



With funds from



The Inclusive Conflict Prevention & Peacebuilding Project

KOLHAT BARRAY NEWSLETTER

Editorial

Welcome to our maiden edition of the Kolhat Barray Newsletter as part of the Inclusive Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Project which Youth Partnership for Peace and Development is Jointly delivering with Cordaid in Sierra Leone. Central to this newsletter and subsequent editions will be a roundup of updates and activities in the implementation of the project.

The current debate on the agency and relevance of young people, including men and women in Sierra Leone had opened plethora of questions to not only those who implement the policies, but those who makes them on one hand, and the very population that these policies do affect.

The project addresses key peacebuilding challenges having adverse implications for young people, especially young women, who bear the brunt of (often gendered) insecurity and injustice, and who remain largely excluded from effective access to community-based dispute resolution (CBDR), with conflict-generative results. The project on the other hand is formulated with a clear focus on enabling women, working intergenerationally and with men as allies, to collectively influence conflict prevention at local and national levels, contributing to a more inclusive and peaceful society as a measure of walking out of fragility.

The project's execution agencies; Youth Partnership for Peace and Development and Cordaid comes in with unique local and strategic global fits. Cordaid's 2019 global report, *Diverse Pathways to Justice for All*, charts a highly innovative path toward achieving progress on conflict prevention and justice through engagement with customary and informal systems. The Kolhat Barray project also focuses on the engagement of women with locally-rooted customary and informal providers of Community Based Dispute



Resolution (CBDR) and justice, based on evidence from the report that those providers are most relevant to the everyday needs of rural and peri-urban women and youth, and likelier to deliver cheaper and more sustainable results. Evidence-based strategies to shift customary and informal CBDR and justice providers toward more inclusive, less rights-abrogating practices will include improved dialogue between women, youth and providers; and the adoption of new, standardized tools for accountability and transparency.

Cordaid and YPPD have been closely linked through the global Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS), wherein Cordaid provides the international secretariat and YPPD serves as a key member in Sierra Leone; the organizations have also cooperated around advocacy on UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security with a landmarked launch in Sierra Leone.

Both Cordaid and YPPD will, through the project allocate additional funds directly to women- and youth-led civil society, community-based organizations (CSOs) and networks in all targeted districts across Sierra Leone via sub-grants for women and

youth-led activities. Profiling and pre-screen exercises are ongoing to provide better targeting of groups and community-based organizations to benefit from capacity building interventions in addition to the micro grants for innovative youth and women-led solutions.

With our partners, Cordaid and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, together we keep addressing some of the very urgent peacebuilding challenges which remains imminently concerning for a country on the crossroads in its fragility spectrum.

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Catalyzing Grassroot Peacebuilding: Emma's Thoughts on Gender Dimensions to Local Peacebuilding.



Emma S.N.C Coker, Gender Advisor – facilitating a dialogue group session

Leading from the Frontlines of Fragility

Being on the crossroads since the country's civil war, Sierra Leone has had several processes unfolding as part of repositioning her place on the global and governance stages. While most of these processes are looked at as key opportunities for holistic growth and engagement, a lot seems disconnected as to answering questions like how central young people are in seeking joint and collective solutions to dealing with major drivers of conflicts, violence and fragility in general. Sierra Leone, like any conflict, security and violence-affected contexts, young people are commonly perceived as either perpetrators or victims of violence with young men usually assumed to be the primary perpetrators and young women the primary victims, especially of sexual and gender-based violence.

Young women and men are at the centre of the Theory of Change because their needs are most acute and supporting justice providers to adapt their services to those needs are likely to have cascading effects on inclusiveness and responsiveness more broadly. Consistent with the commitments of Cordaid and YPPD to UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the current project seeks to transform unequal gender roles, behaviours and power relations, focusing on gender-specific barriers to women's access to justice, the differentiated experiences and concerns of women and girls and men and boys, and rendering visible the effects of SGBV, including gender inequality as its root cause.

Unequal power distribution between women and men continue to deny majority of women of not having their voices in local and national decision-making processes. However, women do play an important role in promoting sustainable peacebuilding efforts when especially fully involved to lead, participate and take action on critical processes. If women are being involved in decision and leadership processes, it will help design a lasting peace which enhances the empowerment, inclusion and protection of women and young girls. Further to this, important to note is that the attainment of sustainable peace ultimately leads to greater gender equality and a transformative social change which is built on the role women and men plays. In all the activities completed so far, the team has ensured the full involvement and participation of young women in addition to deeper intergenerational conversations and engagements with older generations. The project team will continue to promote and sustain their active participation at all stages of the implementation and also trigger actions for young women to work with men as allies, and mobilize to identify and take action on key drivers of conflict, insecurity, violence and injustice in their communities.

What roles have young women played in the current project activities?

In all the activities completed so far, the team has ensured the full involvement and participation of young women. They women have assisted with community mobilization, participated in consultation meetings and focus group discussions, and making final decisions. The project team will continue to promote their active participation at all stages of the project and also trigger actions for young women to work intergenerationally and with men as allies, and mobilize to identify and take action on key drivers of conflict, insecurity and injustice in their communities.

The exclusion of young people, especially women from local dispute resolution and conflict prevention has been a challenge these communities have endured across all three targeted districts; with each having very unique conflict drivers which have had an adverse impact not only on security and justice outcomes but also on the development of young people themselves. Here is what Augusta K. Sheriff from Gandorhun town, Malen Chiefdom, Pujehun district had to say during a Focus Group Discussion (FDG); ***"Our chiefs did not include women in all the agreements they reached with the Socfin Company. Today, young women are suffering from such decisions; our sources of livelihood have been destroyed, our parents can no longer afford to support our education and most of us have now dropped out of school. The company workers are now sexually harassing and exploiting us, some of us continue to endure sexual abuse, rape and teenage pregnancy. We have to steal from the Socfin farm for survival and if caught, we suffer the consequence that follows... Our future is bleak and our unborn children may suffer the worse. The project is already identifying range of issues across diverse communities as far as gender considerations are concerned and the willingness of local authorities in enabling the spaces for dialogue. We will ensure our voices will be heard and no longer neglected. I believe this is the only way our lives will be better and our communities empowered"***.

Right across the 23 communities, 7 chiefdoms and 3 districts that the project is being implemented, stories like the one Augusta had above are the realities for the majority of young women who still struggles to get their voices out.

What's next for women in the implementation of the project?

The project team will continue to promote the full involvement and active participation of young women in the planned project activities; ensuring that the remaining interventions are as inclusive and gender-sensitive as they can possibly be. Young women as well as men will be fully involved in local dispute resolutions of prevailing conflicts and prevention of future occurrences. Critical project lessons and best practices learnt from their activities will be recorded and shared for scalability in adoption in the three targeted project districts and reaching out to other parts of the country through learning which other partners may have gathered from this project's intervention.

Series of interesting processes are unfolding; ranging from the Community-Based Organizations identification for the Kolhat Barray Small Grant and the eventual granting process to youth-led institutions, to set of Youth Dialogues, youth profiling, curriculum development for youth leaders as well as training workshops that will build their capacities and many more.

Voices from the Communities: Creative Spaces and Strategies for Narrative Change around Peacebuilding



Community Meeting in Mabankra, Village, Tonkolili District,

Many of the persistent challenges in everyday peacebuilding in the midst of myriad conflict drivers and triggers occur at the local level, and many have touted the potential of community approaches that generate more and well-informed grassroots realities to overcome many of the societal breakdowns and problems that comes with them.

Deeply rooted in communities and districts having diverse conflict drivers in addition to the available spaces for inclusive dialogues which builds on societal co-existence, structural issues and deficiencies still very much exists which are affecting the livelihoods of the poor and marginalized. These include mistrust of the people in their leaderships, over-centralization of power, uneven distribution of wealth and income, perversion of justice, marginalisation of women and youth in decision-making processes and the increased weak technical capacity of community-based organizations to fully engage on the issues.

At the project's level of implementation, there is no doubt about the power of working with local communities and their structures, even more now at the level of conflict prevention and community-based dispute resolution and peacebuilding. Just as numbers matter in reach and project scope, strategy and approach to the engagement process are significantly very key in accompanying the change process. The Kolhat Barray project, which emphasizes multi-stakeholder grassroots peacebuilding solutions, makes a truly important pathway to how the whole of society approach can, and should, address the longstanding and everyday conflict prevention and peacebuilding challenges. More particularly, some of these communities that we operate have very complex conflict drivers around land governance and multinational cooperation's ownership of it, gold mining, women's empowerment and cultural barriers to their fullest potentials, livelihoods and agricultural productivity, prolonged exclusion of young people from their own development processes and a host of others.

Spurred by multiple local challenges, a new emphasis on grassroots peacebuilding and the prevention of conflicts has been evident in district-wide debates across a wide variety of other contexts, including access to social services, pandemic response, prolonged exclusion, injustice, conflict triggers, barriers to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and support for human rights, including economic, social

To address these problems, the Kolhat Barray Project and its unique process of collaborative conflict prevention and peacebuilding has identified the key pathways to raise awareness, strengthen and support networks and coalitions engaged with these issues. For these to be effective and meaningful, YPPD and Cordaid are addressing issues of capacity which enables grassroots community-based dispute resolution providers as well as keeping up to speed greater coordination between older civil society organizations and youth-led ones as means to foster transformative learning and joint interventions around the issues. From ongoing engagements across these communities that the project operates, it is already very clear from various stakeholder groups that the process will consolidate and deepen the peace and democratic processes in Sierra Leone which is critical for sustainable development and poverty reduction. It is also important because it seeks to promote women and youth participation in policy issues that affect them.

Opportunities exist for Cordaid and YPPD as the project rolls out. One of the key opportunities include existing community structures across targeted areas such as the Chiefdom and Village Development Committees, Youth Councils, civil society organizations, women and youth groups. These are broad-based and all inclusive structures that represent the interests and concerns of their constituents with legitimacy to mobilize and take action. Being critical as it is for ownership and inclusivity, ten (10) Project Management Boards/Committees are being established; ensuring every targeted community and district is having full representation at the level of making decisions on the project. These levels of people-centered approaches are paying higher dividends as the project progresses.

and cultural rights. While calls for greater focus to peacebuilding and conflict prevention are not new, together, these actions comprise a fresh and national normative when considering the country's peace journey, one that seeks peace, justice and inclusion at all levels – ensuring that no one is left behind and the full realization of the United Nations Global Goal 16 and its nexus with other related goals.

INTRODUCING THE KOLHAT BARRAY SMALL GRANT FOR YOUTH-LED COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS.

About the Kolhat Barray Small Grants

Funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF), Youth Partnership for Peace and Development (YPPD) in partnership with Cordaid are implementing the Inclusive Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Project, also called the Kolhat Barray. This catalytic grant for innovative youth-led conflict prevention and peacebuilding projects targets community-based organizations (CBOs) led by young women and men across the Western Area Rural, Tonkolili and Pujehun districts where the project is being implemented with the aim of advancing the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Medium-Term Development Plan and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250. The identification process will screen potential youth-led and serving agencies with supports in capacity as well as potential funding to power their creative solutions.

Objectives of the Small Grants

The Fund is piloted to assist youth-led organizations to develop and implement innovative impact-driven projects that will contribute to sustainable peacebuilding and conflict prevention. The fund further aims to document best practices from successful youth-led projects and create greater awareness of the need for youth mainstreaming in conflict prevention, peacebuilding policies and strategies.

The Fund aims more specifically aims to:

- Mobilize young people and their organizations for better youth-related policy implementation;
- Help government, non-governmental and civil society organizations better understand and respond to youth and their complex issues.
- Support youth learning, networking and information while fostering joint interventions for peace;
- Pilot and demonstrate new ideas on youth leadership, governance, conflict prevention and peacebuilding;
- Share and exchange best practices to the widest extent possible;
- Promote gender mainstreaming in all youth matters.

Building peace with young people and their organizations



3 Districts

Tonkolili
Western Area Rural
Pujehun



Areas served

23 Communities
7 Chiefdoms
4 Wards



Grant

900 million Leones is dedicated to the Kolhat Barray Small Grant for innovative youth-led peacebuilding projects.

WHO IS THE KOLHAT BARRAY SMALL GRANT FOR?

Kolhat Barray Small Grants are given to youth-led organizations and groups that are dedicated to:

- Improving peaceful, just and inclusive societies in project targeted districts of Tonkolili, Pujehun and Western Rural
- Engendering inclusive and participatory grassroots organizing
- Collaborative engagements with young people and their communities

Grantee organizations that this project intends to support must be exclusively led by young women and men up to the age of 35 years. Young women-led organizations are strongly encouraged to seize this golden opportunity.

Priority will be given to:

- Small, emerging grassroots groups with little or no access to funding from other sources
- Groups, networks, or collectives based in the three targeted project districts
- Groups located in remote, underserved areas
- Groups that are made up of and/or working with socially excluded and disadvantaged young women and men
- Groups using creative and transformative strategies to further their activism for peace.



International Youth Day 2021 Event in Sierra Leone



In Sierra Leone, despite tremendous efforts by the government and development partners over the years, youth participation, active inclusion and representation in critical decision-making processes affecting their lives remains daunting and the situation is worse for especially young women and girls. Youth lacks the education and required life skills that makes them productive and hence many are found on the street unemployed and unproductive. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the problem by increasing the proportion of young people especially adolescent girls not in employment, education or training.

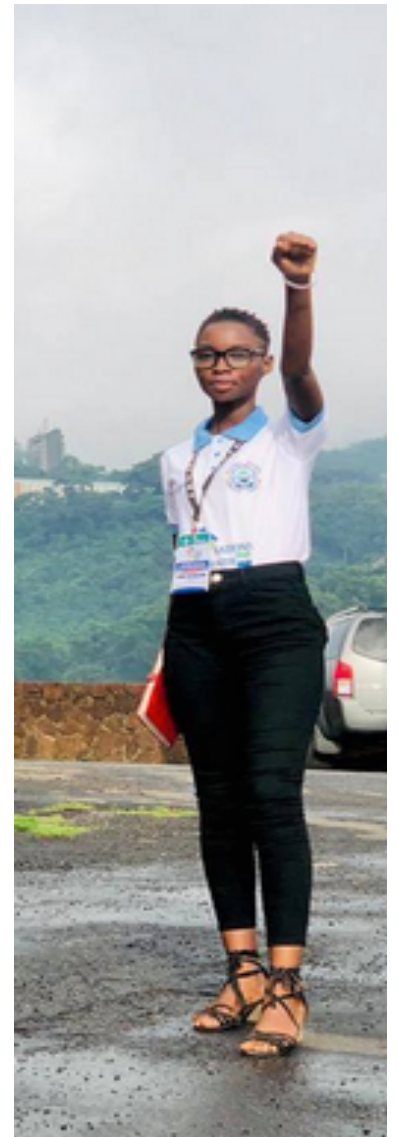
To contribute to changing this narrative, the Youth Partnership for Peace and Development through the Kolhat Barray Project worked collaboratively with the National Youth Leadership Summit Committee and the Ministry of Youth Affairs among other institutions to mark the 2021 International Youth Day event in Sierra Leone with the theme **"Transforming Food Systems: Youth Innovation for Human and Planetary Health"**. Organized in the confines of the Sierra Leone House of Parliament, the **Kolhat Barray Project** utilized the advocacy opportunity to support the **IYD 2021** commemoration as means build effective alliance and advocate on the need for affirmative actions on the UNSCR 2250 as specifically mentioned in the recently revised National Youth Policy

Two major activities were carried out during the IYD 2021 commemoration including a press briefing and a National Youth Leadership Summit that brought together 250 young people from across Sierra Leone. Happening at the very moment when the revised National Youth Policy was approved and launched, a hearty congratulations to the Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Youth Affairs for facilitating such a golden process. The National Youth Commission's work in fully implementing and delivering on the policy provisions cannot be overstated in addition to allowing every Sierra Leonean youth to fully reach their potentials as means to be sure there is no one leaving behind.

The Hon. Vice President, who gave the keynote address via video, informed participants of H. E. President Julius Maada Bio's New Direction Government's commitment to supporting youth empowerment. The Vice President expressed delight in the steps taken so far in terms of addressing youth empowerment in the country; recognizing the need to sustain and actions for creating the spaces for inclusive and meaningful youth engagement.

"And today, when you look around Sierra Leone, we have dynamic young Ministers; Ministers that are young. You talk of the Minister of Youth, to Education, to Mineral Resources. Several of our Ministers are youth," the Hon. Vice President, Mohamed Juldeh Bah noted.

We convey our appreciation to YACAP for facilitating this Year's Youth Summit, as part of the support that YPPD and Cordaid provided to this event was made possible through the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF) through the Inclusive Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Project which we also call the "Kolhat Barray project."



International Youth Day 2021 Statement from YPPD in Sierra Leone: The Kolhat Barray Powering Youth Voices for Action



Youth Leader from the Western Urban District Making Statement

We are delighted as partners in organizing the 4th edition of the Sierra Leone National Youth Leadership Summit 2021 in observance of the International Youth Day. The event gives youth the opportunity, more especially Sierra Leoneans and their policy-makers as well as youth-serving agencies, an opportunity to recognize the potentials of youth, to celebrate their achievements, and plan for ways to better engage young people to successfully take action in the development of their societies. It presents a unique opportunity for stakeholders to rally together in ensuring that young people are included in decision-making and effective participation at all levels. The imagination, ideals and energies of young men and women are vital for the continuing development of the societies in which they live.

International Youth Day theme for this year is "**Transforming Food Systems: Youth Innovation for Human and Planetary Health**," – but food systems can be only transformed where conflict, violence and fragility are adequately managed. During the 2021 ECOSOC Youth Forum (EYF), the issues and priorities highlighted by young participants included the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly related to its effect on human health, the environment, and food systems. As part of the official outcome recommendations of the EYF, young participants stressed the importance of working towards more equitable food systems.

Acknowledging the ardent role of the Government of Sierra Leone in repositioning how youth and their complex challenges are addressed, we thank the Ministry of Youth Affairs, the National Youth Commission and the Ministry of Finance for their leadership and supports in providing a roadmap for youth inclusion, empowerment and development through the finalization of the National Youth Policy. The Blue Print for Sierra Leonean youth is welcome, and we sincerely thank the GOSL and its development partners for the commitment to catalyzing results.

But more needs to be done. Sierra Leonean young people deserve to be empowered, and on this International Youth Day, we at YPPD and our partners are seeking the support of our allies and government to ensure that this is fulfilled. Now more than ever, we are calling on the government and partners to invest more in advancing youth empowerment, creativity, inclusion and active

participation. More life needs to be put into revamping and expanding the Youth Farms and a clear strategy for accelerated returns that will directly benefit young people and by extension, the country as a whole.

On this special day where we come together to celebrate youth and renew our commitments to do all that we can to support them in stepping forward. And on this day, YPPD would like to renew its commitment to doing all that we can to accompany the change and empowerment processes that Sierra Leonean youth requires. This is especially important at a time when violence is increasingly becoming an everyday part of communities today.

Addressing food security is a significant step to fostering peace, reducing fragility, conflicts and violence, which primarily emanates due to lack /or availability of it. These are some complex challenges that the Inclusive Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Project or the Kolhat Barray seeks to address with young women and men as catalysts for change. To successfully manage this, we need holistic and integrated approaches, more significant policy, coherence, and do more to popularize the National Youth Policy and fully have it implemented.

We also need to build better and more robust partnerships and collaborate closely with all partners and stakeholders in conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone.

Reaffirming our dedication and commitment to delivering sustainable interventions seeking to empower young people, it is evident that the debate is no longer on the reactivity of government to promptly respond in addressing the growing challenges Sierra Leonean youth are faced with, but a collective call for to cooperate and demonstrate our resolve to tapping into the numbers that young people present.

We call upon all stakeholders to mainstream youth across all programs from inception through programming and implementation and invest in the young generation and appropriately consider them 'as assets for transformation and development.

Thank you

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