



# JOINT MONITORING REPORT

EMPOWERING YOUTH AT RISK AS RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINING PEACE AND  
COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN TONKOLILI AND KENEMA DISTRICTS IN SIERRA LEONE

SEPTEMBER 2022



*A bit of fun after the group discussions in Kpandebu, Kenema District*



Contents

- Introduction ..... 2
  - Objective ..... 2
- Methodology..... 2
- Findings ..... 3
  - Activities Implemented ..... 4
  - OUTCOME 1 ..... 4
    - Behavioral changes of Y@R ..... 4
    - Participation in community activities and decision-making ..... 5
    - Youth leadership and group dynamics ..... 7
    - Gender Awareness and GBV ..... 8
    - Substance use ..... 8
    - Recommendations ..... 9
  - OUTCOME 3 ..... 10
    - Community projects (Infrastructure) ..... 10
    - Recommendations ..... 11
    - Youth livelihood activities ..... 12
    - Recommendations ..... 15
- Crosscutting Issues..... 16
  - Coordination and communication ..... 16
  - Conflict sensitivity ..... 16
- Risk Management Matrix..... 18

## Introduction

This report describes and analysis discussions with Youth at Risk beneficiaries and community stakeholders across the project locations. This activity was part of an ongoing project monitoring exercise aimed at understanding progress project implementation and document success stories and challenges of the project titled “Empowerment of Youth at Risk as resources for sustaining peace and community resilience in Sierra Leone”, implemented in Tonkolili and Kenema districts in the period October 2020 – October 2022. The intervention is funded by the United Nations (UN) Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and implemented by the FAO (as convening agency), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in close cooperation with the Government of Sierra Leone, with the Ministry of Youth Affairs as lead government partner. The project will work to empower and reintegrate youth at risk, by providing increased possibilities for youth to participate in decision-making processes and for securing their sustainable livelihoods while providing basic infrastructural facilities for the communities in general; and increasing access to prevention and protection services.

## Objective

The objective of the joint monitoring exercise was as follows:

1. Get feedback from project beneficiaries, stakeholders and intermediaries on activities implemented so far, impacts seen so far and challenges to be addressed
2. Address and clarify issues among beneficiaries and communities as a ‘united front’
3. Facilitate interaction and experience-sharing among implementing partners

## Methodology

The Joint Monitoring exercise was carried out between September 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022, across all the projects locations in both Tonkolili and Kenema Districts. Representatives from FAO, UNFPA, MAF, MGCA, NAYCOM, NACCED, PPRC, District Councils, DYC/CYCs, FINE-SL, and Caritas Bo & Makeni participated in the exercise.

The team jointly visited the two districts to be able to share experiences while in the field. A total of 13 out of the 18 target communities were visited during this mission. The remaining 5 communities had been visited some weeks prior to this mission in another (high-level) monitoring mission with the Heads of Agencies and the Hon. Minister of Youth Affairs and Deputy Minister of Agriculture (separate report was produced for this mission).

In each chiefdom, around half of the communities per district were visited for ‘in-depth’ discussions’ around project activities, while the other communities were targeted with a shorter visit to ‘touch base’ with beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Due to the high number of participants, the team split into 3 teams (of app. 5-7 people) and visited separate communities in parallel. Data was collected by the 3 teams combining team members from the different sectors and partners.

In each community targeted for ‘in-depth consultation’, the Community Monitoring Committee (CMC) comprising of stakeholders, beneficiaries and key structures (e.g. MAPEs, mentors) was initially engaged

followed by Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) with M/F Y@R engaged separately as well as with a mixed group of community stakeholders.

In communities targeted with ‘touch-base meeting’ (TB) the CMC was engaged for a discussion, allowing beneficiaries and stakeholders give feedback and raise any issue of concern.

To guide the discussion, each team was provided FGD guides (with space for note-taking) with guiding questions reflecting the various project components and activities and cross-cutting issues around communication, coordination and conflict sensitivity.

Each day the team debriefed, reporting general findings and in particular any urgent matters to be addressed while in the field. At the end of the exercise, notes were handed over to the FAO project manager who compiled this report.

Below the schedule for the mission and communities visited:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>		
Tuesday 05/09	Morning (8-11.30am): Travel Freetown - Magburaka		
	<u>Team 1</u> Manempeh (ID)	<u>Team 2</u> Old Town (ID)	<u>Team 3</u> Makeni Road (ID) Ruwala (TB)
	Late afternoon: Debriefing with district stakeholders		
Wednesday 06/09	Morning (8.30-11am): Travel Magburaka – Mile 91		
	<u>Team 1</u> Mile 91 (ID)	<u>Team 2</u> Yoni-Banna (ID)	<u>Team 3</u> Matibo (ID)
	Afternoon (3-6pm): Travel Mile 91 - Kenema		
Thursday 07/09	<u>Team 1</u> Hangha (ID) Largo (TB)	<u>Team 2</u> Simbeck (ID) Konjo (TB)	<u>Team 3</u> Kpandebu (ID) Loppa (TB)

## Findings

Below the feedback from beneficiaries and communities is presented, as well as the reflections and observations of the monitoring team.

Presentation of finding is generally structured according to the project’s different outcome areas (noting that this exercise focused on monitoring project implementation at community level, it centered on Outcome 1 and 3, as activities in the correctional facilities under Outcome 2 are monitored separately).

Recommendations for adjustment of project strategies are highlighted in bullets under the various outcome/output areas.

## Activities Implemented

For easy reference and to contextualize the feedback from beneficiaries and communities, below is an overview of the key activities implemented in the period since the last joint monitoring visit.

### Training/workshops

Key trainings and workshops recalled by beneficiaries during the joint monitoring exercise include:

- On-going awareness raising on family planning, sexual and gender based violence, teenage pregnancy
- Establishment and operation of Crisis Drop-In Centers
- Trainings on conflict analysis and mitigation
- Dialogue sessions with Y@R and duty-bearers (community authorities, MDAs, police)
- Joint workshop/training sessions for justice and security institutions with Y@R and community stakeholders
- Trainings for community health workers on substance abuse and counselling, and awareness raising sessions at community level (individual/family level counseling activities about to commence)

### Agricultural/livelihood activities

- Trainings on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) for crop producing groups; trainings on basic business management for all groups; trainings on post-harvest management for maize groups
- Distribution of agricultural inputs (seeds, tools); land preparation and crop cultivation on-going (planting, weeding, fertilizer application completed)
- Learning visits and short-term apprenticeships with local private sector entities
- Delivery of agricultural processing equipment and transport facilities (bikes, tricycles) to chiefdom/community level stores, pending handing over; development of bylaws for use of equipment/bikes

### Other activities

- Continuation of construction activities for community infrastructure projects
- Second round of football galas

## OUTCOME 1

**Youth at risk (women and men) are empowered and included in decision-making processes in their communities in the target districts**

### Behavioral changes of Y@R

Like during the last monitoring mission, both beneficiaries and stakeholders expressed that the level of violence and crime was much reduced in the community, with stakeholders feeling a great sense of ease and relaxation. There are now friendly and respectful interactions and communication between the Y@R and other members of the community.

The Y@R have changed attitudes and behaviors, with a reduction in anti-social behaviors such as drinking and smoking, gambling and 'rudeness' (at least in public), as well as less stealing and less prostitution. Loppa gave an example of having had a party the previous night, without any fights occurring, which had been common in the past.

Clique/gang activity is reduced in the target communities. According to beneficiaries across most groups engaged, there is hardly any lingering identification with the cliques/gangs they used to associate with. For example in Mile 91, the group combines former members of the two groups Backtallar and Borderline, but both groups are practically dissolved now. (Note that the beneficiary selection focused on youth on the margins of cliques and gangs, but in a number of communities, such as Mile 91 and Simbeck, the 'ring leaders' have been included as well, and they appear to have genuinely used their influence over other youths for the better.) In locations where there are still other cliques/gangs active, there is a cordial relationship with the beneficiaries, according to them, and no tendency of former gang companions trying to undermine project activities or otherwise dissuade the beneficiaries from full participation.

Beneficiaries express strong anti-violent sentiments; stating that they would not consider supporting any politicians in creating unrest [in connection with the upcoming election] as they now have their income-generating activities to focus on.

"No negative political tensions are observed as we are busy with our farm work." (Beneficiaries, Yoni-Banna)

"We will never allow politicians to use us again." (Beneficiaries, Largo)

During the demonstrations on August 10, beneficiaries in Magburaka joined the DYCs to move around to other localities reaching out to their peers urging them to remain calm. Similarly examples were given from Mile 91, where there had been local riots in connection with a clash between police and okada riders. This indicates a change of mind-set of the beneficiaries to not only refrain from aggression themselves, but seeing themselves as role models and acting as ambassadors to actively trying to influence their peers with anti-violence messages.

Most beneficiaries were aware of their designated peace ambassadors (trained by NACCED, NAYCOM). Most seemed to be fairly active especially in solving palava within the beneficiary group itself. Some peace ambassadors are very active (e.g. the female peace ambassador in Kpandebu) and are also supporting the settling of conflicts in the wider community e.g. on land and family disputes.

#### Participation in community activities and decision-making

Beneficiaries generally reported a very positive working relationship with community members and stakeholders. Participation in the project has greatly improved their role, position and image in the community.

"We are working together now and they are listening to us" (Loppa).

"Before they were pointing fingers at us, but now they admire us" (Female beneficiary, Mile 91).

"New chief treats us like daughters and call us for community meetings."

"They used to call us street girls, now they call us by our names." (Female beneficiary, Old Town)

“I am now seeing things I didn’t use to. I am so proud now to sit together with people here. In community issues, they think of me, we make plans together.” (Male beneficiary, Mile 91)

Beneficiaries in general confirm an increased participation in decision-making and other community activities (with only few communities e.g. Old Town and Yoni-Banna indicating some persistent challenges to be effectively involved). (\*Note that participatory data collection is currently on-going to understand dynamics and challenges of youth participation in various community activities). Beneficiaries generally perceived the community stakeholders and members to be very supportive, some even helping them out in the farms.

Stakeholders reported how the youths had previously been reluctant to participate in community activities but now willingly come around to support community work, like cleaning campaigns and brushing around schools and roads. Both stakeholders and beneficiaries state that the youths are now respecting the elders and that communication is cordial; the Y@R equally feel well recognized in the communities and treated with more respect.

Beneficiaries felt involved in the project from the beginning and appreciated how the project acknowledged them as members of the community when ‘they asked us what we wanted to see in our community’ i.e. by involving them in the participatory selection of joint community projects under Outcome 3.

Beneficiaries also highlighted that project activities had positively facilitated their interaction and cooperation with other community members, for example during the construction of community facilities, and during the farm preparation, where the project had encouraged and supported them to engage other youths in manual farm labour. Beneficiaries report doing things with other youths, e.g. the community cleaning activities. Beneficiaries express interest in more facilitated activities like sports with other youths.

Their role in the project has also built their confidence and improved their position in general in the community and some of the Y@R are now running for other positions, e.g. one of the female beneficiaries in Kpandebu is running for chairlady of the whole town.

Beneficiaries recognize the active involvement of the DYCs/CYCs in project activities, but are never called for independently organized activities by the DYCs/CYCs – not clear if such activities are not organized at all or if they just do not reach the particular beneficiaries.

Beneficiaries report a maintained improvement in their relationship with families, with a number of them having moved back in with families and relatives and integrated themselves with their livelihood activities. (\*Note that further data is presently being collected on this aspect of their reintegration). A number of beneficiaries also reported having resumed educational activities, having re-gained the support of their families after having changed their lifestyles and habits and now appearing more serious.

“After some of the trainings, I sat down and thought, ‘street life is not good,’” recalled a female beneficiary in Old Town, after which she had reconciled with her uncle and aunt.

## Youth leadership and group dynamics

Some beneficiaries recalled having participated in leadership trainings and were able to mention some leadership qualities. Only few of beneficiaries had participated in dialogue activities and trainings on conflict resolution. Beneficiaries have generally been complaining that when fewer members participate in such trainings they do not report back to the whole group.

Group leadership seemed to have significantly improved since the last joint monitoring visit, where contested leadership and internal cohesion in the groups were huge issues. Some of the groups had since then re-elected their leadership. In general, groups seem to be more consolidated now, with a cordial working relationship between male and female beneficiaries, on and off the farm, where they 'laugh and cook together'.

Groups reported improved cooperation from more members since the last visit; with at least 80% of members actively participating in all activities. Decisions are made jointly by the whole group, according to most.

Both male and female beneficiaries generally indicate an equal and cordial working relationship between them. Female beneficiaries in general appear confident and bold and equally involved in all project activities. In some of the most rural communities, e.g. Loppa in Dama chiefdom, the females appeared a bit more quiet and timid, most likely reflecting the more traditional village setting of the community. In all groups, there is female representation in the executive leadership; however with females in the positions of treasurer and marketing managers and not in the top leadership positions. While the project's criteria and encouragement to have female representation was not objected by the groups, there is some risk that after the end of the project male beneficiaries will gradually take over the key leadership functions entirely. In few communities (e.g. Kpandebu) female beneficiaries indicated a tendency for the male beneficiaries to dominate in decision-making. Some groups found that male participation in meetings was less, whereas female participation in farm work was less.

Some group (e.g. Hangha, Yoni-Banna) still complained that a number of the youths were reluctant to participate in community activities like cleaning exercises, and only showed up to formal project activities like trainings where there are benefits (food, transport refunds) involved.

None of the groups reporting experiencing a high level of internal conflict (as compared to last monitoring visit); they do have 'small palava' and argue but are able to settle it among themselves. Groups are aware they have bylaws they can use to fine or suspend uncooperative members although in most it has not yet happened. (Note that bylaws were effectuated in Largo and Gombo, where male members had verbally assaulted female members; and in Mile 91 where a violent incident had occurred).

According to beneficiaries, other youths in the street want to join the project and admire the beneficiaries. They rarely experience sentiments of jealousy from any other youth/community members.

"The community is happy for us, they enjoy less crime." (Female beneficiary, Old Town)

Both male and female state to be reaching out to other youths in the street to encourage them to leave the street, stop using drugs, etc. As mentioned above, during the demonstrations in early August, some beneficiaries had been going around with DYCs/CYCs to encourage other youths to remain calm. This

reflects a strong motivation on the part of beneficiaries and a mindset of change, since they are now seeing themselves as role models.

### Gender Awareness and GBV

Generally communities and beneficiaries report a reduction in GBV in their communities. Beneficiaries and stakeholders are generally able to define and give examples of GBV, and express attitudes that it is not acceptable, and there are indications of heightened community awareness and action towards GBV. Stakeholders do discuss GBV in some community members and do intervene in cases of domestic disputes. Note that communities and beneficiaries also attributed these tendencies to the strong stance of the government and what is perceived as stronger enforcement of laws.

Most communities have and are aware of their husband schools. Female beneficiaries in a number of communities do not appear much aware of the husband schools and what they are doing; however in Old Town female beneficiaries attributed reintegration with families largely to the husband schools which had encouraged parents to involve the Y@R in everything, and they recommended for the husband schools to be established in other communities as well. Some communities mentioned a positive mindset of stakeholders and improved support of husbands towards wives as an outcome of the trainings.

There seems to be quite some differences in terms of the role of the MAPEs; in some communities the MAPEs are very active – e.g. in Gombo where the MAPEs serve as group members, mobilize for agricultural activities, etc. - whereas in other communities they are not known by the beneficiaries (in Mile 91, the MAPEs were selected from outside the beneficiary group) and in general seem less known by female beneficiaries. Some communities (Old Town, Mile 91, Makeni Road) reported not having cordial relationships with the MAPEs.

Female beneficiaries recognized having been trained by FINE-SL. However, female beneficiaries do not seem to be much aware about the male-centered activities implemented by FINE-SL. Female beneficiaries do however confirm that male beneficiaries have changed; and that they do not experience harassment or aggression from male beneficiaries.

Female beneficiaries (Makeni Road) stated that commercial sex workers experience some of the highest level of SGBV - because men see them as easy targets, vulnerable and with no control over their own lives – but at the same time, the community is less likely to take action in those instances (because these women perceived as not listening to advice) whereas the stakeholders would intervene in marital disputes.

Most (female) beneficiaries state that they would report a GBV case to the chiefs, and seem to have limited awareness of other institutions responding to GBV nor of available support services for survivors. As much as the approach centers on engaging men as peer educators, there seems to be a gap in also more explicitly engaging the females on the key topics around gender, GBV, and referrals. Most beneficiaries especially females are not aware of the location of the Crisis Drop-In Centers.

### Substance use

According to beneficiaries in Mile 91, 80% of them used to smoke (cigarettes, marijuana, kush). They had typically started smoking in the clubs with friends, and to manage the stress in the streets. Many typically spent more than SL 50,000 every day (app \$4) on smoking/drugs - now, they are saving money,

which they are using on food or other productive activities, a benefit highlighted across several communities. Beneficiaries recognized how their substance use affected their behaviors, making them 'noisy' and disrespectful towards elders.

Beneficiaries stated they had typically reduced or stopped abusing substances 9-12 months ago. They recognized that it could be a difficult and gradual process – some group members still smoke, but have generally reduced while altogether refraining from the harder substances like kush and tramadol. The beneficiaries explain that they are also much less exposed now to substance use habits as they are less in the streets, and they do not smoke while on the farm.

“The project encouraged me to stop; now I am just going to the farm and have stopped wasting money” (Female beneficiary, Mile 91)

Note that the MOHS counseling sessions under the project were yet to fully commence at the time of the monitoring mission – the motivation to stop drug consumption was strong among the beneficiaries themselves and support was found among themselves and in the environment. All project partners had been advising them to stop after joining the project, with strong messages to stop drug consumption being a general message they met throughout all activities – beneficiaries had felt much encouraged, as they were not used to having anybody around to advise them. Beneficiaries are motivating each other and are as well getting support from their family environments since a number of them have reconciled with or even moved back in with relatives, and even from community elders. Few beneficiaries (Ruwala) mentioned receiving counseling from health workers.

Beneficiaries stated that they frequently call on other youths to sensitize them and advise them not to do drugs (e.g. in Mile 91, Ruwala).

### Recommendations

- Continue to work with and strengthen capacities of CYCs/DYCs to organize activities and involve the Y@R. Strengthen the DYCs/CYCs to ensure more broad involvement of more members in project activities. In Tonkolili, there appears to be a need to facilitate some mediation and trust-building between the DYCs/CYCs and Y@R beneficiary groups.
- Strengthen the usual channels within the local youth leadership structures; there has been a tendency for many groups to report all issues big and extremely small directly to the partners, but with a view to sustainability, they need to be able to settle conflicts among themselves and reach out to youth leaders and/or community leaders if they are not able to settle it at their own level.
- Accompany/further assess the nature of 'increased Y@R participation' in community activities, for example by participating in Y@R meetings, community meetings and DYC/CYC meetings. (Note that a participatory data collection tool on Youth Participation is being piloted).
- DYC/CYC and other relevant structures to follow up on how training/workshop learnings are cascaded and applied; for example, if only few group representatives attend a training there should be follow up that new knowledge is shared with other members and put to use.
- More awareness raising for female Y@R and inclusion in gender/GBV activities – they need to be equally aware of reporting channels and referral pathways and available support services for survivors. Add more emphasis on the situation and vulnerable of commercial sex workers in gender awareness and dialogue activities.

- Some communities recommended for a stronger linkage between MAPEs and the various institutions where referrals are made, which would enable them to better accompany and follow up on the processes.
- Stronger emphasis on engaging parents/families directly in various activities – for example, in Old Town the husband schools were praised for engaging families directly which played a big role in reintegrating the youths
- Promote recreational activities between Y@R and other youths, such as sports activities, to continue to strengthen social cohesion and make more people feel included in the project
- If time/resources allow, engage beneficiaries systematically in outreach and cascading in peace and behavior change messages to other youths (e.g. on anti-violent elections, substance abuse, GBV, etc.)
- Follow up on counseling sessions on substance abuse to ensure that other non-beneficiary youths can benefit as well.

### OUTCOME 3

**Social cohesion strengthened and youth at risk socially and economically empowered to meaningfully reintegrate into their families and communities.**

#### Community projects (Infrastructure)

Community infrastructure facilities (e.g. rice mill structures, barrays, community centers) was still under construction at the time of the visit, at around 50-80% completion.

Communities in general emphasized the joint community projects centering on infrastructure as beneficial to the communities and meeting felt needs. Communities and beneficiaries do highlight these joint projects as a way for the youth to work together with other communities. In general, the cooperation between youths and stakeholders is good when it comes to the infrastructure activities.

Especially in Kenema, the trained community monitors are very active. Some communities (e.g. Mathibo, Kpandebu) complained of low contribution from the youths towards the construction activities.

In general, communities and beneficiaries were concerned about the delay in the construction activities. They are eager to have the facilities finalized in time so they can start using them for their various processing, income-generating and other purposes. In Tonkolili, the contractor has been much slower than in Kenema, and there are few sites that have remained largely inactive, and communities were concerned if they would eventually be left out entirely. In general, concerns were raised by the uneven progress of work across the various communities, with structures in some communities being almost done while others have not started, and examples of contractors relocating materials from one community to another. While this is part of the contractor's workflow, without the manpower to have active teams on all sites simultaneously, it is necessary to ensure more communication to the communities on these processes to avoid wrong perceptions that some communities are being favored over others. Some communities thought that the structures had already been completed in other communities (not the case) and that they were getting different and more expansive facilities

Some communities still raised concerns about the size of the rice mill structures; perceiving them to be small. FAO explained again that the dimension is equivalent to the processing room in the Agricultural Business Centers – the rice mill shelter is 4 x 4 meters = 16 m<sup>2</sup> and the milling machine is only about 1

m2 leaving ample space for working on the mill and even for keeping some items in temporary storage within the structure.

Makeni Road who have opted for bakery requested for the structure to be extended. FAO explained that the design has already been reviewed and the processing area has been extended by approximately 3 meters – the new dimensions were demonstrated to the community and beneficiaries and well received.

Changes in leadership in communities may affect the cooperation around the joint community projects; for example, in Mile 91 there had been a re-election of the Paramount Chief – the old and now also the new Paramount Chief are both highly supportive of the project and well linked to the group, however the inner circle of key stakeholders had also changed leaving some confusion about the purpose and ownership of the community project (a community rice mill in the case of Mile 91). The background and purpose was explained again. In a broader perspective, this indicates that management arrangements are vulnerable to changes in leadership and that a very broad community engagement is necessary to avoid elite capture or other ownership conflicts with regards to the community structures.

At the time of the monitoring visit, Caritas in both districts are in the process of engaging all communities and stakeholders on the approach for the operation & management of the community structures (rice mills, barrays, markets, etc.), for them to start discussing on the appropriate structures to put in place and drafting bylaws. Communities will be engaged in joint chieftom level sessions with AO, MAF, MOYA and district councils to finalize O&M arrangements prior to handing over of the facilities. For communities with rice mills, designated operators will be trained on the technical use and maintenance of the equipment by the supplier in cooperation with MAF and FAO.

Expectations to infrastructure remain very high, and communities have numerous additional infrastructural needs such as toilets, water wells, drying floors, storage facilities, etc. Additional requests were also made for light, internet and furniture for the community facilities.

Note that some communities have started digging their own toilets near the barrays/community centers – the project can promote such initiatives in other communities as well, highlighting the need for own contributions from communities.

### Recommendations

- Continuous engagement and sensitization of communities to clarify scope of project and manage expectations, as unfortunately the project is unable to deliver on all infrastructural needs of the target communities.
- The project is working to advocate with other UN agencies and the councils can advocate with other local development partners to address additional needs to complement the structures supported by this project.
- FAO to continue to push contractors to complete works so handing over can be done well in advance of the project end date, to be able to monitor the use and maintenance of the facilities
- Partners (FAO, Caritas, DYC) to follow up regularly with contractors on work schedules, and support the communication of work flows to communities to avoid misperceptions of bias in the process. Communities/CMCs should be further engaged to discuss responsibilities and information-sharing for participating in and monitoring the construction process (e.g. material delivery and management, labor rotation)

- Ensure broad involvement of all sections of communities in operation & management of the community facilities to avoid challenges relating to conflict of interest and elite capture
- Provide additional copies of technical drawings and BOQs for the various types of structures to make sure they are available to the whole community
- Engage beneficiaries and communities to discuss potential income generation opportunities for the community facilities (e.g. barrays, community centers) – for example, the Hangha beneficiaries suggested having one room in the center being rehabilitated to run a small internet café – although beyond the scope of the project to financially support it, the discussion can be facilitated in connection with the development of O&M bylaws

### Youth livelihood activities

Beneficiaries report no longer being involved in illegal and risky activities. Female beneficiaries unanimously express that they are no longer involved in commercial sex work to generate income. Those changes are by the beneficiaries attributed to the combination of the livelihood support and training/counselling activities.

At the time of the monitoring mission, the groups involved in crop production had planted and weeded (maize and cassava farms) and were waiting for harvesting (livestock groups waiting for the finalization of construction of poultry/goat houses). Beneficiaries reported that whereas they had only little prior experience in those agricultural activities, they had received a series of trainings and on-site coaching by MAF and the FAO agronomist and were now able to apply improved agricultural practices to their farms. Despite the late supply of agricultural inputs in some communities, the farms were in general doing well with some challenges e.g. Fall Army Worm infestation on some of the maize farms; broken hand tools, domestic and wild animals eating some crops; and distance to some of the farms. Beneficiaries generally felt well supported by stakeholders in their agricultural activities, with some chiefs and community members even working on the farm with them.

In addition to providing the youths with a small income through the cash-for-work scheme, the farm work also served to focus the attention of beneficiaries, and, in their own words, simply make them too tired to go out in the streets when they return from the farms at the end of the day. From the beneficiaries' statements, it seems that their activeness and achievements on their farms has reinforced their own confidence as well as supported their change of image and recognition in the community:

“Now, when I go to the farm and see the improvement, it helps me to reduce stress. Before, they didn't think of us as anything; now we are invited into decision-making. I am so proud to be in the community as a changed man.” (Male beneficiary, Mile 91)

“We are not in the street anymore, we concentrate on what we are doing on the farm. When we come home at night we are tired, and we just help our parents.” “Now, we have people to advise us, to encourage us to go off the street.” (Female beneficiaries, Makeni Road)

Overall, there was a good and improved commitment observed among the youths towards their agricultural activities, with most beneficiaries confirming that most of the group members are active on the farms - as compared to the last monitoring visit, where few active group members were raising concerns that a majority of group members (especially in Kholifa Ruwala communities around Magburaka) were not actively participating in on-farm activities. For example, in Makeni Road, the

group had not been able to mobilize itself swiftly for planting after receiving their inputs, resulting in the perishing of some potato vines, but claimed that the cooperation from members was much better now and they go to the farm every day (the field-based FAO agronomist confirms that their farm is now doing well).

Note that FAO employed various measures to strengthen participation and ownership, including strong involvement of DYCs/CYCs and MAF extension structures in mobilization and supervision; and strongly tying performance on the farms to conditional benefits later on (e.g. – if the poultry groups cultivate 1 ha of maize they can feed 100 birds, if they cultivate 5 ha they can feed 500 birds).

At the time of this monitoring visit, beneficiaries even reported on additional own initiatives towards agriculture, with a number of examples of beneficiaries having initiated own farming activities on the side, inspired by the project, either individually or in groups. While waiting for their project-supported livelihood activities to start generating incomes (the maize farms were just few weeks away from harvesting time at the time of the monitoring visit), a good number of the beneficiaries had engaged in other more short-term agricultural or business trading activities. In Loppa, both male and female beneficiaries had formed labour gangs to be hired by other community members e.g. for weeding other people's farms against cash remuneration. A male beneficiary in Mile 91 has started a second maize farm in parallel with 20+ other youths, getting half of the seeds from the MAF extension officer based in the area and the remaining from the local market.

Beneficiaries highlighted that cash-for-work for farm preparation activities had been used to solve day-to-day problems. The agricultural activities had enabled some of the beneficiaries to interact with others youths in the communities by taking them to the farms and sharing the payment with them (NB: FAO/Caritas made provisions for incentive payments for a higher number of agricultural laborers to fast-track the farm preparation work and enable the beneficiaries to engage with other community youths). This had worked well in most communities, with experience-sharing on new agricultural methods taking place and other youths appreciating the small income opportunities. Mile 91 beneficiaries said that other youths had helped them in the form and had 'asked for application form', wanting to join the project (some mistakenly thinking that beneficiaries are receiving monthly stipends but wanting to join in any case).

The strategy had unfortunately somewhat backfired in some communities; e.g. in Kpandebu where payments had been delayed due to some administrative challenges at FAO, resulting in some tensions between the beneficiary group and the additional laborers until payment was effectuated. Other groups had been able to use some of their VSLA funds to engage additional laborers.

Good cooperation and cohesion among the group members in the agricultural work – 'we work as one, and advise on another' (Female beneficiaries, Mile 91). In general, it seems that the farm work is equally done by male and female beneficiaries, with most of the tasks done jointly – although with the tendency towards the division of labour wherein males to done the most physically demanding work of brushing and women do planting and weeding. Mile 91 female beneficiaries explained how the group goes to the farm together and cook together while in the farm. Some female members (Kpandebu) confessed they were 'lazy' to do the hard manual labor and instead sent designated family members to represent them – thereby ensuring a contribution from their side. Female beneficiaries in Mile 91 indicated that the males had gotten more of the labour compensation money for the first phases of the farm work namely the land clearing and brushing (\*note that the FAO team had observed a general perception among

some groups that all members of the groups should share the money equally, although in practice the work was done more by some of the members).

The three groups who will be involved in rearing of small ruminants expressed some frustration over the delay in the start-up of their own livelihood activities (\*note that the construction of goat sheds is yet to be done and the distribution of the animals themselves can only be done after the rains), seeing that all other groups who had been involved in crop production had already seen tangible benefits through the inputs and cash-for-work and participated in numerous trainings.

The VSLAs had also contributed to strengthening alternative livelihood sources for the beneficiaries while waiting for the crop and livestock activities to start yielding benefits. Similar to the findings from the last monitoring visit, the VSLA scheme had a better uptake in Kenema than in Tonkolili. Youths in Loppa and Kpandebu, but also Ruwala in Tonkolili, praised the VSLA scheme as having helped them greatly while waiting for their farms to start yielding. Beneficiaries gave examples of having taken loans to start an individual groundnut farm or to expand an existing farm; as well as loans to start some petty training activities (selling fish, biscuits, patched groundnuts, etc.), or supporting family members with medical issues.

Especially female beneficiaries seemed to have made use of even small cash injections. Few beneficiaries (e.g. 1 female in Mile 91, 1 female in Kpandebu) indicated being members of Osusu in the community and having taken loans from there. Female beneficiaries (for example in Mile 91) reported having used DSA from exchange visits to Kono and transport refunds from some trainings to join Osusus and/or invest in petty business activities. Some of the female beneficiaries who had been able to reconcile with and move back in with their relatives were now taking part in the family livelihood activities to have a small source of income from there.

According to Caritas, in Tonkolili, only 3-4 out of 9 communities have remained very committed and successful in the VSLA schemes whereas the rest rarely meet and only few members are contributing. Makeni Road and Old Town, for example, say they meet and make savings every week but with low cooperation from the other beneficiaries – reasons given are that they do not contribute because they do not trust each other with loans and that some beneficiaries were thinking that if they put money in the box donors would think they did not need any support from the project.

Land related conflicts as generally not an issue after the initial land acquisition before the onset of crop activities; only in Kpandebu, there had been a conflict over the land the youths are working on but the Paramount Chief had intervened and settled the issue in their favour, and they can now stay on the same land for the second planting.

Input and resource management among group members remain a challenge among some groups (especially in Tonkolili) despite the mechanisms put in place. Notably, there was an issue of more than 20 bags of fertilizer disappearing from Old Town community, with allegations against the group chairman and secretary. According to the group, all the inputs had been left in the care of the chairman (this is not advisable – recommended system would be to have a padlock with 3 keys). The case was reported to the police on the day before the monitoring team visited, and will be further investigated. One bag of fertilizer had been stolen in Kpandebu, where the female beneficiaries however seemed to have limited awareness of this; which could indicate they have limited influence over input management in the first place.

In terms of sustainability perspectives, increased self-reliance as a result of the project was highlighted as a major change and greatly appreciated by a number of groups (e.g. Ruwala, Largo, Kpandebu), and they expressed confidence that they had now changed their perception of agriculture and were able to continue on their own, using the inputs and skills gained through the project. However, some beneficiaries in some groups especially in Tonkolili (e.g. Mile 91) continue to have extremely high expectations to the project, asking for the project to leave them with additional inputs and cash grants to be able to continue on their own.

Additional requests for the youths included small micro-loans for business development; additional inputs to expand on their farming activities;

### Recommendations

- Most of the youth groups want to expand on their present agricultural activities – if the project has any savings, groups who have performed very well and have the eagerness and capacity to expand on their activities could be supported with few additional inputs (e.g. Loppa wants to expand on their IVS cultivation)
- Especially those groups involved in maize cultivation requested to strengthen MAF to provide insecticides (\*note that Fall Army Work which is very common in Sierra Leone every season had been infecting some of the farms but had been managed using a locally prepared organic herbal concoction known as ‘Devil’s weed)
- Consider supporting groups with both short-term and longer-term livelihood activities – for example, the groups who opted for livestock (ruminants) could have been supported in some smaller short-term crop production activities to engage and motivate them while waiting for the main activity to be implemented and yield income. (Note that this would require some additional resources – financial and human - not only for the inputs but also for the additional trainings on GAP etc. that would be required if a group was involved in multiple livestock activities)
- Continue to promote a mind-set of self-reliance throughout the NCE. FAO is planning to work closely with the groups to prepare for second cropping season (even third), not by providing additional inputs but by coaching them to manage their first harvests well and invest some resources in farm continuance, taking them through the process of planning and resource management so they will learn and be able to organize themselves for future seasons after the project ends.
- During the NCE phase, discuss with group members on possibilities for incorporation of more youths in case they expand on their farming activities
- Support the groups to negotiate long-term land access conditions to ensure that they will be able to continue unhindered in the next cropping seasons
- FAO to hand over motorbikes and tricycles to beneficiaries now that bylaws have been developed for all groups (\*note that the licensing process has been delayed but is expected completed in coming weeks)
- Continue to strengthen input management especially among Tonkolili groups and involve key stakeholders where necessary
- Advocate with other development partners to support target communities with vocational skills trainings initiatives, to complement the groups’ agricultural activities

- Groups requested for identification cards and additional t-shirts – while there is no remaining budget for this, however it is such items do have a positive contribution to the ‘branding’ and identity building among the youths identifying as Y@R and now ‘positive youths’

## Crosscutting Issues

### Coordination and communication

Local coordination seemed to be generally good and improved since last monitoring visit. During this visit, there were no significant challenges with information flow among group members and among the stakeholders reported. Project partners at field level (e.g. FINE, Caritas) do coordinate activities with each other and the DYCs/CYCs, and overlap in activity schedules has not been an issue.

Beneficiaries in most groups felt information was well shared and activities planned well, with them being well informed and aware of the various next steps of project activities. They receive information either directly from project partner agents in the field, through youth leaders or via the project WhatsApp group.

However, despite acknowledging access to above communication channels, some groups/communities still felt communication was poor (e.g. in Yoni-Banna – it is noted that this community appears to still experience some internal leadership challenges which has also affected the flow of communication in the past). Some groups raised issues that for some trainings and activities they were only notified very late, and would appreciate earlier notice to prepare themselves. Some groups requested more information on the delay in construction activities and handing over of motorbikes/tricycles.

In Tonkolili, there were some challenges with the personal relationships with the CYCs/DYCs (e.g. in Mathibo, Mile 91, Makeni Road, Old Town) which was reported to not be too cordial.

### Conflict sensitivity

In general, both beneficiaries and communities emphasized that the level of conflict had been significantly reduced since the beginning of the project, and that the project had contributed a lot to improving communication and collaboration in the communities.

According to the feedback from project participants, there are no major conflicts affecting or affecting the implementation of the project. High expectations of beneficiaries was identified by the team as a critical issue to manage. The project team noted that despite positive behavioral changes observed among the Y@R, they remain a volatile group with a tendency for issues to escalate quickly over even minor issues.

Some challenges experienced by groups were highlighted in the above sections – key issues to address during the NCE to avoid escalation of tensions in the future are summarized below:

- DYCs/CYCs and partners should help to ensure that information is reaching Y@R and community stakeholders properly to avoid poor flow of communication at group/stakeholder level due to internal power struggles
- Strengthening of DYCs/CYCs to be able to monitor and address (or refer) conflicts relating to the Y@R. Support trust building between DYCs and some of the groups in Tonkolili where the relationship is not good
- Strengthen group leadership, especially the role of females

- Continued follow up on and strengthening of management systems for livelihood inputs and other resources
- Support groups to negotiate access to land for upcoming agricultural seasons to continue with their activities
- Set up structures where possible for Y@R to continue to cascade positive messages on peace and anti-violence (especially as elections are approaching) and allow them to cement their 'role model' activities

Risk Management Matrix

Field observations from joint monitoring mission March 21-26

Risks to the achievement of PBF outcomes	Likelihood of occurrence (high, medium, low)	Severity of risk impact (high, medium, low)	Mitigating Strategy and Responsible Parties	Observations	Recommendations
<p><b>Political and/or economic instability that affect overall security situation in the two targeted districts</b></p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>UN Agencies to work with the Minister of Youth Affairs, DYC, CYC, CSOs, PPRC, political parties’ associations, transport and trade associations, and community leaders to avoid youth at risk to be manipulated and engage into violent activities. Coordination with stakeholders and dialogue mechanisms established within the project will also help to mitigate escalation of conflicts.</p>	<p>During the August 10 demonstrations, there was unrest observed in Tonkolili but not in Kenema.</p> <p>Otherwise, no other political instability has been observed to be affecting the project areas.</p> <p>The economic situation in the country continues to affect the project and target areas; with increase in cost for goods and services.</p>	<p>Encourage and strengthen Y@R’s own initiatives to reach out to other youths with peace messages (as seen during the October demonstrations).</p> <p>Strengthen DYC/CYC capacity to monitor and de-escalate conflicts.</p> <p>Follow up on action points from joint training for justice and security institutions to continue to strengthen networks to swiftly identify, address and deescalate tensions.</p> <p>Speed up delivery of remaining livelihood activities to further strengthen Y@R’s incentive to refrain from crime and violence.</p> <p>Ensure tight mechanisms for input management, as the current high costs of e.g. fertilizers can be a temptation</p>

<p><b>Resistance to engage in project activities</b></p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>The findings of the UN-Government youth at risk assessment indicate that the context of high unemployment and pervasive poverty across the country constitutes the largest underlying cause for the recruitment of at-risk youth into gangs and cliques. It is therefore, expected that the livelihoods component will be an incentive for youth at risk to participate in the project activities. Further, all project beneficiaries e.g. reintegrated youths, survivors of SGBV, will benefit from the civic education intervention to ensure grounding in civic responsibilities, rights, strategies for engaging decision-making authorities.</p> <p>Selection of beneficiaries will be carried out in a transparent and open manner, based on agreed criteria within the communities, ensuring clear linkages between the outputs/outcomes, e.g.: beneficiaries of livelihoods will also go through civic education process, etc.</p>	<p>In general, across the various components, the active participation of more group members was observed during this monitoring visit.</p> <p>Only few groups report reluctant contributions towards farm work and community activities (where food/transport refunds are not involved).</p> <p>Generally there are very high expectations among beneficiaries for compensation for any participation/labor in project activities; but ownership has improved greatly across most of the groups.</p>	<p>to misuse inputs.</p> <p>Work carefully with groups to develop work plans and review their bylaws (in connection with FBO formalization) to have clear mechanism and structures among them that ensure equal contribution to the work and fair compensation for group members for the livelihood activities.</p> <p>Support groups to make use of existing bylaws to expel/suspend members who are not actively contributing.</p> <p>Continuous sensitization on expected own contributions from beneficiaries and communities.</p>
<p><b>Difficulties in removing barriers that</b></p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>The UN and Minister of Youth Affairs to work in partnership with all local stakeholders,</p>	<p>No reports of youths being intimidated or manipulated by former gang leaders, it so far appears that there is no</p>	<p>Since the risk of disengaging seems low for the individual beneficiaries, it could be considered to engage them in</p>

<p><b>prevent the disengagement of youth from cliques and gangs</b></p>			<p>particularly DYC, CYC, PPRC, political parties, local leaders, to ensure their collaboration in monitoring and preventing any barrier to the disengagement of youth from cliques and gangs. Family and community members, CSOs and security institutions will be instrumental in this task.</p>	<p>significant personal risk associated with disengaging from cliques and gangs for the project's targeted beneficiaries.</p> <p>Some of the beneficiary youths are still associated with the clique/gang structures, however these are reported by both youth and communities to have taken on a looser structure and no longer be characterized by aggression and crime.</p> <p>Some of the Y@R groups indicate a new 'positive' group identity around membership of their respective beneficiary groups, and some report engaging in outreach activities to other 'street youth' to get them to disengage as well.</p>	<p>sharing positive testimonies in their communities and reach out to non-beneficiary youths, as it seems to be a motivating factor for them to be seen and see themselves as role models for others.</p>
<p><b>Manipulation of youth at risk by unscrupulous political actors in view of 2021 electoral campaign and 2022 local elections</b></p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>The UN Agencies, PDA, Minister of Youth affairs will ensure the buy in of political parties at central and local level and ensure that they are fully aware of the project implementation and engage in related discussions. Political parties' associations, particularly the All Political Parties' Youth Association (APPYA), PPRC and security institutions to monitor activities of political parties in</p>	<p>There has so far been one reported episode of a Y@R group having been called on to rally for a local election, however the group had declined to participate with reference to the project.</p> <p>There are other examples of Y@R groups having been called on to rally for non-political purposes/participate in local intimation strategies, here likewise having declined referencing they were busy</p>	<p>Ensure that beneficiaries are fully engaged in project/livelihood activities during critical moment and fully understand the negative implications of not attending to their various enterprises for their own eventual benefit/income.</p> <p>Partners to look for opportunities to engage the beneficiaries directly in anti-violence messaging before, during and after the elections,</p>

			the project area.	with project activities.  The project team is cautiously optimistic than when the youths are fully engaged in their new livelihood / productive activities, they would have a very strong incentive to not let themselves be manipulated. Likewise the civic education and other trainings seem to have given many beneficiaries a new sense of civic identity/responsibility.	possibly even engaging some of the 5.0s (some are involved in the project / supportive of it).  Use platforms associated with the project (e.g. Whatsapp groups) to encourage beneficiaries to share peace messages among themselves, generally engaging them to be ambassadors towards one another and other youths in their areas.
<b>Difficulties in identifying community facilitators with the requisite capacities to engage with youth at risk</b>	High	Medium	The UN Agencies to work in partnership with DYC, CYC and local CSOs to identify talented and motivated community facilitators to support quality and timely implementation of project activities. Mentoring process will be ensured by the Agencies.	The DYO/DYCs/CYCs are fully involved in all activities and taking the lead in mobilization, monitoring and information-sharing. They generally enjoy a very good report with the target communities and other local stakeholders.  The various agencies have established structures/selected intermediaries to facilitate various project activities at community level, e.g. MAPEs, mentors, ambassadors. Although they technically have separate responsibilities, in practice the many structures to deal with create confusion and some overlapping mandates – in some communities the Y@R groups report these people overstepping and trying to control the affairs of the	Continue to involve local youth structures in all activities and facilitate learning and network by practical cooperation with other technical MDAs (e.g. MAF).  Ensure clear TOR for all the various structures engaged. Continue to strengthen CMCs as a joint platform for these structures to meet and work together with the beneficiaries.  Continue to promote the use of established coordination structures and platforms among all partners and facilitate experience-sharing and learning.

				<p>groups.</p> <p>In general, it is a challenge with the high number of agencies and partners involved in the project. Different partners involved have different strategies for community engagement which can create confusion.</p>	
<p><b>Preexisting gender inequalities prevent the meaningful participation of young women and girls in the project activities.</b></p>	Medium	High	<p>The UN Agencies will work with family members and women leaders to mobilize the active participation of young women and girls in project activities. Special attention will be given to remove barriers that could prevent their participation in project activities. Male Advocate and Peer Educators, Boys Youth Clubs and Husband Schools will be instrumental in this process.</p>	<p>JM found that there was generally a high participation of women in all the project activities.</p> <p>Beneficiaries report a positive change in group dynamics between M/F following the trainings as well a positive changes in the role of males in domestic responsibilities.</p> <p>Female beneficiaries stated that they are no longer involved in commercial sex work, but that there is still a tendency for stakeholders to not take action when this group experience GBV due to how they are perceived in the community.</p>	<p>Extend sensitization onf GBV and referral pathways to female beneficiaries.</p> <p>Address the situation of commercial sex workers in community gender awareness sessions.</p> <p>Continuous sensitization and engagement of the Y@R groups to strengthen and ensure the involvement of women in the leadership.</p> <p>Gender conscious structuring of groups and development of agricultural work and business plans has been done to ensure fair distribution of responsibilities among men/women and involvement of women in key roles.</p> <p>Follow up and coaching of females in key leadership roles to ensure they are allowed to be effective.</p>

					Emphasis on seeking out female mentors from FBO/private sector entities to support groups in this regard.
<b>Natural disasters and health epidemics.</b>	High	Medium	The UN Agencies will work with government to mitigate possible impacts of disasters and health epidemics on the project. Constant dialogue will be maintained with the communities and youth at risk on measures required to prevent the spread of Covid-19.	No natural disasters have occurred.  COVID-19 has phased out and never had any significant impact on the project implementation.	Continue to promote good hygiene behaviors among project participants, for general health reasons.
<b>Climate variations negatively impact on agricultural activities</b>	Medium	Medium	FAO will closely assess available meteorological data and liaise with community members and youth at risk to ensure agricultural activities are aligned with changing seasonality.	Season and weather pattern observed, but so far no significant impact expected on agricultural activities.  Few farms in Tonkolili (Ropulun, Ruwala) experienced flooding on their farms.	Integrate climate smart agriculture has been integrated across the training modules.  Careful assessment of all sites proposed for agricultural and infrastructure activities to ensure minimal impact of weather conditions.
<b>Frequent reshuffling in and inadequate coordination between government units and key counterpart organizations</b>	High	Medium	The UN Agencies and government will maintain constant coordination and consultation with local and government stakeholders on importance of their consistent participation, to ensure that key focal points and leadership are fully aware of the project implementation and related discussions.	There was some loss of key coordination functions at field level due to the relocation of the District Youth Officer in Tonkolili and death of CYC chairman in Nongowa chiefdom.  The project was unable to conduct joint monitoring visits and Technical Committee Meetings for some time but these practices have now	Regular update of project database for key documentation, materials. Encourage partners to submit all training materials, reports, etc. for upload.  Strengthen engagement between national and district level government counterparts to ensure information flow.  Conduct Technical Committee

				resumed.	<p>Meeting ASAP to plan for key exit strategies to be implemented during NCE phase.</p> <p>Strengthen DYCs/CYCs and involved more members in project activities</p>
<b>Adverse effect on project participants and their relations among/ between each other</b>	Medium	High	The UN Agencies and Government will ensure that “ <i>Do No Harm</i> ” principle through continuous conflict sensitive planning, monitoring and adjustment will be applied. Conflict analysis of the situation of youth at risk will be undertaken at the inception stage and knowledge to be utilized in the implementation of the activities. UN Agencies will implement the Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism.	In general, beneficiaries report overall improved group dynamics and even improved sense of unity with other Y@R groups in other communities which they had previously a hostile relationship with.	<p>Continued conflict-sensitive planning and joint discussion between agencies and partners to keep each other updated on potential conflict dynamics.</p> <p>Address issues around group leadership structures and input management that could lead to conflict within the groups.</p> <p>Promote social and recreational activities among the Y@R groups and other youths.</p>