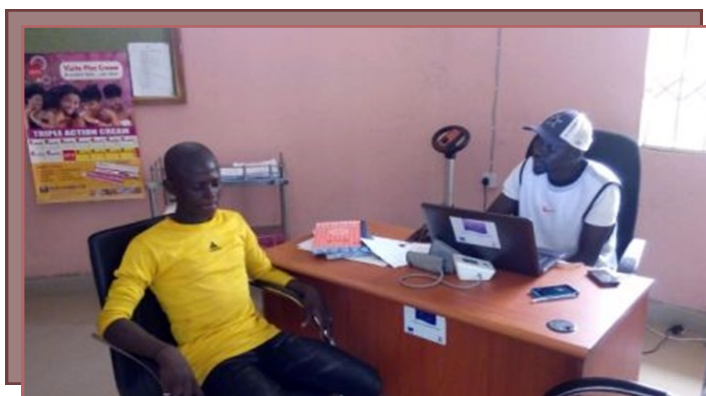
Gyero community is one of the 20 communities in Jos South Local Government of Plateau State where HTYF is implementing STEER project.

Curbing Harmful Drug Usage by Youths in Ali Kazaure Community

Over the years, the consumption of harmful drugs and other illegal substances has gradually become a cause for concern in Northern Nigeria. Substances such as Cannabis Sativa, Marijuana, Heroin, Cocaine and Steroid are taken in large quantities especially by young people between the ages of fifteen and thirty years old. Other drugs such as Tramol and Codeine are also used in excess without medical prescription by these group.

The increase in the rate of drug abuse has also been accompanied with its resultant harmful effects, such as emotional and psychological breakdown, biochemical dependency and also financial hardships as abusers spend more and more to satisfy their addiction. These effects go beyond the individual directly involved as family members and the communities also indirectly bear the brunt of substance abuse.

Plateau state has its own “fair share” of drug abuse by youths. In various communities of the state, young people, especially males, consume and abuse drugs at an alarming rate. Various factors are responsible for this; they include lack of education, low awareness of risks involved, stress, peer influence and poor parenting. Ali-Kazaure community of Jos north Local Government Area is no exception, with drug abuse not restricted to males only, as many young women were also involved. However, with the formation of the Quality Improvement Team (CQIT) in the community, things are about to change. The team members prioritized drug abuse as the major issue to be addressed in the community and a target was set to reduce the number of youths involved in drug abuse by at least 50% over the next one year.



Ahmed (17 years), one of the drug addicts from Ali Kazaure, at a counseling session with Dr Luka M. Audu of Apurimac-Onlus

To address the issue, the team decided to partner with “Say No to Drugs Life Watch Initiative”, a community based organization with expertise in dealing with youth and drug problems. The team carried out awareness campaigns and sensitization targeting youths, community leaders, schools and religious institutions. Drug peddlers in the community were also engaged to minimize sales to underage youths. Finally, referrals were made to rehabilitation centres for counselling and recovery for those needing help to overcome their addiction.

One of the youths referred was Sabiu Ahmed, 17 year old strongly addicted to Tramol, Codeine and Diazepam. He was identified, counselled and linked up to Apurimac-Onlus, a trauma healing centre located at Katako, Jos Plateau State that provides rehabilitation and vocational training services. The CQIT followed up with Sabiu to ensure that he adhered to his treatment and rehabilitation procedures. He also received vocational training in shoemaking.

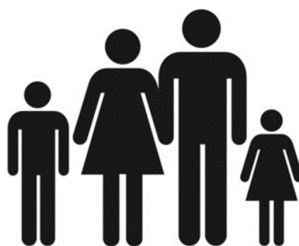
Sabiu is one of the over 500 youths that the CQIT in Ali-Kazaure has been able to help overcome drug abuse over the last 12 months. Though not yet at their 50% target, the team has made tremendous progress. More members of the community are now well sensitized and the community is working together through collaborative efforts to ensure its youths use drugs responsibly.

Mashiah foundation is implementing STEER project in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau state. The CSO has formed seven other CQITs in communities within the local government and all are addressing service delivery issues affecting over 8,000 orphans and vulnerable children.

STEER PROJECT DASHBOARD



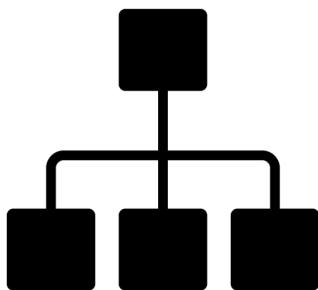
303,605 OVC served



29,894 beneficiaries supported to access HIV services



711 kids clubs formed, benefitting 46,768 children



62 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) strengthened to serve OVC



1,547 community groups established to support caregivers



=N= 40,999,770 (\$146,428) saved across village savings associations

Systems Transformed for Empowered Action and Enabling Responses (STEER) for Vulnerable Children (VC) and Families, is a 5-year USAID/PEPFAR funded project led by Save the Children along with other consortium partners (Mercy Corps, Management Science for Health, Association for Reproductive and Family Health, and America International Health Alliance) operating in seven States of Nigeria: Kaduna, Kano, Sokoto, Bauchi, Plateau, Lagos and Cross River. STEER's goal is to ensure that all orphans and vulnerable children access and utilize comprehensive and coordinated services and are able to realize their full rights. The project targets 675,000 vulnerable children and 175,000 caregivers.

STEER is creating greater country ownership and leadership through strengthened governments, civil society and project beneficiaries to facilitate greater access to and uptake of HIV services and further mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on Nigerian children and families. STEER supports Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and community structures to provide comprehensive and coordinated services for caregivers and children covering seven service areas -Health, Nutrition, Education, Child Protection, Psychosocial Support, Shelter & Care, and Household Economic Strengthening.

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USAID-Systems Transformed for Empowered Actions and Enabling Responses

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