

Youth @ Risk End of Project Report.

Background Introduction

Due to the fragility of our peace decades after the civil war in Sierra Leone, violence amongst youth became a perennial problem especially after the 2018 elections. The rise in cliques and gangs became higher than before. These cliques and gangs otherwise known as Youth At Risk, are used as agents of violence to intimidate political opponents and voters, disrupt rival political rallies and the electoral process.

To address these seeming security threats in the country, NaCCED with support from UNDP was tasked with the responsibility to provide civic education trainings for targeted beneficiaries of the Youth @ Risk project, thereby empowering them to become resources for sustainable peace and community resilience. After several assessments, Tonkolili and Kenema districts were selected. The overarching objective of the project was to ensure that Youth At Risk are reintegrated into families and communities through livelihood support, civic education, counselling and awareness raising.

In Kenema Districts, two chiefdoms were selected- Dama and Nongowa chiefdoms with 183 beneficiaries:

Dama Chiefdom:

1. Kojo Dama,
2. KPadenbu Dama,
3. Giema Dama,
4. Lopa Dama

Nongowa Chiefdom:

5. Talia Nongowa,
6. Largo Nongowa,
7. Hangha Nongowa,
8. Gombu Nongowa and
9. Simbeck Nongowa),

For Tonkolili District, two (2) chiefdoms were also selected- Kholifa Rowalla and Yoni Chiefdoms with 219 beneficiaries

Kholifa Rowalla Chiefdom:

1. Court Barray 24
2. Malempeh 21
3. Old Magburaka Town 21
4. Ropolon 22
5. Rowalla 25
6. Makeni Road 24

Yoni Chiefdom:

7. Mile 91 36

8. Yoni 21 and
9. Mathibo 25

In view of the above, the accomplishment of this project for the past 24 months period has reached its fruition and details of activities as undertaken is reported below.

Activities Implemented

Several activities were implemented as part of NaCCED's mandate in the project. These activities were meant to increase the awareness of the project beneficiaries about their rights and responsibilities, focusing on their role to peace building and conflict resolution. Among the activities implemented were:

1. **Familiarization Visits:** Before the implementation of the project, several familiarization visits were made to targeted communities to identify beneficiaries and understand the terrain.
2. **Focus group Discussion:** Focus Group Discussions were conducted in order to understand the deep-rooted norms and knowledge gaps in civic roles and responsibilities affecting youth participation in governance and decision making generally. These Focus Group Discussions were held in --- communities in Kenema and Tonkolili districts.
3. **Youth Duty Bearer Dialogue Sessions:** After the conduction of the FGDs, there were issues of concerns from the youths which according to them are responsible for the gap in executing their roles and responsibilities in their communities. A dialogue sessions for duty bearers and youths were held in targeted communities. The reasons for these dialogue sessions were to have a frank talk on the germane issues that came out of the FGDs to see how stakeholders can improve their relationship with the youth, thereby bringing the youths closer for sustainable development.
4. **General Civic Education Training:** Training workshops were also conducted, 9 in each districts (Kenema and Tonkolili), to help beneficiaries to know their civic rights and responsibilities, especially around topics that bothered on diversity, ethnicity, Teenage Pregnancy etc. with the aim of transforming them into good/useful citizens in their communities.
5. **Youth Ambassador Training:** Two separate training workshops for Youth Ambassadors were conducted in Magburaka and Kenema towns respectively. A total of 18 peace ambassadors from the two districts, 9 per district. Each training lasted for two days. This training focused on how to analyse a conflict, highlighting diverse aspects and elements of a conflict resolution approaches and methods, Communication in conflict, listening skills and techniques, negotiation skills and techniques, mediation, stages of mediation, reconciliation, Conflict management styles, various traditional conflict management styles, approaches to conflict management, trauma healing, non-violence etc.
6. **Open Space Edutainment:** Open space Edutainment activities were held in the Kenema and Tonkolili districts, 2 for each. The edutainment exercise were a way to bring the project to community people and youths who are not part of the project and it gave opportunity to beneficiaries to share their experiences and the gains they've made so far since the start of the project. During these sessions, popular artists and cultural groups entertained the

audience using theme messages for youths at risk, while passing messages of peace and goodwill to audience

7. **Testimonial Sessions:** Testimonial sessions were conducted in the two districts where the project was implemented to receive first-hand information from the beneficiaries and community members on the gains made in the lives of the beneficiaries and the communities at large, during the lifespan of the project.

The activities implemented by NaCCED as agreed are summarized in the table below with their frequency and location.

ACTIVITY	LOCATION	FREQUENCY
Familiarization visit to target communities	Kenema and Tonkolili Districts	
Focus group Discussion	Kenema and Tonkolili Districts	8, 4 for each district
Youth Duty Bearer Dialogue session	Kenema and Tonkolili Districts	8, 4 for each district
General Training	Kenema and Tonkolili Districts	18, 9 for each district
Media Engagement	Kenema and Tonkolili Districts	
IEC Material	Kenema and Tonkolili Districts	
Open Space Edutainment	Kenema and Tonkolili Districts	
Youth Ambassador Training	Kenema and Tonkolili Districts	4, 2 for each district
Testimonial Sessions	Kenema and Tonkolili Districts	4, 2 for each district

Key Outcomes

At the end of this project, several successes otherwise known as the key outcomes are achieved. Below are the key outcomes:

- **Behavioral Change:** One of the key outcomes of this project is to influence positive behaviour change in the lives and actions of the beneficiaries. Towards the end of this project, it will interest our partners to know that the beneficiaries who are better known as Youths @ Risk, have been successfully integrated in their communities are now involved in meaningful activities in synchrony with the project expectation.
- **Personal Testimonies:** At the end of the project, personal testimonies were collected from beneficiaries. From their testimonies, beneficiaries expressed how delightful they are over the implementation of the project, stating how their lives have changed and how useful they are now to their communities as a result, they have been accepted. Details from these testimonies can be seen in the clips attached to this report.
- **Community Stakeholders' interview:** Community stakeholders in the selected communities were interviewed to give their take on the project. Majority of those interviewed explained the significant gains the project have made in the lives of the beneficiaries in their communities, which has amounted to them been seen now as agents of development in their respective communities. The full clip of their interviews is attached to this report.
- **Law Enforcement (Police) Testimonies:** Testimonies were gathered from the law enforcement personnel in the targeted communities. From what we gathered it is evident

that there is now considerable reduction in crime rate in these communities. Beneficiaries have now become peace makers other than perpetrators of crime.

- **Parents/Siblings Testimonies:** As a way of gauging the successes made in the implementation of the project, testimonies were recorded from parents/siblings of beneficiaries. From their observation, they are thankful for such intervention in the lives of their siblings. According to them, they now feel safe living with beneficiaries without the fear of been stolen from. They are now proud of the beneficiaries as they are now useful to the communities when it comes to collective responsibilities in their communities.

Recommendations:

- The activities of the project are very relevant in building peace and reintegrating youth at risk into their communities. We recommend that this project be scaled up to cover more communities
- The Ministry of Agriculture to continue support for youth at risk in the present project locations and help organise other interested youths in other communities
- The council for civic education and democracy to continue conducting the youth and duty bearer dialogue sessions as it helps in curbing violence and in maintaining the peace
- Advocate with other development partners to support target communities with vocational skills trainings initiatives, to complement the groups' agricultural activities
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