What an exciting last few months it’s been. OVP has expanded to three new villages serving an additional 3,500 people, even as we slowly phase out of the three villages where we’ve worked since 2005. With access to clean water and basic sanitation, adequate shelter, and many more children in school, the original villages of Jokibu, Foindu and Pujehun are thriving! Foday Sheriff, a 45-year-old Jokibu resident confirms, “Because of OVP, my village recovered faster than other villages after the war. Today we are better off than other villages in this chiefdom, and we have grown faster than other villages too.” Projects that OVP did five years ago are still running, because residents independently manage nearly all of OVP’s previous work. Yet nearby villages still exist in deplorable conditions. The new villages of Grima, Gbeka and Mamboma were chosen due to their vulnerability, proximity and large population size. Our expansion in these villages has a two-pronged approach:

Community Action Planning – OVP works with local communities to develop the vision, insight, planning and leadership to run their own community actions. OVP trains community leaders to engage other community members in identifying and analyzing key issues they face.

Women’s Empowerment – Given the importance of women’s development for overall economic development, OVP recruits and trains female leaders to form their own action groups, which have identified four main priorities increasing wages, preventative healthcare, family planning, and improving education. Together, OVP staff and female leaders work to develop training and action plans to address these topics.
Villagers in Mamboma take charge of their own development

The village of Mamboma had never gone through a process like this before. On March 13, 2014, the village hall (concrete structure for community meetings) was packed to capacity: Community members debated and discussed what mattered to them most in this culmination of a month-long, highly engaging process. At the end, over 125 community members gathered to rank the village’s priorities, which will now guide community actions and OVP’s work plan for the village moving forward.

Twelve community members formed the steering committee to design the community’s first project, which addresses their first priority—stopping the spread of sickness. Together the group brainstormed and tested solutions prior to planning their action. The group defined their concern: We need better ways to control waste and encourage hygienic conditions to prevent sickness. They concluded that, in order to be effective, it would require new latrines, hand-washing stations, community education, and community-led monitoring committees. Join us in making a difference in the lives of people of Sierra Leone, one village at a time. Your contribution today is essential, and helps villages like Mamboma achieve the self-sufficiency that creates sustainable communities and changes lives. In these impoverished areas, we have one of life’s few opportunities to simply reach out and make a tremendous difference.

The Village of Mamboma

Mamboma means ‘located by Mambo,’ a nearby stream. There are approximately 95 homes and 1000 residents in the town. As home to the newly-elected Paramount Chief of Peje Bongre chiefdom in Kailahun district, the village prides themselves on being self-sufficient. Mamboma means ‘located by Mambo,’ a nearby stream. There are approximately 95 homes and 1000 residents in the town. As home to the newly-elected Paramount Chief of Peje Bongre chiefdom in Kailahun district, the village prides themselves on being self-sufficient.

Annelleise Moore is one of twenty Blake School students who are embarking on a journey of a lifetime this June. OneVillage Partners is once more taking a group of Blake students to Sierra Leone, one of the most impoverished countries in the world. Annelleise and her fellow Blake students have been learning about Sierra Leone through numerous informational and preparation meetings. Each student traveler researched and developed a brief PowerPoint on an important historical, geographical, or cultural topic, including the Sierra Leone-United States connection through slavery, primarily for rice workers in the southern U.S. They then shared their work with the travel group to better prepare themselves for the trip.

As a Blake student traveler, “I hope to realize that despite our different lives, we can still connect and learn from each other.”

Annelleise Moore, Blake School Sophomore

OVP facilitators and the Steering Committee for Mamboma’s First Project

2014 Blake Travelers

Keeping OneVillage Partners Moving Forward... With Abby Carlson

Abby is one of the talented Minneapolis interns that allows OneVillage Partners to expand our quality programs to new villages in Sierra Leone. Abby began her internship last summer and has assisted OVP with development and communications. She embodies the dedication and commitment we look for in our interns at OVP.

While at Gordon College in Massachusetts, where she majored in French and minored in Linguistics, she went abroad to study in France and Senegal. This experience planted the seeds of her interest in West Africa and international affairs. After graduating in 2012, Abby returned home and began looking for a volunteer opportunity, and was led to OVP through friends. Initially, Abby was drawn to OVP because of the success of our programs and our approach. “I have enjoyed how invested everyone is and how much everyone cares about the work and the programs. I like the people and professionally it has given me great insight into skills I will need in my profession. I like working with an organization where more than half of the staff are in Sierra Leone and most are Sierra Leonians. I also like that a lot of the programs are focused on women and helping to empower them.”

In her professional life, Abby was recently promoted from a part-time position to the Client and Member Services Coordinator for E Group in Minneapolis, a marketing and incentives company. Good luck on your new opportunity, and thank you for your continued volunteer efforts!