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U.S. Navy's "Project Handclasp" Reaches Out to Freetown Orphans

On March 9, crew members from the USS Robert G. Bradley – a United States Navy frigate visiting Freetown as part of the Africa Partnership Station program – completed an assistance project at Christ Faith Rescue Orphanage on Jomo Kenyatta Road in Freetown. The six American sailors and two U.S. Navy civil affairs generalists worked with six of their counterparts from the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) to rehabilitate the chapel and classrooms at the orphanage. They tore down three old walls and constructed seven new ones. The crew members also primed and painted the new walls. To mark the completion of the project, the U.S. Navy distributed more than 500 high nutrition meals, 10 soccer balls, and hundreds of school supplies.

This project benefited 65 orphan children between the ages of five and fifteen who stay at the Christ Faith Rescue Orphanage, which was founded in 1990. The donated items came from the U.S. Navy's worldwide American outreach program, "Project Handclasp" (PH). This is the only program of its type in the U.S. military, America, and the world. PH is a unique public-private partnership with corporations, public service organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and individuals throughout the United States.

PH humanitarian, educational, and goodwill materials are donated by America's private sector and personally distributed by U.S. Sailors and Marines to those in need overseas. This aspect of the program not only ensures that people most in need receive the material, but also that the service members involved gain a personal appreciation for the challenges and ways of life of citizens of other nations. PH material distributions are normally conducted in conjunction with community service projects – allowing American military personnel to serve as ambassadors of goodwill on behalf of the people of the United States. Please see the PH Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Project-Handclasp/130291170918>.

The U.S. Navy's Africa Partnership Station (APS) is an international security operation initiative, facilitated by the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa and other international partners, aimed at strengthening global maritime partnerships through training and other collaborative activities in order to improve maritime security in Africa. The APS mission is focused on combating the illegal trafficking of drugs and persons, safeguarding natural resources such as fossil fuels and fisheries, and deterring piracy. For more information, please see <http://www.naveur-navaf.navy.mil/apshome.html>, or visit the APS Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/AfricaPartnershipStation>.