



LEARNING BRIEF

COMMUNITY-LED CLIMATE ADAPTATION IN KAMBIA DISTRICT

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE YPPD–TRÓCAIRE WOMEN AND YOUTH
LEADING CLIMATE JUSTICE PROJECT, JANUARY – JUNE 2026

DATE

August 2026

THEME(S)

Climate Justice; Agroecology; Forest Management; Renewable Energy; Livelihoods; Gender & Youth Inclusion; Community Governance; Policy Advocacy

LOCATION

Matham, Koya 2 and Kassasie — Magbema Chiefdom, Kambia District, Sierra Leone

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER

Youth Partnership for Peace and Development (YPPD)

DONOR

Trócaire, through the Irish Civil Society Partnership (ICSP) — Project SIE 100

INTERVENTION DATE(S)

January – June 2026 (Year 3 of implementation)

COST(S)

SLE 224,450.83 expended in H1 — approximately 42% of the 2026 annual budget of SLE 533,650

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between January and June 2026, the Women and Youth Leading Climate Justice: Advocacy and Action project worked with three communities in Magbema Chiefdom — Matham, Koya 2 and Kassasie — to strengthen the capacity of women, young people, traditional leaders and Forest Management Committees to lead their own climate adaptation, protect community forest resources, and carry their priorities into district decision-making.

This Learning Brief draws together what YPPD and its communities learned over the semester: how refresher training translates into practice when it is followed by coaching; how conservation holds when it also pays; how young women move from audience to advocate; and how community adaptation priorities begin to enter formal district planning.

BACKGROUND

Sierra Leone remains highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. In Kambia District, erratic rainfall, declining soil fertility, deforestation and reduced agricultural productivity press directly on households that depend on farming and forest resources for their livelihoods. Women and young people carry a disproportionate share of that burden while holding the least influence over how communities and districts respond.

The Women and Youth Leading Climate Justice: Advocacy and Action project, implemented by YPPD with support from Trócaire under the Irish Civil Society Partnership, responds to this by building community capability in agroecology and sustainable forest management, promoting renewable household energy, strengthening local governance structures, and creating platforms through which community priorities reach policymakers.

The first half of 2026 marked the project's third year of implementation. Quarter 1 was given to staffing, work planning and community mobilisation in line with the approved budget phasing; Quarter 2 delivered the full package of planned activities. The lessons that follow are drawn from activity reports, community feedback, and joint monitoring conducted with Trócaire and fellow partner KADDRO.



DIRECT COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, JANUARY – JUNE 2026
(NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED)



Participation figures are drawn from the Six-Month Activities Implementation Report (January – June 2026). Coaching and mentoring follow-up sessions and the joint monitoring visit engaged the same communities and are not counted again here.

LEARNINGS

Critical learnings were identified against each of the project's outcome areas. A selection of these learnings follows.

1. COMMUNITIES LEAD THEIR OWN ADAPTATION

Refresher training that builds on what communities already know

From 15th to 17th April 2026, YPPD delivered a three-day refresher training on agroecology and forest management — one day in each community — in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. Roughly 45 participants per session, drawn from the Forest Management Committees and including smallholder farmers, youth representatives, women leaders and community Headmen, worked through eight technical sessions covering soil fertility and composting, mulching, crop diversification, organic pest control, local seed systems, land-use planning, sustainable forest management, agroforestry, tree nurseries and field demonstrations.

The training deliberately built on the 2025 capacity-building interventions rather than starting again. Participants opened by reflecting on what they had adopted, where they had stalled, and what they still needed — and facilitators shaped the sessions around those answers.

- Sequencing a refresher after a period of practice surfaced the real barriers to adoption — input costs, land tenure, market access — which a first-time training would not have reached.
- Delivering the training *in* each community, rather than at a central venue, allowed field demonstrations on local soils and enabled participation by people who could not travel.
- Partnering with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security added technical credibility and, critically, created a pathway for government follow-up rather than a one-off event.

Commitments secured in the room outlast the training

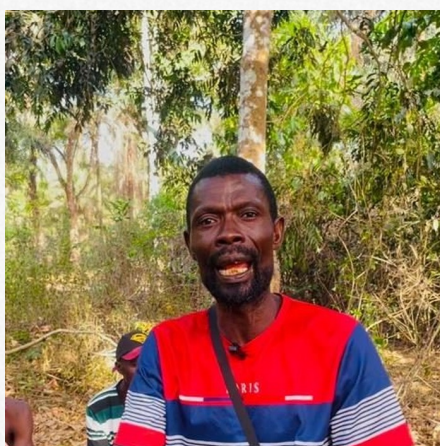
The most durable outcomes of the April training were not knowledge gains but public commitments made in front of the community. The Headman of Kassasie committed a plot of land to the Forest Management Committee as a farming site; a second community leader dedicated farmland as an agroecology demonstration site; and the Ministry of Agriculture Extension Officer committed his own time to monitoring those sites.

- Creating space for leaders to make commitments publicly converts goodwill into assets the committee can actually use, and makes follow-through socially enforceable.
- A government commitment to monitor — made alongside community commitments — links local action to the district technical system at no additional project cost.



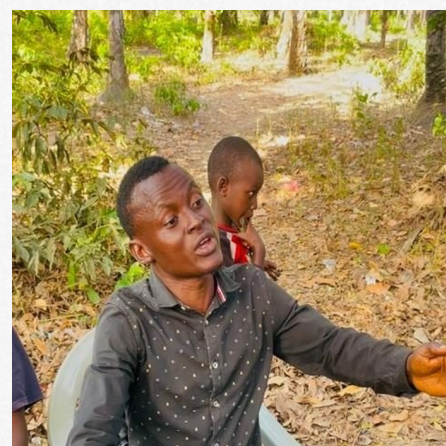
"I am committing a plot of land to the committee as a farming site."

HEADMAN, KASSASIE



"In the bid to advance agroecology, I am dedicating a farmland as a demonstration site."

COMMUNITY LEADER, KASSASIE



"From government, I will dedicate my time to monitor these sites."

EXTENSION OFFICER, MAFS

Coaching and mentoring is what turns training into practice

Through May 2026, coaching and mentoring sessions followed the training into the three communities, engaging women, youth groups, lead farmers, community leaders and Forest Management Committee members. The sessions reinforced techniques already introduced and helped participants work through the obstacles they had met in applying them.

- The monitoring visit later confirmed the pattern: participants who received continuous follow-up were markedly more confident in applying agroecological techniques, producing organic fertiliser and managing forest resources than those who had attended training alone.
- Committees demonstrated improved coordination, and women and young people reported increased participation in forest conservation discussions — an outcome of repeated contact rather than a single event.
- Budgeting mentoring as a distinct follow-on activity, not an informal extra, is what made this possible.

2. COMMUNITIES SUSTAIN THEIR NATURAL RESOURCES

Locally made by-laws are holding

All three communities have adopted and are enforcing community by-laws prohibiting indiscriminate tree felling, under which trees may be cut only under agreed conditions. In Kassasie, community members have gone further, adopting a practice of planting two to three trees for every one felled for a legitimate purpose.

- Rules that communities write and enforce themselves have proved more durable than externally imposed conservation conditions, because enforcement rests with the people who benefit.
- Replacement practices give the by-laws a visible, positive expression rather than a purely prohibitive one, which has helped acceptance.

Governance structures need maintenance, not just establishment

Monitoring found that the Village Development Committee in Kassasie had ceased to function after several members migrated to Kambia Town. A new fifteen-member committee was constituted during the visit, restoring the structure responsible for coordinating project activities. In Matham and Koya 2 the opposite pressure appeared: visible project benefits have generated demand to expand committees beyond their current fifteen members.

- Community structures decay through ordinary events — migration, illness, competing work — and periodic verification of functionality should be a standing part of monitoring, not an exceptional finding.
- Pressure to expand membership is a success indicator, but committees also need clear terms of reference so that growth does not dilute accountability.
- Each of the three communities has now dedicated communal farmland to its Village Development Committee, with proceeds intended to fund committee operations — a locally generated mechanism for sustaining governance beyond the project.



Focus Group Discussion with community members during the monitoring and field supervision visit, Kambia District.

3. CLIMATE ACTION THAT ALSO DELIVERS LIVELIHOODS

Briquette stoves: conservation that pays a household

Across all three communities, monitoring found widespread adoption of briquette stoves, with participants reporting substantially reduced dependence on firewood and faster, more efficient cooking. In Matham, women trained under the project are now constructing improved stoves for neighbouring communities on a cost-recovery basis, generating household income that supports children's education and other family needs. In Koya 2, women and young people have carried the skill beyond the target community, training relatives and neighbouring villages.

- Environmental interventions are sustained when they deliver a direct economic benefit. Reduced firewood collection saves time; stove construction earns money; both reinforce the conservation objective without further project input.
- Spontaneous replication into neighbouring communities is a strong signal of value — and an argument for deliberately resourcing peer-to-peer diffusion rather than relying on it happening by chance.

Agroecology is reaching yields and food security

Communities reported improved crop yields following the adoption of agroecological practices and the use of organic fertiliser prepared from locally available materials, including farm weeds. In Koya 2, participants further reported improved management of palm plantations after adopting sustainable harvesting practices, resulting in increased palm oil production and higher household incomes. Increased production has enabled families to save, meet household needs, purchase seedlings and prepare for subsequent farming seasons.

- Practices built on free, locally available inputs are adopted fastest, because they do not depend on a supply chain the community does not control.
- Gains are constrained where they meet a hard limit the project has not addressed: limited access to farming tools in Matham, and inadequate post-harvest storage in Koya 2, are now the binding constraints on further progress.
- Communities themselves identified the next step — small-scale poultry production in Koya 2, valued both as income and as a source of manure for the farming system — indicating that participants are now designing their own adaptation pathway.



A community-level session under way in Kambia District, combining facilitated learning with open community dialogue.

4. WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LEADING CLIMATE JUSTICE

Translating national climate policy into community language

From 20th to 22nd June 2026, the first of two bi-annual community awareness rounds reached 60 participants — 40 young women and 20 young men — across the three communities, on Sierra Leone's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the significance of COP31. Facilitators used storytelling, visual aids and community mapping to connect national commitments on renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, reforestation and adaptation with lived experience: falling farm productivity, shifting weather, flooding and health risks. Focus Group Discussions created space for young women to describe how climate change has affected their education, food security and access to resources.

- High-level policy becomes usable when it is anchored in what people already observe. Community mapping in particular allowed participants to locate national goals on their own land.
- Setting an explicit participation target that favoured young women (40 of 60) changed who spoke, not merely who attended.
- The sessions produced a documented repository of community-specific climate impacts and indigenous adaptation practices — an evidence base for advocacy in the lead-up to COP31, and a project output in its own right.
- Pre- and post-session evaluations and follow-up interviews gave practical evidence of knowledge retention and should be maintained across all community-facing activities.

A recurring theme was a sense of injustice: Sierra Leone contributes minimally to global emissions yet bears a heavy share of the consequences. That recognition visibly strengthened participants' resolve to engage in advocacy, with many expressing willingness to serve as climate ambassadors in their own and neighbouring communities.

Traditional leaders as allies, not obstacles

CASE STUDY — CHIEF MORLAI JULEH KAMARA, KASSASIE COMMUNITY

"The training has changed my understanding. I now believe that when women and youth are empowered and included in decision-making, the whole community benefits. As my contribution, I am committing a plot of land to the committee as a farming site."

Chief Morlai Juleh Kamara, a 64-year-old traditional leader from Kassasie, became a strong advocate for the empowerment of women and young people after taking part in the project's trainings on gender equality, community governance, agroecology and forest management, alongside coaching and community sensitisation.

Before the project, women — particularly young women — and youth had limited opportunity to participate in community decision-making or to access productive resources. Through the training and mentoring, Chief Kamara came to see inclusive leadership and equitable access as conditions for better development outcomes, not concessions. He voluntarily donated a plot of land to establish a communal farming site, giving women and young people a place to apply what they had learned, and he now actively encourages their participation in community meetings while urging other leaders to do the same.

The learning: engaging traditional authority directly, and over a sustained period, converts the gatekeepers of community decision-making into its most persuasive advocates for inclusion. A commitment of land from a Chief carries a legitimacy no external organisation can supply.



Women and young people taking an active part in a community session — participation targets were set deliberately to ensure young women were heard, not merely present.

5. COMMUNITY PRIORITIES REACHING DISTRICT POLICY

From Community Adaptation Plans to the District Development Plan

The project convened a District Multi-Stakeholder Policy Roundtable on Climate Adaptation Planning at the Kambia District Council, bringing district stakeholders, policymakers, local authorities, civil society actors and community representatives to one table. Matham, Koya 2 and Kassasie each presented their adaptation priorities directly to decision-makers: climate-resilient agriculture and protection of natural resources; improved water access reflected in district planning and budgeting; and early action with community-level resilience integrated into district action.

The Deputy Chief Administrator was candid about the Council's funding constraints and the competing demands on limited district resources, while encouraging communities to register formally with the Council so they can be captured in planning processes, to attend Council meetings to present their needs, and to remain alert to funding opportunities from development partners. Panellists from across the district's technical and political leadership responded with specific commitments.

- Formal recognition of the Community Adaptation Plans as legitimate inputs to district planning, and a commitment to work toward their integration into the review of the Kambia District Development Plan.
- Technical guidance from the District Agriculture Officer to align community priorities with climate-smart agriculture; a pledge from the Local Councillor to champion those priorities in Council deliberations.
- An explicit commitment to inclusive, gender-responsive adaptation planning reflecting women, youth and persons with disabilities, following an intervention from the representative of persons living with disability.

What the roundtable taught

- Communities presenting their own priorities, in their own words, shifted the session from presentation to negotiation. Policymakers responded to people, not to a project document.
- Honesty about institutional limits was more productive than a general pledge of support: naming the funding constraint moved the conversation toward registration, planning cycles and partner funding — routes that are actually available.
- Securing named commitments from individual office-holders creates a concrete basis for follow-up, which a collective resolution would not.
- The remaining task is procedural, not rhetorical: registration of community structures and insertion into the District Development Plan review cycle are the steps that will determine whether the commitments hold.



Panellists respond to community adaptation priorities at the District Multi-Stakeholder Policy Roundtable, Kambia District Council Hall.

CROSS-CUTTING APPROACHES

The project works with the same communities across several sectors at once, so that people's needs are addressed as they are actually experienced rather than through separate, sector-driven interventions.

- **Gender equality and social inclusion.** Participation targets favouring young women, deliberate space for their voices in Focus Group Discussions, women's leadership in the stove enterprise, and the explicit inclusion of persons with disabilities in adaptation planning have moved inclusion from an aspiration to a design feature. Barriers to women's participation in decision-making were addressed directly as a training session, not left implicit.
- **Partnership with government institutions.** Working through the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security on training delivery, and with the Kambia District Council on adaptation planning, has embedded the project in structures that will outlast it. Joint monitoring involving the Council, MAFS and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change is the logical next step.
- **Peer learning between Trócaire partners.** The joint monitoring and cross-learning visit with Trócaire and KADDRO to Gballanthalla and Katik exposed YPPD and its communities to proven models — community-managed VSLAs, fire belt construction, briquette production, intergenerational agroforestry plots, eco-friendly cooking stoves, and community-financed maintenance of project infrastructure. Several are being adapted directly into YPPD's own programming.
- **Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning.** Pre- and post-session evaluations, attendance tracking, follow-up interviews, document review, direct observation and Focus Group Discussions were triangulated to verify reported results rather than accept them. Monitoring identified problems the activity reports had not — most notably the lapsed committee in Kassasie — which is the test of whether a monitoring system is working.
- **Sustainability by design.** Communal farmland dedicated to committees, community by-laws, cost-recovery stove enterprises, government commitments to monitor demonstration sites, and the pursuit of formal community registration with the Council are all mechanisms that do not depend on continued donor funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pair every training with a budgeted coaching and mentoring follow-up. The evidence from this semester is that follow-up, not the training itself, determines adoption.
- Address the constraints communities have named — farming tools in Matham, post-harvest storage in Koya 2 — before introducing new practices. Unresolved constraints cap the return on everything already delivered.
- Strengthen and periodically verify community governance structures. Expand Village Development Committees where demand justifies it, support newly constituted committees, and treat structure functionality as a standing monitoring question.
- Resource peer-to-peer diffusion deliberately. Briquette stove skills are already spreading to neighbouring communities without project support; modest investment would multiply that reach.
- Convert district commitments into procedure. Support communities to register formally with the Kambia District Council, accompany their representatives to Council meetings, and track the District Development Plan review cycle so the Community Adaptation Plans are tabled at the right moment.
- Institutionalise joint monitoring with the Kambia District Council, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change to strengthen technical oversight and institutional ownership.
- Explore complementary livelihood options identified by communities themselves, including small-scale poultry production, to diversify household income and strengthen resilience.
- Maintain the community climate evidence base built through the awareness sessions and carry it into national advocacy ahead of COP31.

LOOKING AHEAD: JULY – DECEMBER 2026

The second half of the year carries the semester's learning into the remaining phased activities.

PLANNED ACTIVITY	BUDGET LINE	TIMELINE	LEARNING APPLIED
Two-day refresher training on sustainable briquette production in each of the three communities	D.2	Q3	Builds directly on models observed during the KADDRO cross-learning visit
Second round of bi-annual community climate awareness on the NDCs and COP31	D.3	Q3	Consolidates community evidence ahead of COP31
Bi-annual structured cross-community learning exchanges between Matham, Koya 2 and Kassasie	D.4	Q3–Q4	Formalises the peer diffusion already occurring spontaneously
District-level multi-stakeholder policy engagement to advance adoption of Community Adaptation Plans	D.5	Q4	Converts roundtable commitments into planning-cycle procedure
Second bi-annual monitoring visit	H	Q4	Includes verification of committee functionality as a standing question
Continued coaching and mentoring of Forest Management Committees, women and youth, including support to the committed demonstration and committee farming sites	—	Ongoing	The semester's central lesson, applied continuously

REFERENCES

- Six-Month (Bi-Annual) Activities Implementation Report, *Women and Youth Leading Climate Justice: Advocacy and Action*, Project SIE 100 (Trócaire ICSP), YPPD, 1st January – 30th June 2026.
- Report: *Refresher Training on Agroecology and Forest Management* — Matham, Koya 2 and Kassasie, Kambia District, 15th – 17th April 2026, YPPD.
- Report: *Bi-Annual Community-Level Awareness on the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and COP31*, 20th – 22nd June 2026, YPPD.
- *Monitoring and Field Supervision Report*, Matham, Koya 2 and Kassasie, 1st – 4th July 2026, YPPD Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.
- *Monitoring and Learning Visit Report* — KADDRO Project Communities, Gballanthalla and Katik, Kambia District, joint Trócaire / YPPD / KADDRO visit.
- Activity Report: *District Multi-Stakeholder Policy Roundtable on Climate Adaptation Planning — Integrating Community Adaptation Plans into the Kambia District Development Plan*, YPPD.
- Government of Sierra Leone, *Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement*.
- Community Adaptation Plans — Matham, Koya 2 and Kassasie, Magbema Chiefdom, Kambia District.



SUPPORT

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