



## **PROJECT TITLE:**

**Improving Early Childhood Education Development in Rural Forest Communities in Porkpa District Grand Cape Mount County (western Liberia)**

### **YEAR 1 REPORT**

**NOVEMBER 2022 – NOVEMBER 2023**

## **PROJECT INTRODUCTION**

With Support from a German charity foundation KinderMissionsMerk, SAMFU is implementing a project to improve early Childhood education intended to benefit over 150 school-going kids five communities (Green Back City, Camp Israel, Soso Camp, Fula Camp and Varney Camp) within the Gola Forest National Park located in Western Liberia particularly within Sokpo clan, Porkpa District, Grand Cape Mount County. These communities are noted for high rate of food insecurity, poverty and low human development capacity in Liberia due to the lack of basic social services poor infrastructure including improve education to provide quality education. As such, most parents of school going kids were previously left with no option but send their kids to distant relatives as a mean of acquiring quality education.

To help curtail the many challenges faced by parents and to solidify foundations for school going kids in target communities, SAMFU secure funding support from KinderMissionsWerk to provide improve early childhood education facilities to benefit target communities.

Key for achieving during this project implementation is to provide targeted kids with improved education facility including construction of modern seven-classrooms building, one hand pump and four-rooms latrine. This project also target annually supplying targeted kids with education material (books and other early childhood education materials), support school feeding program as well provide annual early childhood education development training and monthly compensation to volunteer teachers.

In the heart of rural Western Liberia, where the Gola National Forest Park's lush foliage and rich biodiversity envelop the landscape, a transformative initiative has taken root. The "Construction of a Primary School and Improving Childhood Education Development in Rural Forest Communities in Western Liberia, Archdiocese of Monrovia/Liberia (24 months)" project stands as a beacon of hope and opportunity, brought to life through the collaborative efforts of SAMFU (Save My Future Foundation) and KinderMissionsWerk. This visionary project aims to not only uplift the educational landscape but also to nurture the futures of children in the surrounding communities, specifically within the Sokpo Clan of the Porkpa District, situated in Grand Cape Mount County.

Commencing on the significant date of November 25, 2022, the project embarked on a transformative journey that would span a full 24 months, culminating on November 24, 2023. The terrain this project has sought to reshape was one of educational disparity and struggle. Before SAMFU's intervention, the communities encompassing Fula Camp, Varney Camp, Camp Israel, Green Bank City, and Soso Camp faced significant challenges. Their children learned in the shade of trees, guided by underqualified instructors. In essence, their educational landscape was fraught with obstacles.

Yet, from the moment SAMFU's intervention began, a windswept change of hope and determination has prevailed. These communities have received more than a promise; they have seen the tangible and resolute actions that have set a new course for their children's education.

The project's overarching objectives are both noble and ambitious. It is more than a simple school construction initiative; it is an endeavor to lay the foundation for quality childhood education development in these underserved communities. It seeks to illuminate the path toward a brighter future by addressing educational disparities through comprehensive measures and activities, closely coordinated with local leaders and the community.

It's about providing not only the physical infrastructure but also the intellectual foundation for education. Volunteer teachers are being trained, not only for the present but also for the future, instilling a culture of learning that will continue to thrive in the years to come.

The collaboration of SAMFU and KinderMissionsWerk is bolstered by the active participation of the target communities. Their involvement extends from providing the very land on which this dream is built to contributing surveying expertise, construction materials, and the priceless human resources required to manifest this vision.

In the following sections, we delve deeper into the remarkable journey this project has undertaken, detailing the measures and activities that have collectively formed the bedrock of transformation, and a brighter future for the children in these communities.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The success of the project over the reporting period can also be attributed to the direct involvement and contribution of the targeted communities. Their involvements came in the following form: provision of the 25 acres flat forest land for the construction, surveying, provided construction materials such as sand and gravel, and provided human resource to aid in the overall construction process.

Following the introduction of the project, and upon understanding its transformative power, the targeted communities embraced the project, which is evident by their total involvement in the

project from the onset. More detail of the project implementation and the involvement of the target group is given below in the measures and activities.

## **MEASURE AND ACTIVITIES**

### **November 2022 to June 2023**

Firstly, in a meeting with target communities, SAMFU presented its plan to support the improvement of local schools. The communities enthusiastically welcomed the idea of a new school and identified Fula Camp as the central location for the project. They pledged to survey and prepare the land, providing the required legal documents. The community members and the District Commissioner collaborated with SAMFU throughout the project stages. The identified site for the school is a 25-acre flat forest land at the back of Fula Camp, which the communities agreed to clear and prepare according to the Ministry of Education's requirements. SAMFU committed to constructing a seven-room elementary school with bathrooms, offices, and a playground. They will also provide training and compensation for volunteer teachers, and jointly run the school with the communities for two years after its completion.

Meetings were held with the Catholic churches in Monrovia, Bomi and Grand Cape Mount to brief them about SAMU activities in the region and other parts of Liberia — in setting the stage for the implementation, SAMFU conducted a meeting with the Catholic Parish Priest at his office on Ashmun street, Central Monrovia, which resulted in having him informed of the project's goals and objectives.

Additionally, a meeting was held with the firm to zero-in on plans for school facilities construction on December 7, 2022 at SAMFU's office to discuss plans for school facilities construction. The Firm discussed plans to begin the project and agreed to complete the construction of the Facilities in ninety (90) days period.

Meetings were also held with leaders of project communities, local leaders (clan & paramount chiefs, women and youth leaders) — Following the meeting with the Community members for site identification, another meeting was held with local leaders and youth leaders by SAMFU staffs and the head of the Construction firm in Fula Camp to seek their support and help in the

construction of the project. SAMFU was assured of their full support and readiness to help in whatever way possible.

In December of 2022, Destiny Building Construction and Maintenance Company began the construction of an improved education facilities in Fula Camp, Sokpo Clan, Porkpa District, Grand Cape Mount County along with their team members from the project community that were selected.

Monitoring visits were conducted to assess the status of the school Construction activities — there were a total of two Monitoring visits conducted on the project site during this reporting period. Updates on the progress of the construction were provided along with photos from the site as well as testimonials from the community. From that monitoring visit, SAMFU became aware of the number of workers and community volunteers working on the project and the community response to the construction firm.

Lastly, a meeting was held with other organizations for partnership - meetings were held with WeCare Foundation and Jothemon Education foundation for a sub grant to carry out training for volunteer teachers in Sokpo Clan. This had representatives from the Ministry of Education in attendance as well.

There was supposed to be a monitoring visit conducted twice every month until the completion of the construction to have SAMFU updated on the progress of the construction, however, due to internal issues, only three visits were conducted, which led to a slow pace in the work and that resulted to the construction not being completed on the projected time.

### **July to October 2023**

From the 14th to the 16th of August, a monitoring visit was conducted on the School's project to know the status of the construction. Based on this visit, a detailed report was made about the progress of the construction thus far and recommendations were made. Moreover, even though there has been some meetings held with other organizations for a sub grant to get desks and chairs for the school, there were still inquires made in the Lofa Bridge Community about the prices of desks and chairs, and some vendors were identified.

**Conduct monitoring visit on project site** — an additional monitoring visit was made on the project site to monitor the amount of work being done there as well as to observe the community

reaction and support to the project. During the visit, SAMFU became aware of the slow pace of the work by the construction firm. The community also complained of the laziness of the firm and their delay to complete the construction and they expressed their worries, as the academic year was about to begin, but the construction was nowhere near completion.

**Hold meeting with leaders of the five target communities**—a meeting was held with leaders of all five communities on August 13, 2023 to get the communities feedback of the project, Identify volunteer teachers for the the school, as well as agree on a date for the school dedication and opening ceremony. During this Meeting, SAMFU apologized to the communities for all the issues they had with the construction including the longevity of the construction and begged the communities to continue to work with the team and give their continuous support until the completion of the school. The leaders of the communities agreed that the seven teachers that they already have there should be trained as volunteer teachers. The identified volunteer teachers were:

1. Fonathan B. Kollie
2. Ibrahim K. Swaray
3. Ansu T. Layvel
4. Bladdy S. Kamara
5. Desmond A. Kroma
6. Abubakar Kroma
7. Mohamed Feika

Speaking through the general town chief of all the five communities, the communities agreed that the first Saturday in September which is September 2, 2023 for the school dedication program.

**Hold meeting with volunteer teachers** – A meeting was held with the seven volunteer teachers to agree on a date to conduct training for them, location for the training, as well as other school related matters. The Teachers agreed for the training to run from August 28-September 1, 2023, stating that the academic year would soon begin so the sooner the better. The teachers also agreed that the training location be within Monrovia as a means of exposure to them since the training environment would be a school area where the ECD style of learning is being taught and they would get a first-hand practical of what they would be taught.

**Conduct training for Volunteer teachers**—as part of the project plan, SAMFU is to conduct a training for volunteer teachers to properly run and maintain the school, as such, a proposal for a sub-contract to conduct training was sent out to other organizations that specialize in the field. Top on the list was the WeCare Foundation, an accredited NGO, unfortunately, their fees were way out of SAMFU's budget. SAMFU then contacted the Joterna Learning center, another training organization specialized in the ECD training program to conduct training for the volunteer teachers. In order to cut cost and work within SAMFU's budget, it was agreed that the first half of the training be held in Monrovia at the organization's office in Zuazon. On Sunday, August 27 the teachers arrived in Monrovia to begin the first half of the training. The training began on Monday, August 28, 2023 and it runs for eight hours daily (8am-3pm), it will be completed on Friday, September 1, 2023.

**Complete Teacher Training Program** — On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September the training of seven volunteer teachers from project communities which started in August came to a successful end with teachers being trained to carry out teachings using the ECD style of teaching in the classrooms. The teachers were also given the ECD prescribed training manual, set of ECD planners, ECD workbook as well as ECD set of prescribed books upon the completion of the training.

**Complete School Construction** – During this reporting period, the construction of the school facility including laying of floor in all the rooms, plastering of Walls, painting and finishing of the roofing came to completion. As was agreed internally, with the help of a professional contractor, the project was handed over to the community to complete the school construction while SAMFU provided the needed materials. All materials needed for the completion of the construction was provided and transported to the project site by SAMFU. It took the total of five days to purchase and transport materials from Weajue, the nearest commercial town to Fula camp based on the condition of the road and a total of Two weeks to have the construction work completed on the building.

**Provision of desk and Chairs** — As per the project document, SAMFU has provided desks for six classrooms that meets the standard of the ECD learning style as well as chairs for teachers and administration. Additionally, we (SAMFU) provided tables and chairs for the teachers to use when planning or preparing lessons and other learning materials for the kids.

## **PROJECT CONCLUSION – YEAR 1**

The "Construction of a Primary School and Improving Childhood Education Development in Rural Forest Communities in Western Liberia" has been a remarkable endeavor, ushering in a new era of educational opportunity and hope in the communities surrounding the Gola National Forest. This 24-month project, jointly executed by SAMFU (Save My Future Foundation) and KinderMissionsWerk, has achieved significant milestones during the reporting period, which extended from November 25, 2022, to November 24, 2023.

In the beginning, these communities faced substantial challenges in providing quality education to their children, who were learning under trees with underqualified instructors. However, today, thanks to the unwavering commitment of SAMFU and the enthusiastic support of the target communities in the Sokpo Clan, this landscape has transformed.

The success of this project has been due, in no small part, to the direct involvement and contributions of the communities themselves. They have played a pivotal role in every phase of this journey, from providing the essential 25-acre land for school construction, surveying, and furnishing construction materials to supplying the invaluable human resources needed to realize this dream.

During the reporting period, a multitude of activities unfolded, all with a shared goal of enhancing education and transforming the lives of the children in these communities. The project found strong allies in local leaders, construction firms, and other organizations, all coming together to ensure its success.

As this reporting period draws to a close, and with more work ahead in the final year of this project, we reflect on the profound change that has taken place. The construction of a seven-room elementary school, equipped with vital amenities, marks a new beginning for education in this region. Volunteer teachers have been trained, and the community has rallied around the prospect of a brighter future for their children.

The involvement and dedication of these communities are evident in every aspect of this project, from the construction of the school facility to the preparations for a successful academic year. Challenges arose, but they were met with resilience and a shared commitment to creating a better educational environment.



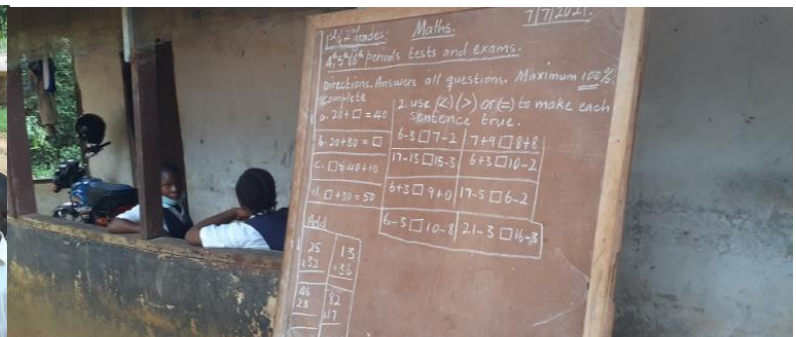
As we move forward into the next and final year of this project, the stage is set for the school's dedication and opening ceremony. We are grateful to SAMFU, KinderMissionsWerk, and all the partners who have made this project possible. The journey continues, and together, we will ensure that this beacon of education shines brightly, illuminating the path to a brighter future for these communities.

The progress achieved during this reporting period speaks volumes about the potential for positive change when communities, organizations, and individuals unite for a common cause. It is a testament to the power of education and the resilience of those who dare to dream of a better tomorrow.

### **PHOTO GALLERY:**



*Learning space previously used by students in Fula Camp*



*Learning space previously used by students in Fula Camp*

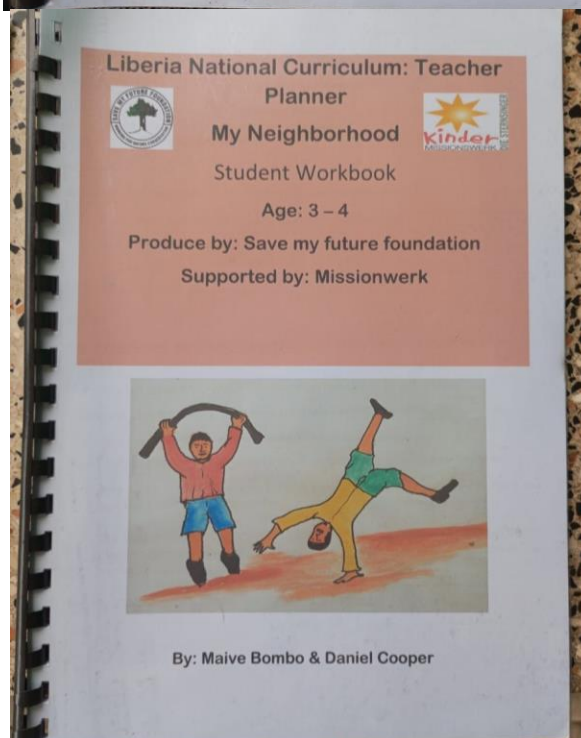
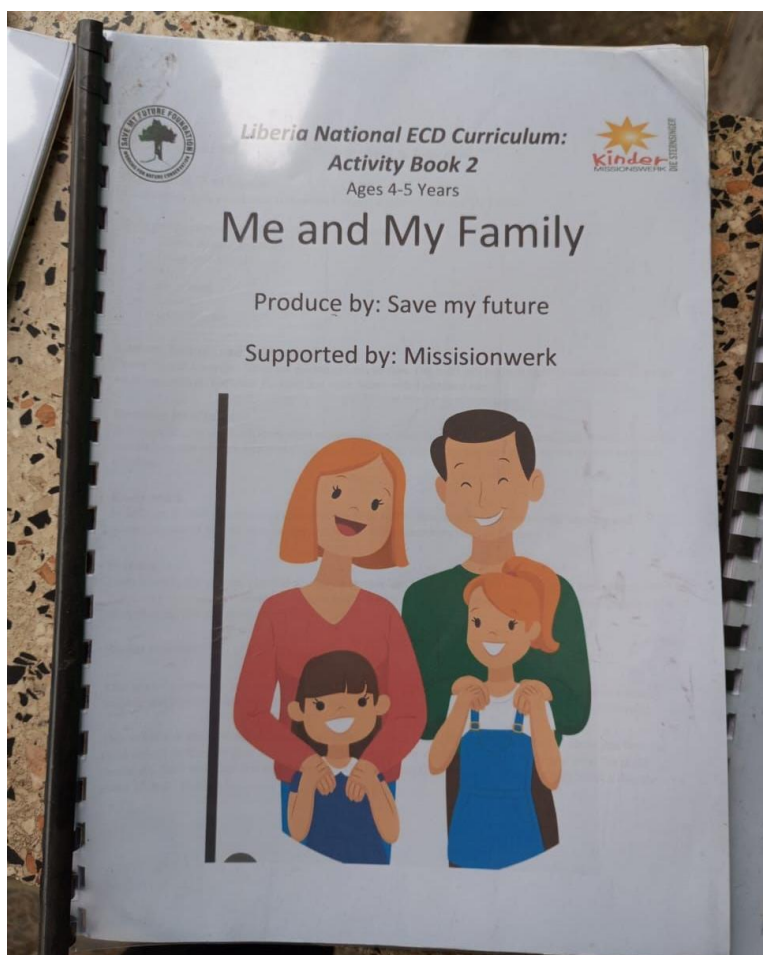
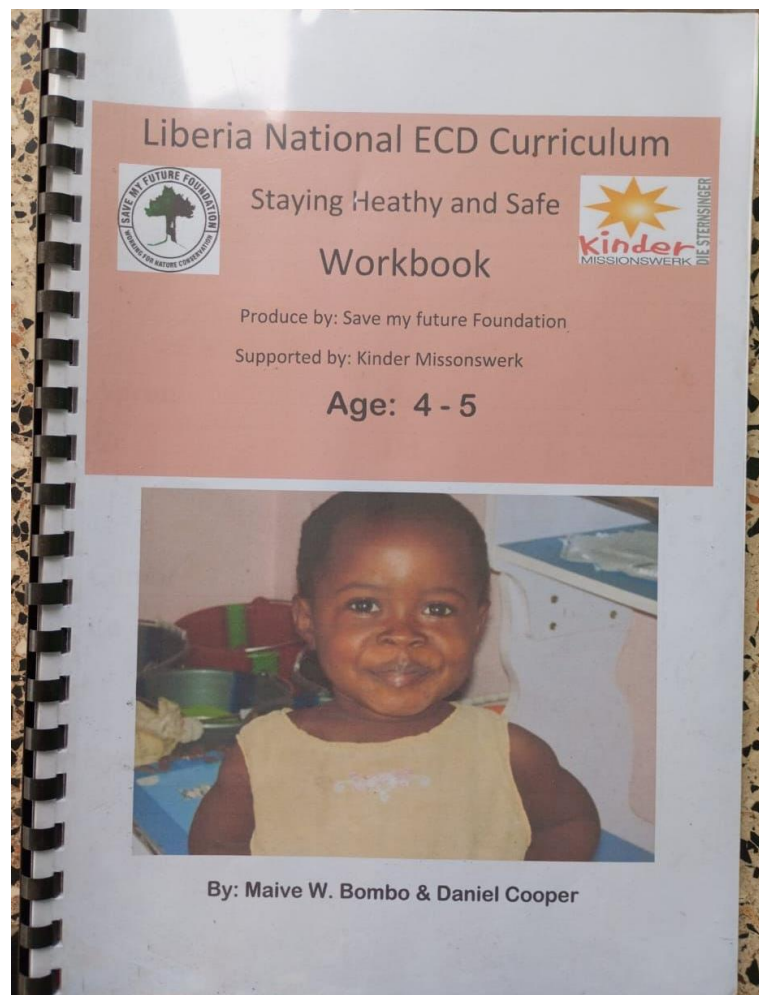
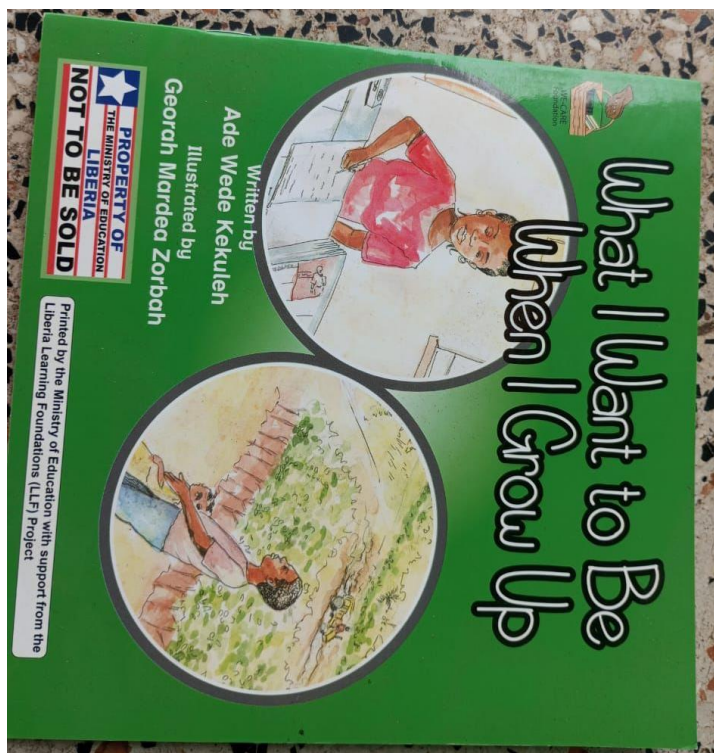


*Newly constructed seven (7) classrooms learning space currently used by students of target communities*



*Madam Maryann Sajery (SAMFU Admin Officer dedicating the tewly constructed seven (7) classrooms school facilities currently used by students of target communities*







*Ms. Maima Brooks (SAMFU Project Officer, handing over ECD Learning Materials to the school administration through their PTA Chair*



*Ms. Maima Brooks (SAMFU Project Officer, handing over monthly compensation (packages) to volunteer teachers*





*Cross-section of volunteer teachers participating in the ECD Training at the JOTERMA Learning, located in Duarzon Margibi County*