

HEALTH IN ACTION

Health Poverty Action and Find Your Feet Newsletter

Autumn 2019



In this edition:

Supporting women and children's health and nutrition in Sierra Leone

Plus: Mental health and resilience in Zimbabwe, locals tackling malaria in Laos and much more...

**HEALTH
POVERTY
ACTION**

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INTRODUCTION

Health Poverty Action and Find Your Feet are linked charities that share resources and expertise so we can better support marginalised communities to enhance their health, livelihoods and wellbeing.

Health Poverty Action was founded in 1984 after a young British doctor returned from Afghanistan with a profound understanding of the connection between health and poverty. We act in solidarity with health workers, activists and communities worldwide to improve health and challenge the causes of poverty.

As health is an issue of social, political and economic justice, while working practically alongside communities to support their struggle for health, we also campaign to tackle the root causes.

Find Your Feet was founded in 1960 by journalist Carol Martin in response to the plight of Eastern European refugees after the Hungarian uprising.

Over the years we have evolved from being an organisation that provides humanitarian aid to one that supports long-term rural development projects. We have also shifted our geographical focus from Europe to Asia and Africa where we believe the need is greatest.

We help rural families experiencing poverty in Asia and Africa to grow enough food so they don't go hungry, to strengthen their voice so they can speak out against injustice and to earn enough money so they can find their feet.

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Fatu brings her daughter Ami for a nutrition check-up in Sierra Leone

JOIN THE MOVEMENT – HEALTH FOR ALL IN A JUST WORLD

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Registered charity no. 290535





► Binty and baby Isatu attend a nutrition clinic supported by Health Poverty Action

HAPPY MUMS HAPPY TUMS

Our new appeal builds on our work around maternal and child health with communities in Sierra Leone. Donations made to the 'Happy Mums, Happy Tums' appeal before 31 December 2019 will be doubled by the UK government!

Matching your donations with



UKaid

Wherever you live in the world, pregnancy and early childhood can present challenges for parents and families. For mothers in rural Sierra Leone, these challenges can be a matter of life and death. Health Poverty Action's UK Aid Match appeal, 'Happy Mums, Happy Tums', aims to support and empower mothers in rural Sierra Leone to improve their health and that of their children, primarily through nutrition.

Together, we will train community health workers and equip health clinics in rural Sierra Leone to give mums the nutritional information and support they need to give their children the best start in life. We'll support community-led initiatives which provide sustainable sources of nutritious food for mums, their children and the community.

This appeal builds on work we've already done and partnerships we've developed with communities, health workers and institutions in rural Sierra Leone since 2005.

One of our previous projects in the same region focussed on maternal health. We used a similar approach to engage, inform and support a range of community stakeholders, including healthcare workers, women and young people. This led to a 41 percent decrease in the maternal mortality rate over the course of three years, as the

“The biggest problem we face is nutrition. Most children who come here are here with a feeding problem.”

Asha, nurse

Fatu and Ami's Story

Fatu is 22 years old and her daughter, Ami, is two years old. They live in a rural area of northern Sierra Leone, where Health Poverty Action has been working with the community to improve children's health. Fatu explains how a year ago, Ami was very sick with malnutrition.

“She got sick, she lost weight and I had to bring her to the health centre.”

The health clinic worked with Fatu to suggest nutritional food that she could afford, and that Ami would eat. By working together, Ami was able to get better.

“They told me to wash my hands properly before giving Ami her food, and to give Ami peanuts in the morning and evening... without this service, I would have lost my child.”

In the future Fatu hopes that Ami will be educated and have a good job, like a nurse or a minister in the government.



community addressed key issues around childbirth, reproductive health and healthcare provision.

Asha – A Nurse’s Story

Asha has been a nurse at Kagbere health centre in northern Sierra Leone for five years. Health Poverty Action has been working together with staff at this health centre for many years.

Asha says, “The biggest problem we face is nutrition. Most children who



come here are here with a feeding problem. Most times they have been given water and rice too young, or without a varied nutritional balance. Most of the parents who come here haven’t been taught what food to give their children.”

With support from Health Poverty Action, Asha can teach parents about the importance of breastfeeding and the different nutritional foods they can give their children to help them grow.

“She got sick, she lost weight and I had to bring her to the health centre.”

Fatu



Donate now:

You can help more families and communities in Sierra Leone, like Fatu’s and Asha’s, by contributing to our appeal.

Give to Health Poverty Action’s ‘Happy Mums, Happy Tums’ campaign before 31 December 2019 and the UK government will double your donation. To make a donation, please complete and return the enclosed donation form in the prepaid envelope or, alternatively, use one of the methods below:

- **Web:** www.healthpovertyaction.org
- **Phone:** 020 7840 3777
- **Mail:** Health Poverty Action, 31-33 Bondway, London, SW8 1SJ

Matching your donations with





Spotlight on



Communities in Zimbabwe addressing mental health and building resilience

John Mhlanga is 51 and lives with his family in the Chimanimani district of Zimbabwe. John is a Community Health Worker and Voluntary Health Educator, leading a Community Health Club. He is also an experienced farmer who leads a Farmer Action Learning Group in his village; helping his peers to implement sustainable farming practices.

John has been trained and supported in these roles through initiatives established by Find Your Feet alongside local partner organisations, with funding from Comic Relief, with the aim of promoting mental health, wellbeing and resilient livelihoods. John liaised with traditional leaders in order to organise meetings with the community, addressing issues around mental health. He tells us:

“Due to the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness, my people could not disclose that they had family

members with mental illnesses. I had to put my cell phone number in public places to promote private conversations. Oh! That night I did not sleep with text messages flowing in my phone whilst others were calling. They were inviting me to visit their homes and meet with their mentally ill relatives. This worked very well. I visited them all.”

As John gained the confidence of the community, they assisted with identifying more people with mental illnesses, eventually identifying over 100 people. He made arrangements to accompany them and their caregivers to their nearest health centres to seek treatment for the first time, with some being referred to hospitals for further assessments.

Reflecting on how the community mobilised to support people with mental illnesses, as well as challenging stigmatisation and discrimination around mental illness, John tells us:

“The mentally ill have been a marginalized group with none to cater for them but this project has shown them love and appreciation in the society. We believe the project will continue to help us include the mentally ill in development and social groups”.

After the storm

Chimanimani district was devastated by Cyclone Idai in March of this year. John recalls the immediate impact:

“I woke up on 16th March 2019 and saw that my field that was green with seed and food crops yesterday was washed away during the night by the cyclone and replaced with a valley of stones. I did not know if I was dreaming or not. I wished it was a dream but it was not”.



John lost the food for his family for the coming year, the seed for future years and almost all of the arable land and its organic fertility to the cyclone. He also lost his irrigation pipes, meaning that he had no water for agricultural purposes and his family had to travel for half a kilometre to collect water for their home.

John observed the impact on people with mental illness and their caregivers, as he struggled to reach them in person and by phone in the aftermath of the cyclone. He saw that families were finding it hard to cope, with some asking for help to secure medicines and others criticising him for not visiting them. Realising that vulnerable people were depending on him motivated John to show resilience and to redouble his efforts to stand up for himself, his family and his community.

Ultimately, John was able to recognise some positive developments, despite the suffering caused by Cyclone Idai. Many people were motivated to join his Farmer Action Learning Group, raising the number from 18 to 50, largely because he had showed strength and led others in efforts to normalise their lives in the aftermath of the cyclone. The Community Health Club also expanded its membership. John explains:

“The training that I did in mental health...helped me and my networks to cope with this horrible situation because we know that we can develop health complications if we think about this bad thing that befell us instead of what we can do to improve what is happening to us.”

Your contributions mean we can continue to support innovative projects like this. Please visit www.findyourfeet.org to donate today.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Working with remote communities in Laos to tackle malaria

In rural areas of Laos, distance is a major challenge for people seeking to access health services. The cost of travel to a health centre or hospital prevents many people from remote villages from seeking treatment. For some ethnic minorities, language is a big constraint.

During rainy season, many remote villages where Health Poverty Action works are inaccessible. To address this, we train and support village malaria workers and volunteers to provide health education, testing and treatment to local people throughout the year.

Mr Bouasone and Mrs Naeng are farmers from Phaloung Village. They contracted malaria from staying in their rice fields, which are located near the forest, during the rainy season. Mr Bouasone and Mrs Naeng report that around half of the people in their village have had malaria. Some have had it more than once because they do not sleep under insecticide treated nets.



▲ Mr Bouasone and Mrs Naeng were treated by their village malaria worker

Many go to the forests to hunt and collect forest products for food and to sell in the market to support their families. This

places them at risk of infection from mosquitoes carrying malaria parasites. The trained village malaria worker from their village conducts tests and provides medicines. She also advises and educates people on the symptoms of malaria, how to prevent it and the importance of seeking immediate treatment.

Health Poverty Action, with funding from Comic Relief, has trained more than 1,000 village malaria workers and volunteers who provide health services in remote communities like Phaloung village. Mrs Naeng explains: “our village malaria worker is very helpful to us and to our community because she is from the village and we can easily go to her house anytime that we are sick.”

Mr Bouasone concurs “when I feel sick I always go to see our village malaria worker. She tests me for malaria if I have high fever. I got the medicine from her that helped me recover. I cannot go to the health centre or hospital in the district or province because transportation is not available in our village.”



▲ A village malaria awareness session

**A GIFT IN YOUR
WILL HELPS PEOPLE
AROUND THE
WORLD CONTINUE
TO TAKE CHARGE OF
THEIR OWN HEALTH.**



Stand with the communities, campaigners and doctors who've been taking a different approach to tackling poverty and poor health for over thirty years.

Health Poverty Action was founded in 1984 by a young doctor on his return from Afghanistan. Today, because of our committed supporters, we are able to work in 18 countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America.

To find out how even a small gift in your will can make a huge difference, please contact

fundraising@healthpovertyaction.org

or 020 7840 3777.

**HEALTH
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DEAL OR NO DEAL

At Health Poverty Action we are part of the global movement fighting to address the root causes of poverty and poor health. This means we speak out against trade deals which would harm people's health both in the UK and around the world.

As a no-deal Brexit looms closer, the risk is greater than ever that the UK may be destined for a US/UK trade deal. This would open the NHS up to further privatisation and put an end to the publicly owned, universal health service we cherish.

As our policy team campaigns for health systems across the world, it remains crucial that we fight back against threats to our own NHS! With your support we work in solidarity with activists, communities and NGOs campaigning for fairer access to medicines, against privatisation and damaging cuts in the UK and internationally and make the case for progressive alternatives to our current economic system.

You can find our recent briefing entitled 'Trading up for health: How to prevent trade deals from undermining health' online here: bit.ly/HPABrexitHealth



Vital Statistics

Did you know that for every £1 raised, 96p goes towards our programmes? This means that as much of your money as possible is going to where it is needed most.



Health Poverty Action and Find Your Feet currently work in 18 countries across Asia, Africa & Latin America. We act in solidarity with health workers, activists and communities to improve health and challenge the causes of poverty.



Our work in partnership with local communities and agencies has benefitted almost 2 million people across the world over the past year.

HAPPY MUMS HAPPY TUMS EVENTS

Join us at our upcoming events and support mums in Sierra Leone to take charge of their own health, because healthy mothers lead to healthy families. All proceeds raised through these events will support the 'Happy Mums, Happy Tums' Appeal and all donations will be generously doubled by the UK government. For more information, please contact Gaby Brown by email at g.brown@healthpovertyaction.org or call 020 7840 3760.

Eat with Me

Join us to celebrate food worldwide! Try curry dishes cooked by well-known chefs (including MasterChef quarter finalists Yui Miles and Ajay John). Tickets include all food, drink and a goodie bag.

- Buy your ticket today: bit.ly/2kSgNtf
- Date: Tuesday 22nd October, 6:30-9:30 pm

- Venue: Halcyon Interiors, 120 Wigmore St, Marylebone, London W1U 3RU
- Tickets: £30 per person

**Happy Mums, Happy Tums:
An event to celebrate and
support mums worldwide!**

Hosted by a well-known celeb and mummy social media influencers, guests will be treated to delicious canapes, complimentary drinks and a goodie bag! What's more they can speak to a selection of the UK's top baby brands and an opportunity to listen to a panel of parent experts.

- Buy your ticket today: bit.ly/2lVobEs
- Date: Wednesday 13th November, 6:30-9:30 pm
- Venue: Mayer Brown International LLP, 201 Bishopsgate, London, EC2M 3AF
- Tickets: £25 per person

Matching your
donations with



HAPPY MUMS HAPPY TUMS

KNOWLEDGE MAKES MOTHERS POWERFUL AND BABIES HEALTHIER

Support mums in rural Sierra Leone to take charge of their families' health through good nutrition

"If this service was not here I would worry for my child's life"

Binty and Isatu

Make a donation today

Double the impact you can make! Support over 6,000 women and children in rural Sierra Leone like Binty and Isatu.

Give to Health Poverty Action's 'Happy Mums, Happy Tums' campaign before 31 December 2019 and the UK government will double your donations up to £2 million.

£22 could pay for one radio broadcast to share healthy food tips with new mums

Match funding from the UK government will directly support the health and nutrition of mums and young children in rural Sierra Leone, and public donations will support Health Poverty Action's work where it's needed most.

How to donate:

Web: www.healthpovertyaction.org

Phone: 020 7840 3777

Mail: Health Poverty Action,
31-33 Bondway, London, SW8 1SJ

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