



**Group Name:** Youth Movement for Sustainable Development Sierra Leone (YoMSuD-SL)

### **Youth Challenge Fund (YCF) Phase One (1) – 2022 Quartely Report**

Project Title: Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRHR) Among 600 adolescent girls in Falaba district Sierra Leone.

Project Duration: 2 Months

Project Completed.

**Goup Lead/Project Coordinator**

### **REPORT NARRATIVE 1**

**Please see next document for program activities and pictures**

#### **What have we done since receive fund:**

Purchase of project activity items/materials to fast track the implementation/Training of our staff and volunteers.

#### **Project Activities Implemented**

##### **Brief Introduction of the project communities**

Dembelia Sinkunia Chiefdom is located in the Northern part of Sierra Leone bordering with the Republic of Guinea. Subsistence farming, cattle rearing, timber harvesting, and backyard gardening are their major sources of livelihood, majority at 90% are Muslims and significant group of Christians. The population is made up of different ethnic groups such as Yalunka, Fullah, Limba and Kuranko. Their religious and cultural practices influence their social life and livelihood greatly. This has resulted to the poor development in the sector of education, gender equality, women and girls' rights in especially the project communities within the Chiefdom.

#### **I. Pre-implementation Community Consultative engagement meetings with Stakeholders in the five project communities; Sinkunia, Bantantia, Jedia and Mannah & Gbindi Communities.**

The project targeted community stakeholders by sending them permission letters to each community's stakeholders which includes Regent Chief, Chiefdom Speaker, Section Chiefs, Town Chiefs, Women's Leaders, Religious Leaders (Imams & Pastors), Youth Leaders, Community Social Club Leaders, Timber, Okada (Motorist) Riders Union, Teachers, Health workers' Representatives, the media (Radio) within the project communities. The stakeholders are believed to be the custodians of their communities, they are the decision makers and they influence the societies' religion, laws, norms, cultures and tradition that has greater impacts on the adolescents. They are the major actors responsible for the increase in sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy, early child marriage, violation of women and girls' rights, because they are known to have been compromising cases within their communities.



### **Who were involved**

community's stakeholders which includes Regent Chief, Chieftom Speaker, Section Chiefs, Town Chiefs, Women's Leaders, Religious Leaders (Imams & Pastors), Youth Leaders, Community Social Club Leaders, Timber, Okada (Motorist) Riders Union, Teachers, Health workers' and the media (Radio) station representatives

On the 10th August 2022, a team of YoMSuD-SL visited each of the five communities reaching out to each of the aforementioned stakeholders in each community and had a comprehensive engagements on the project theme. We first visited Bantantia community stakeholders Staff and purpose of visit introduction was done by the project leader Mariama Bintu Sesay. On behalf of the Bantantia community Pa Foday Kamara –Town Chief made strong and promising commitments change community's perception, attitudes, behaviours and will enforce community by-laws that will promote adolescents sexual and reproductive health rights.

The women's leader, Madam Thallah Kamara thanks YoMSuD-SL and Plan International for bringing such program to their door-step and for making them get the knowledge and information about the importance of girl child education, women's and adolescents sexual and reproductive health rights.

On the same day after Bantantia Community engagement, we went to Jedia Community where we met with all the community's stakeholders. Here staff and project purpose introduction was done by Madam Ramatu Fofanah Assistant Project Leader. Jedia Town Chief was super excited by stating that if YoMSuD-SL could reach to their community where they are in a very hard to reach community, then they must augment this efforts and make sure that the overall project objective is achieved by protecting women's and adolescents sexual and reproductive rights. Encourage their daughters to prevent themselves against unwanted pregnancy. The Section Chief also incinerated that the girl child's rights must be included in their community by-laws and offenders must be punished.

Later the same day in Mannah Community, stakeholders welcomed YoMSuD-SL team and thanks Plan International for supporting their community organization-YoMSuD-SL and that they are ready to do anything to make the project successful. We have been waiting for such important information that could change the mindsets of our leaders towards issues disturbing girl child education in our community, early child marriage and teegnage pregnancies have been the only success for our daughters here and leaders are not doing anything about it, but we thank God for your intervention –said Abu Kamara Town Chief. Conclusion were made and Community attendees made strong commitments in changing attitudes and behaviours towards adolescents in societies.

On the following day, August 12th 2022 YoMSuD-SL team reached to the Sinkunia community stakeholders, the town is divided into two sections: Sinkunia Upper and Sinkunia Lower. Stakeholders at Sinkunia upper were first engaged, Staff and project mission introduction was done by Project Coordinator Mariama Bintu Sesay-YoMSuD-SL, the chieftom speaker Pa Sanna welcomed the team and appreciate the project idea, he continued by saying they all will put hands together to make it a success and minimise the teenage pregnancy rate and that its not easy to end or stop what teenagers are used to, also the phone has contributed greatly in the increase. He ended by quoting that "boy pikin na shovel, e dae pull am outside and girl pikin na hoe ,e dae put am inside



house". Mamudu Jalloh also welcomed us and that he is in support of our work and that he is strongly in support of girl-child education. The same day, YoMSuD-SL team engaged stakeholders for Sinkunia lower where the Regent Chief /Paramout Chief Representative welcomed the team and project idea and called it one of its kind development initiative in his chieftdom during his tenure in office as Regent Chief. This is an urgent and important issue that needs not only the efforts and attention of the community but the stakeholders more because they have control over their people and their local laws said Mr. Mamudu Mansaray. He continued by saying that youth are very key and contribute greatly in development and said they are opportune to have such activities in their community considering the distance, social amenities, road network and other facilities, they are ready to support the organization.

On the same day, YoMSuD-SL team visited the last community Gbindi, meeting was held with few stakeholders including the section chief. Introduction of staff and purpose of the visit was done by the project team lead Mariama B. Sesay, in her statement explained the relevance of the project and benefit to them as an individual directly and indirectly and to the community as a whole, she also requested for active community participation, ownership and take actions at the end of project implementation. The section chief Alimamy L. Mansaray added that he will pass on the message to other stakeholders and will give us their support so we can work as a team to achieve our objectives, he ended by thanking the organization and donors for their good work.

At the end of each community stakeholders engagement meetings, tokens were given to each stakeholder and attendance were collected with pictures and videos for more evidences.

## **II. Selection and Training of the Community Based Service Providers from the five project communities**

### **Who were involved**

Community stakeholders; Youth leaders, section chiefs, town chiefs, community health workers (CHW), principals and YoMSuD-SL project team lead

On the same day of stakeholders engagement meeting, project team lead requested from the community to select the community based service providers; in the selection it should be one teacher and one Community health worker (CHW) who can read, write, fluent in speaking and a native of the community with experience working with teenagers.

So two representatives were recommended /selected per each community giving a total of ten community based service providers to be trained on : "Adolescent Sexuality and Reproductive Health Rights" this is to enhance clear and effective communication in helping an adolescent achieve healthy development and reproductive health. Being able to understand the perspective of the adolescent will enable the provider/counselor to respond appropriately, creating a positive and effective service experience. At the end of the training pictures, videos and each received transport refunds and refreshment.

Training was conducted on the 14th August where all the five project communities were represented by two each giving of sum of ten community based service providers.

Males : Three(3)



Females : Seven (7)

### **Impacts of the Training**

The selected trainees before the training had no knowledge on issues surrounding adolescents and they lacked the necessary information for protecting adolescents sexual and reproductive health rights in their communities. Although they were aware of the too much teenage pregnancy, early forced marriage, sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), sexual assaults, but they never had the opportunity on what to do when cases around adolescents occurs. After the training they have been well informed and knowledgeable on adolescents sexual and reproductive health rights, what to do to prevent cases like teenage pregnancy, early forced marriage, and how to counsel adolescents when in stress or trauma, how to go about family mediation and helping them overcome challenges they face in schools and communities in hard times. Precisely, the training has helped them changed their mindsets and are ready to support in diverse ways to end violence against women and adolescents.

### **Community Based Service Providers (CBSPs) Recommendations**

- I recommend you establish confidential places besides the health centers where adolescents will be able to access information, knowledge, share their challenges and access contraceptives said .  
Mr. Mohamed sawanneh
- I suggest that you equipped us with all necessary materials and trainings even in the future and let it be for a long period of time so we can have more impacts on the adolescents and the community said .

### **III. Intensive community sensitization in the five project communities**

Changing the mindsets, behaviours, norms and culture of a whole community that has been in existence for decades needs an inclusive and participatory governance, including every sectors not only stakeholders but the entire community members. In respect to that YoMSuD-SL conducted an intensive community sensitization in the five targeted communities. We started in Bantantia with a PA System in a vehicle and full dose refreshment to draw more attention be it small or big, young or old everybody inclusive. The Bantantia community members showed up in chinese numbers stakeholders, Community Based Service Providers, parents, teachers, children, religious leaders, youth groups, okada /motorist groups, timber union, traders union and every mankind existing in Bantantia that day were all present. The sensitization went according to a well drafted agenda-introduction of team members-purpose of the visit-welcome message from the community people-in-depth sensitization of the project-attendance list, refreshment, pictures /videos and pasting of posters in Bantantia community and Thank you note by the youth leader and a teacher Abu Turay.

After hours in Bantantia community we proceeded to Jedia community where we met a group of people from the community waiting for YoMSuD-SL team because we initially sent letter of notification including the purpose of visit and date of visit. We started the sensitization meeting in Jedia at 12:10 PM



and the normal procedures were followed which is the agenda. Here women were given the chance to welcome YoMSuD-SL team because stakeholders considered this move to be women's program and they must be central to it. Mariama Bintu Sesay introduced YoMSuD-SL team and expanded on the adolescents sexual and reproductive health rights, ending of teenage pregnancy, early forced marriage and promoting women and girls' rights in communities especially in Jedia. Town Chief Sewa Kamara emphasized on enforcing community by laws protecting the rights of adolescents and advised his people to take a U-Turn now on adolescent sexual and reproductive health rights. Protecting our daughters and women must be our soul roles in our community. We must be pillars to promote girl child education for our community's development said Fatmata Samura. The sensitization ended with refreshments and snap shots.

We further proceeded to Mannah Community on the same day because these three communities are along the same Kabala Highway. Mannah community sensitization was one of its kind due to the commitments made by not only stakeholders but by the young boys who are the active actors in impregnating young girls in their community. The youth leader Musa Sesay and Mohamed Kamara made strong commitment to put a stop to teenage pregnancy and they must encourage their sisters, daughters and partners in taking contraceptives to prevent unwanted pregnancy. The health workers also promised to work hand in hand with the Community Based Service Providers in order to foster adolescents sexual and reproductive health rights. We have learnt a very important knowledge and information today that could wipe poverty out of our community if we only work with it said Sunkarie Turay. The sensitization ended with a closing prayers and 20 minutes shakebody dance.

On the following day ..August 17, 2022, Sinkunia community sensitization was remarkable because even members from the other surrounding communities that were not targeted communities witnessed it and commitments were made by some of these people to pass on the message to their communities and they requested for them to be included in our next project relating to adolescents sexual and reproductive health rights, teenage pregnancy and early forced marriage because it has been a cut across issues in rural communities. Women Leader Madam Sheku Tenneh Saccoh appealed to the boys to support the girls to secure education and the Regent Chief was super excited advised parents to make more commitments in counselling their daughters, to tell them the importance of education.

The program ended with refreshment, pictures, videos and music and a closing prayers by Sheik Yayah Turay.

Gbindi community sensitization was done on the August 17, 2022.

All stakeholders were in attendance such as Two Section Chiefs, Two Town Chiefs, Women's Leaders, Youth Leaders, Community Footballers, Cultural and religious leaders, Timber group, Okada Riders, Parents, Teachers, Adolescents, different Tribal heads, Community Clubs members and all community members. It started with opening prayers done by Mohamed Barrie. YoMSuD-SL staff were introduced to the community by Mr. Sorie Balla Kamara and Gbindi Secondary School principal introduced the stakeholders. The sensitization proceeded to the seed of the program "Adolescents sexual and reproductive health rights". The session was so interactive and educative. Stakeholders and attendees were allowed to make commitments, change of behaviors and attitudes towards promoting girl child education, end early child marriage, end teenage pregnancy for the betterment of their rural communities. Youth made strong commitment in supporting their sisters to acquire education and they



pronounced a slogan this very day which says “Let Girls be Girls and not Mothers” as our past project theme. Parents confessed that sex discussion with their daughters and children has been a taboo rooted from their norms, cultural and traditional beliefs but it is a time for a U-TURN in this aspect they said. They promised YoMSuD-SL, Plan International and partners never to consider sex discussion with children especially girl children as a taboo. They continued to say parents especially mothers must be the best counsellors for daughters said Women’s Leader- **Madam Kindi Shaw**. The sensitization ended with refreshment, taken pictures, videos and closing prayers.

#### **Communities’ Members’ recommendations from the sensitization in the five communities**

- Sensitization is a very good strategy to create community awareness on adolescent sexual and reproductive health rights but it is not enough I recommend you deploy more strategies such as Community education and capacity building for people especially the marginalized, the orphans, women and young school leavers especially young girls to boost their educational and economic status as this could help them less susceptible to the influence of others said **Amara Kamara from Gbindi Community**.
- I suggest you form Youth Task Force (YTF) to link all Out-of-School children and adolescents affairs to YoMSuD-SL and Plan International, so you will be able to know the number of adolescents in and out of school, by this you can promote girl child education in these rural communities using data collected said **Saio Sawaneh from Sinkunia community**
- We have been in extreme poverty since inception because we never have the time to focus on our children’s education especially girl child education, since YoMSuD-SL is our own community organization, I recommend Plan International and YoMSuD-SL help register our Out-of-School, lactating adolescent mothers and young school leavers into community based schools with academic supports, I believed this will help us greatly said **Pa Khurie Jawara from Bantantia community**

#### **IV. Selection of Radio Speakers and Radio discussion program around the project theme.**

Poor quality education level in Falaba district is known to have been caused by compounded factors such as teenage pregnancy, early child marriage, long distances to schools, gender, discrimination, ethnicity, poor value placed on education, families holding onto their negative social norms, religious, cultural and traditional practices, lack of knowledge and information, and above all poverty. In order to capture representative actors from each of the factors stated above, we invited one representative from the parents, teachers, Motor Cyclists (Okada Union), Timber Union, Stakeholders, youth, women, political and Cultural/Religious groups in a radio debate around the topic: Which group or who are responsible for the poor adolescents education level in Falaba district, Sierra Leone. The debate was more friendly, educative, result-driven and interactive on the **August 21st, 2022**. This was done to figure out communities’ ways of solving the adolescents sexual and reproductive health rights, gender equality and equity. Lots of recommendations were made both by representatives and listeners through short messages (sms) and phone calls.

#### **Communities’ recommendations during the radio discussion**





- I suggest you prolong this campaign for at least one year period for the community to use to this important information because people will soon forget their commitments if you the campaign time does not exceed ten months said **Simithy Kamara from Bantantia Community**
- We the people of Fulamansa Community would really want this campaign to reach our areas for both our stakeholders, parents and adolescents to know the importance of girl child education, adolescents sexual and reproductive health rights in community development said **Alpha Yayah.**
- Since our communities are still in dark stage we really want your organization to continue this work in all the communities in the district because you passed on the message in a language we all understand and also I recommend you engage the adolescents properly including the youth around this program said **Pa Sanah from Sinkunia Community**
- I recommend you establish more capacity building programs for both adolescents, parents and youth for income generating purposes. I believe this will reduce poverty and empower the victims so they would not be carried away by those timber men because of money said **Mohamed Saio Kamara (MP Aspirant-Const.039)**
- I recommend you provide academic support to the adolescents lactating mothers (teenage mothers), Out-of-School Children and young school leavers to go back to school because most of them are out of school due to poverty, some of them are orphans, some of them their parents cannot afford them academic materials even, some of them are taken care of by single parents things are very hard for them said **Alphajor Kamara from Mannah Community**

#### V. Success Stories/Testimonies

- ✚ We have never had this kind of opportunity for our own community organization to lead us to light, paving ways for our adolescents, women, young people and girls. Some of us here have never heard about Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive health rights said **Regent Chief Mr. Mamudu Mansaray**
- ✚ We have gotten hope because YoMSuD-SL is with us the young girls to push forward, I promised to make sure the goal of this project is achieved on my own end said **Adama Mansaray From Gbindi Community**
- ✚ We have never had any female graduate from our communities rooted from extreme poverty, far from the city, poor network/internet, early child marriage, teenage pregnancy and lack of knowledge and information about this particular project, sex discussion with our children has been a taboo here for decades but this project has opened our minds and eyes because the message has been passed to us in a language we all can understand. So this is a challenge to us all in Dembelia Sinkunia and Falaba district. said **Madam Sheku Tenneh Saccoh-Women's Leader.**
- ✚ When the community members own a project the possibility of its success will be so great. Let Plan International and Youth Challenge Fund (YCF) be rest assured that their support in our communities are well appreciated and will never be forgotten above all we are ready to work as a community in order to protect the sexual and reproductive health rights of adolescents girls, promote women and girl child's rights by reviewing our community by-laws, our social norms and cultural beliefs said
- ✚ I think it is time we must play a role as religious leaders in these communities by using our doctrines in guiding the children and community people to promote women's and girls rights



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and promote education I believed if this communities are developed we as religious leaders will showers in those developments too,even God supports development said Imam **Saio Kamara from Mannah community**

- ✚ I have never seen a daughter from this community with high school education I believe this time around we shall have more than as expected here through the efforts of all of us said Fatmata Samura **from Jedia community**)

## VI. Challenges

We encountered many challenges,some of these challenges were foreseen and mitigation strategies were put in place by the organization for the security and safety of our staff.While some of these challenges were unnoticed and unavoidable.Below are few of the challenges we faced on the field;

- Poor road network-roads leading to project communities were only motorable and in most cases we had to walk by feet and leave the motor cycle in a distance.Because of this two of our staff Ramatu Fofanah and Kumba Simithy Kamara had an accident where Ramatu sustained some injuries on her leg and her phone was damaged in this period.We had to rush with them to a herbalist since we were far from health center.
- Poor network and internet-Most of the project communities like Jedia and Mannah lacks network let alone to talk of internet.So we found it so difficult to communicate with other staffs and families.
- No electricity-Most of the days our phones stays off because in most of the project communities there are no charging facilites and the few available charging centers,their owners could only open then when they feels like especially when the cost of fuel had shoot up.So we had serious challenges in charging our phones for continous taking of pictures and videos.
- Unstable Increase in Price of commodities-This affects our activities greatly because prices keep changing everyday like a pendulum and we had no control over this.This resulted to extra expenditures and shift in some of our activites.
- Weather conditions-The continous raining not only disturbs our activities bu also get some of our staff sick with cold and flu because some of the times we had to sacrifice to go out even when it is raining to work within project timeline.
- Poor Receipt-Most of the community business centers and service providers does not have receipts and phone.

### How the Youth Challenge Fund has helped improved our staff training

We believe that Young people are a valuable resource for organizations and groups involved in community development. By encouraging and allowing oppotunities for adult-young people-collaboration, YoMSuD-SL help young people learn valuable skills and prepare them to become civically engaged adults. Allow them to confront serious social problems and become active community citizens. Evaluate their involvement efforts on a regular basis to identify and capitalize on strengths, identify and address weaknesses, and help youth gain the knowledge that participation is more meaningful.The Youth Challenge Fund (YCF) has helped us achieved all these in this month.

All our personnel systems have been formalized and understood by staff through a well-structured communication management system, and has opened doors for our staff members' opinions to be part of



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our organizational policies and procedures now. Written employment practices have been in used and reviewed so they support our mission, strategies, and policies, our hiring procedures have been set transparent.

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