a 1000 days sustainable youth development plan

YOUTH IN ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT * MULTIPURPOSE YOUTH RESOURCE CENTRE *

YAD

...working with the youth and for the youth, women and children...

Multipurpose Youth Resource Centre

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They Say " *Youth Are The Future Leaders"...* When, Where and What is The Future ?

Postcolonial Sierra Leone has experienced endless unenviable history ranging from dictatorship rule, brutal civil war, military putsches to a staggering democratic system that is riddled by graft, tribal, regional and selfish interests. Unfortunately, youth, women and children who are hardly considered in decision-making process, have always been the expendable victims. While women and children are weak to resist and survive, youth are manipulated by selfish compatriots to accomplish their sordid deeds. Consequently, the name "youth" has become over the years an antecedent to violence and immoral acts of every magnitude. People now go to ghettoes, gambling grounds and cult shrines when searching for the youth. This triggers the question: who is actually a youth in postcolonial and post conflict Sierra Leone?

Well, according to UNESCO, "youthhood is a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of interdependence as member of a community". So it is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group. According to Commonwealth to which Sierra Leone is a member, "a youth is anyone between 18 and 35 years of age". This age limitation can be less or higher in some other countries.

When I related the above definitions to the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s 2013/2014 global life expectancy index which rated Sierra Leone at 46, a significant increment though as compared to previous years, yet one of the lowest in the world when compared to countries like Switzerland and Germany who were rated between 80 and 83 respectively in the same year, I could imagine that about half of the country's 7 million population is youth and that almost all the decision-makers are living corpses. Ironically, section 41 of the 1991 constitution stated that *"no person shall be qualified for election as president of the republic unless he/she has attained the age of 40 years"*, which clearly tells that though the country belongs to the youth but they are not allowed to contest for its leadership. A would-be dead generation is literally empowered by default to decide the fate of living people… what a great irony!

"*Youth are the future leaders*", is the proclamation of most Sierra Leonean speakers and writers. But you and I know that our grandparents promised our parents the same, and our parents and political leaders are promising today the same. May I ask for heaven's sake: when, where and what is this so-called future? Is there any such thing as future at all in this part of the world?

It must be noted that about 75% of Sierra Leonean youth are currently unemployed or underemployed due to lack of proper education, skill knowhow or job opportunities, according to UNDP. So even if the soothsaying about future leadership is true, how could such a group steer the future to prosperity when they have little or no administrative knowhow and leadership experience?

Grammatically, the future means a period of time following the moment of speaking or writing - a time still to come. It could be tomorrow, later or indefinite. This makes it logical to believe that the so-called future should be now. Yes, the future is now because today is the future for yesterday and yesterday was the future for the preceding days. Today is bad for the youth because the days before yesterday and yesterday were never prepared properly.

Moreover, from development point of view and for the sake of underprivileged youth who are languishing in the notorious slums across this country, everyone may agree with me that good future means improvement in the standard of living. That include but not limited to habitable homes, better community infrastructures, nutritious meal, affordable education, job opportunities, equal access to justice, improved health services, equitable distribution of the country's meagre resources, a sincere democratic system of governance, just to name but few. Hence the above still remain an ordinary dream after five decades of self-governance, I consider any reference to the future to be a mere provocation for the youth. Those who are soothing us with the promise of future leadership are only killing our spirits. Because it would be foolhardy of any youth to expect a better future by miracles without seeing any foundation today. This is why whenever writers and speakers say "youth are the future leaders", we at YAD will always ask "why not now?" Why not simply invite the youth to the decision-making table so that you don't have to bear any blame tomorrow for the abysmal failure of this nation?

Sadly enough, many youth I have spoken to in Kenema city believe in miracles and destinies based on the religious philosophy that whatever happens today was predestined by God. Yes, this is true, but destiny can be influenced and the future can be shaped by hard efforts. It has happened in Berlin and Singapore, why not in Bo or Kenema? Certainly, this cannot be achieved in a community where most boys dream to become drivers, hailers and securities for ministers, and girls want to become nursing aids and secretaries. Though those professions are very essential in every society, but one shouldn't prefer them to a real university degree due to lack of ambition and proper focus. We need to ask ourselves what would be our next options, should we fail to achieve those (low) dreams? We should know that the driver is a driver because he could not be the boss; nurse is a nurse because he/she could not be a doctor; and secretary is a secretary because he/she could not be the manager.

My dear fellow youth, let us start dreaming above the sky so that our failure can be viewed as success for those on the earth. As you may have realised now that there would be no prosperous future for any nation without a solid plan and well -focused young generation, please receive this piece as a wakeup call for us all to work hands in gloves to shape our own future. Let us stop jeopardising the process by sacrificing ourselves to be used as instruments of violence in exchange of pittances and unrealistic promises made by power thirsty compatriots. Let us stop depending on tribal, regional and party identities. It's high time we recognized tribal and regional based politics as the main breeding factors of corruption, violence, enmity and perpetual poverty by which every Sierra Leonean youth is either infected or affected.

The above necessitates formation and strengthening, in all nooks and crannies of this country, youth led organizations like YAD which is tirelessly working with and for the youth in Kenema district. This leaflet is therefore intended to showcase to interested individuals or institutions some of our achievements over the past 1000 days, current undertakings and future challenges as we relentlessly strive to effect positive social changes in our society in pursuit of the beautiful future that we are yearning for.

Whilst hoping to receive the required support from concerned individuals and institutions and to see other youth replicating similar or better models in other parts of the country, I wish to avail myself with this opportunity, on behalf of the board and management of YAD, to welcome any idea or support that could accelerate our pace towards attainment of our Sustainable Youth Development Goals within the next 1000 days. The clock is ticking already...

GETTING TO KNOW YAD

⇒ YAD: Who We Are?

YAD is a non-governmental, non-religious, non-tribal, non-gender -biased, and non-profit-making organization working with and for the youth, women and children in Kenema district, eastern Sierra Leone.

⇒ Mission Statement: What Do We Do?

YAD works with the youth and for the youth to concretize peace and democracy through campaigns against domestic violence, ethnic based politics, gender inequality, social discrimination, unaffordable education, perpetual youth redundancy and economic dependency.

⇒ Vision: How Do We Dream Of Sierra Leone?

We believe that "when education shall become a human right for every citizen; national politics becomes detribalized and deregionalized; youth, women and children are equally recognized in decision-making; there shall be a developed nation called Sierra Leone".

⇒ Areas of Intervention: What Are We Doing To Realise Our Dreams About Sierra Leone?

We are tirelessly working in the following thematic areas:

- Education
- Agriculture and Food security
- Governance and peacebuilding
- Skill and livelihood training
- Social entrepreneurship

⇒ Operational Areas: Where Do we Do It?

We are more interested in impacts than numbers. Our activities are focused on grassroots communities who are considered less by decision-makers and may otherwise receive no assistance without us. That makes us ever ready to expand our activities to other parts of the country depending on time, logistic and the nature of projects, but we are currently working exclusively in Kenema district, eastern province.

⇒ Distinct Values: What Makes Us Special? Why Must You Support or Partner With Us?

Equality: we don't discriminate against anyone based on political affiliation, religious belief, ethnic identity, sexual orientation or social status.

Time is money: we believe that the grandiose scale of human value lies in attitudes and behavioural patterns. That is why we uphold appointments, deadlines and promises we make to both our partners and beneficiaries.

Respect for all: we believe that the first principle of a free society is an untrammelled flow of words in an open forum. We do tolerate and respect everyone's opinion, no matter how opposing they might be to our own interests.

⇒ Institutional Capacity: How Capable Are We and What Can You Expect When Partnering With Us?

YAD has 8 permanent staff and 6 volunteers with diverse educational backgrounds including social sciences, commerce and information technology. The organization currently enjoys a 9 rooms office space equipped with 8 desktop PCs, 4 laptops, 1 field van, 2 motorbikes, 5 laser printers, 2 professional digital cameras, 1 video camera, 1 projector, 3 freezers/refrigerators, 2 generators (15 and 7KVAs), 15 KVAs UPS, 2 ACs, 8 fans and imported furniture.

⇒ Our Legal Status

YAD is fully registered with all line ministries and relevant government departments including Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs, Ministry of Education, Science and technology, Kenema District Council and Kenema City Councils.

OUR PAST 1000 DAYS: Success Stories

YAD was founded in the year 2002. Since then, it has been struggling to exist at various stages and it has implemented many challenging projects. But this leaflet is limited only to our activities in the last 1000 days. During this period, we were able to implement series of projects in all our thematic areas with funds and technical supports from our partners. Some of the projects include the following:

⇒ The Matakan Community Primary School (MCPS)

We believe that education is the master key to development . This is why it's placed in the topmost column of our development agenda. Construction of the Matakan Community Primary School (MCPS) which is currently accommodating more than 90 children from Matakan village and its surrounding in Niawa chiefdom, Kenema district, is a glaring example.

The official opening ceremony of MCPS

PC Mariama J. Tamia III thanking YAD

Some pupils and teachers of MCPS

The project was co-funded by the German Ministry of International Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Fambul Tik e.V. and YAD. It entails 5 standard classrooms, office, library, staffroom, store, furniture, toilettes and water-well. Since the school is not yet assisted by the central government, YAD and partners are paying the teachers and providing uniform and learning materials for the children.

The Paramount Chief, Madam Mariama Jaward Tamia III and her deputy, Chief Momoh Yarja, officially awarded the staff and management of YAD during the formal opening ceremony of this school in recognition of their exceptional contribution to post conflict development efforts of the Niawa Chiefdom community. The historic event was attended by series of dignitaries including the Deputy Mayor of Kenema city, Senior District Officer of Kenema, town chiefs, section heads and women's groups of Niawa chiefdom.

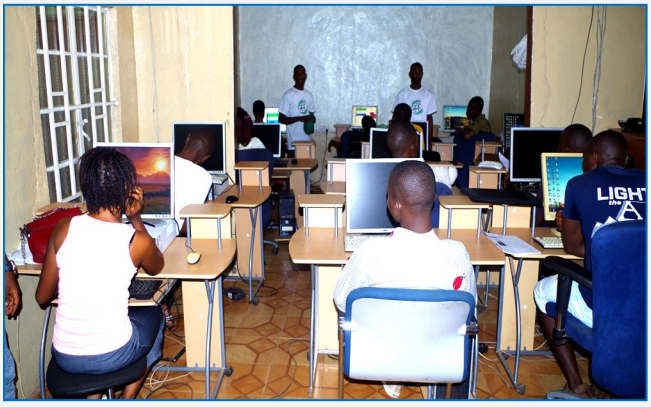
⇒ Governance and Peacebuilding Through Sport and Social Mobilization

In our quest to concretize peace, good governance and security in our community, we were able to partner in the year 2013 with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) which is based in New York. With UNAOC's Youth Solidarity Fund 2013, YAD was able to implement for the first time in Sierra Leonean history, a Youth Sensitization Campaign against Ethic Based Polices, Religious and Cultural Discriminations. The project created three solid heterogeneous youth groups in the three political zones of Kenema municipality with more than 500 membership. The project also led key YAD staff to participate in further capacity building trainings in Istanbul, Turkey and Casablanca, Morocco and to showcase their success story at UNAOC organized summer schools in New York in the years 2014 and 2015 respectively. The goal of this project was to forester sociocultural cohesion and friendly coexistence among the youth in Kenema municipality while changing their mind-set about the national politics using sport as a magnet. Key activities included series of sensitization workshops, coach training, outreach programs, symposiums, community drama, open campaigns and youth cohesion sport tournaments.

Cross section of Youth groups

⇒ Youth Community Library

Launched in the year 2013, our library has served over the years more than 30 thousand underserved and marginalised youths in Kenema municipality and beyond . Major objective of the library is to make education reachable and affordable for youth and children across all levels from primary to secondary and tertiary. The library runs daily from 14:30 - 21:00 PM and it's cost free for all youth and children who have been identifies by our vulnerability assessment indicators as vulnerable. Other users are asked to pay very minimal charges to cover the library technician's stipend. Electricity and maintenance are funded by YAD and other philanthropists. It must be noted that the high cost of educational materials makes education unreachable for many youths in eastern Sierra Leone.



⇒ Agriculture and Food Security

World hunger indicators are constantly showing that majority of Sierra Leoneans are unable to afford a basic diet and have difficulty meeting immediate needs in terms of food, shelter and clothing. Ironically, a large proportion of the youth and women who have no skill knowhow or employable education are currently heading many families in the rural areas. This group has difficulty saving or investing in the future and remains chronically trapped in poverty, thereby undermining their participation in local decision-making, access to productive resources and services and opportunities to integrate into market systems. This is the group we have been focusing on with our agricultural projects.

Titled "Agriculture and Food Security for Youth and Female Headed Households in Matakan and Nongowa Villages", our recent agriculture project targeted 65 farm families with more than 300 dependants. The funds arrived at the pick of the just ended Ebola outbreak in the country and it provided job opportunities for many underprivileged youth including girls. Co-funded by Fambul Tik e.V. and BMZ, this project cultivated more than 60 acres of inland valley swamp (IVS) and it provided seed rice, tools, protective gear, grain store, dry floor and a modern rice miller for the community.

The project didn't only ensure food security for the beneficiaries, it also reduced labour for women and children who are permanently responsible for preparing the daily meal for every Sierra Leonean household.

Grain Storage and dry floor constructed by YAD at Matakan village

One of the rice fields at Matakan village

⇒ Emergency Ebola Response Campaign

The Ebola virus didn't only claim thousands of innocent souls across the country, including youth, women and children, it also exposed our country's abysmal health services. The lack of proper knowledge about the disease and adequate facility to handle it at the onset led the outbreak to overwhelm the eastern region before the central government could realize it. Consequently, the government had to quarantine the region for almost a year, forcing many CBOs, NGOs and business enterprises to park and leave the region. But unlike YAD and its German partners, that was the time they went into full swing campaign against the virus and other killer diseases. As a result, we were able to bring in a 40 feet container worth more than 50 thousand euros, full of emergency medical products, hospital beds and matrasses which were delivered to Kenema Government Hospital and many Peripheral Health Unit (PHUs) in Malegohun and Niawa Chiefdoms in Kenema district. We remained in full operation throughout the outbreak and we even delivered more medical products to other PHU's in Nongowa, Langurama and Small Bo chiefdoms after the outbreak.

The medical products were donated by various hospitals and clinics across Germany prominent among which were the Martin Luther Hospital of Berlin. The shipments were coordinated and funded by Fambul Tik e.V. and German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Bellow is a brief pictorial review of the delivery process:

Nurses /doctors loading beds and mattresses donated to YAD by Martin-Luther Hospital in Berlin, Germany

More beds being loaded in Germany for urgently delivery by YAD

Beds and mattresses imported from Germany being delivered by YAD at Gandorhun town , Niawa Chiefdom, Kenema district

⇒ The Niawa Chiefdom Secondary School Construction Project

In pursuit of our campaign against unaffordable education for every child in constituency 017, we prioritized the Niawa Chiefdom Secondary School (NCSS) construction project as one of our post Ebola recovery projects in the region. Co-funded by BMZ, Fambul Tik e.V and YAD, the project is constructing a standard secondary school at Gandorhun town with 6 classrooms, library, office, staffroom, toilettes, store, water well, furniture and solar light.

Our feasibility studies shows that the chiefdom is performing very awful in terms of education, and the lack of good educational infrastructures, habitable accommodation and adequate incentive for teachers are some of the major causes. Though there are some primary schools in strategic villages across the chiefdom, but the lack of secondary schools in the chiefdom forces children to walk several miles to neighbouring chiefdoms in search of secondary education. The situation becomes even worse during the raining season when they walk in the rains with books under their arms. Most parents normally relocate their children to Blama and Kenema where they usually find it very difficult to live with extended families owing to the high cost of accommodation and feeding in the cites. This situation had forced over the years many potential graduates to fall out of schools immediate they reach NPSE level as their parents preferred to retain them as farm labourers.

This is the situation YAD has stepped in to remedy with the Niawa Chiefdom Secondary School project. It shall benefit more than 250 youth and children against the year 2020. The construction will be completed before December 2016. Below is pictorial review of the current status of the project.

The formal lay-outing ceremony

The structure has already reached wall height

YAD staff demonstrating their determination at the construction site

OUR NEXT 1000 DAYS: Planned Projects

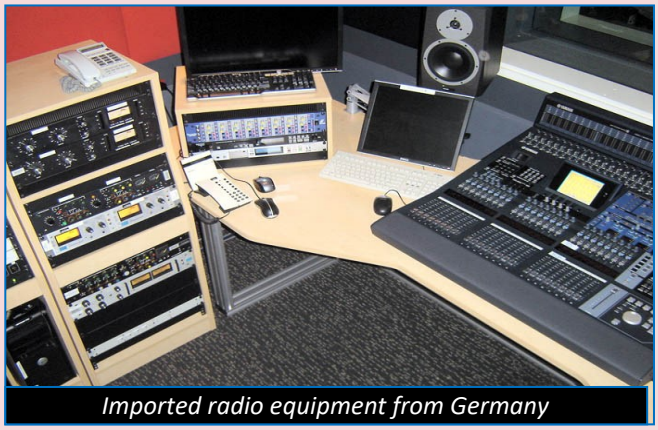
While the United Nations aim to attain its Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030, we at YAD always set our own goals by days if not months considering the low life expectancy rate of the average Sierra Leonean. Lessons learnt from our successes and failures in the past 1000 days enables us to view the future from diverse perspectives and to plan for it with little or no risk. Therefore, some of our planned projects for the next 1000 days will include but not limited to the following:

⇒ **The Youth Community Library**

The recent increment in fuel costs has almost made it impossible to run the library again as it has reflected on cost of all basic commodities. This is why upgrading and maintaining our youth resource library is placed in the top most column of our planned agenda because we always find it pathetic and sorrowful to respond "NO, check back tomorrow" whenever the underprivileged youths who have used to study in the library asked "is the library running today?" This is why we have already launched a fund raising campaign to individuals, business institutions and donors abroad. We hope to upgrade the library with a brand new software and power it up with solar.

A showcase of our digital library layout

⇒ **Community Radio Station:** with many professional media practitioners volunteering with us and sensitization campaigns being some of our best projects, we think it necessary for us to own our own media outlet. With support of Fambul Tik e.V., we have already received millions worth of radio and broadcasting equipment including studio furniture from Radio Berlin Brandenburg (RBB) and Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR) of Hamburg, Germany. To be named Voice of the Voiceless Citizens (VVC), this station is intended to sensitize the youth about their basic civic rights, prevent them from lawlessness and to enable them voice out opinions about decision-making at grassroots level. This project is scheduled for early 2017.



Imported radio equipment from Germany

⇒ **Multipurpose Youth Resource Centre:**

Many people always find it unbelievable that a local organization like YAD is currently paying not less than ten million Leones (Le 10.000.000) for its current location, which could have been used to pay staff and to support other community development projects. The lack of cost free permanent office is grossly undermining the organization's future sustainability. In order to mitigate the prevailing situation, the organization is now working on plans to construct its own office. To be named "Multipurpose Youth Resource Centre", the structure shall house all our vocational training programs, guidance and consoling, conflict resolution/ peacebuilding bureau, digital library and offices. In collaboration with the Ministry of Lands, Country Planning and Environment and land owning families of Kenema municipality, we have already acquired a large piece of land in a strategic location in Kenema and have also signed funding contract with BMZ of Germany. The project will be launch by March 2017.

⇒ **Governance and Peacebuilding:** we share the view that if Constituency 017 is going to compete with other constituencies in the eastern region in terms of development, the youth need to participate fully in diverse ways. Unfortunately there are hardly a youth organization to recon with in many major towns across the Constituency. This is why we intend to form a Constituency 017 Youth Development Council devoid of political interference, which shall be represented by youth from all the three chiefdoms that makes the constituency. The purpose of the Council is to enable the ordinary youth to fully engage in developmental projects and to gain recognition in decision-making at community level. In addition to that, we intend to upgrade 6 existing youth groups with more than 500 membership across Kenema municipality, and 5 youth groups with more than 600 membership across Niawa Chiefdom and strengthen them to serve as our partners in development through sports and social mobilization programs. The groups need proper administrative structures, effective coaching, management know-how, football and volleyball kits.

Existing youth groups from Mabondor and Tiama Sections

⇒ **Agriculture and Food Security:** as a replica of our past agriculture projects, we intend to support 500 youth and female headed households with more than 3000 dependants across Constituency 017 in order to protect them against hunger and to strengthen their individual households economically. A project proposal has already been development in this regard.

⇒ **Standard Education:** our insatiable dream is to make education reachable for all citizens between 05 and 35 in Constituency 017. We therefore intend to construct 3 secondary schools and 10 primary schools in strategic villages and towns across the Constituency before the year 2020. In addition to that, we know that a school without a teacher would be an ordinary building. We also know that the lack of habitable homes for teachers is making it difficult for teachers to stay and work in most remote villages across the constituency. Therefore, our proposals include six units of teachers lodge which could accommodate more than 50 teachers in strategic towns across the constituency.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Copied from few books published by Prof. Mohamed Yunus of Bangladesh and various capacity building trainings organized by UNAOC for its funded youth organizations including YAD, we have realised it over the years that social entrepreneurship is one of the best methods of effecting positive sustainable social change in a community that is permanently trapped in the web of poverty like ours. What makes social entrepreneurship very special in a post conflict community like Sierra Leone, is its ability to train and employ a jobless youth without losing the start-up capital. This scheme has made YAD a source of income and training provider for many underprivileged youth in the following areas:

⇒ Digital Photo and Desktop Publishing

A print technician, James Golia, at work in YAD digital photo lab

Our digital photo and desktop printing services are intended to provide jobs and income for the underprivileged youth in Kenema. Operated by well trained and experienced youth in desktop publishing and digital photography, our all-in-one commercial printer can copy every coloured document in diverse formats, and the Noritsu 3501 Plus minilab can print up to 1000 4x6 size photos per hour thereby revolutionizing digital photography in Kenema district. While exposing young vocational graduates to diverse desktop publishing technics, we also provide effective training for the needy youth in digital photography and provide them with professional digital cameras on revolving loan contracts which enables them pay back within a limited period of time. The same start-capital is used to purchase more cameras for the benefit of more youth in future. While we print for them at cost recovery, we urge them to pursue future carriers in other fields. This is another innovative way of helping the underprivileged youth to hep themselves in our community. It's more honourable and safer than Okada riding and it enables those who are determined to study further to pay their own fees without bothering parents and extended families.

Event and Party Management

Our event and party management service raises fund for the organization, employ those attached to it and makes us happy and strong to resist the harsh economic environment we are living in. Powered by a mobile generator, our PA system is yet to be beaten by any other public entertainment gadget in the entire Kenema district. In addition to that, we are currently building up one of the best brass-bands in the country. All the instruments were imported from Europe. We also have dozens of VIP party chairs to let.

COLLABORATING PARTNERS

After you have glanced through the above narratives, you may be wondering where did a youth organization like YAD get funding for those projects and who are the donor partners? Well, our success depends chiefly on our partners. But we must confess that there are very few donors out there who have confidence in the youth because most youth are less experienced in project management. And there is also the fundamental question to answer: if our own society lack confidence in us, how can we expect donors to trust us with their funds? However, you may be surprised to learn that over the years, YAD's energetic team has successfully fostered partnership and collaborative relationship with the following aid agencies, donors and government institutions:

- Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
- United Nations Alliance of Civilization (UNAOC), New York
- Fambul Tik e.V., Berlin, Germany
- Intermission e.V., Hannover, Germany
- United Religious Initiative, San Francisco, USA
- Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, GoSL
- Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs, GoSL
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, GoSL
- Ministry of Health and Sanitation, GoSL
- Kenema City and District Councils, Sierra Leone
- Kenema District Youth Council, Sierra Leone
- 11 youth groups across Kenema city and various chiefdoms in the district

Some of the faces behind YAD's success

Aloysius Yusufu Allie, Project Manager

Isata Ngombulango, Finance Manager

Gladys I. Swarray, Administrative Secretary

Bockarie Lahai, Field Supervisor/M&E Officer

Jeneba Konjoh, Assistant Accountant

Gibrillatu Kangbai, Administrative Assistant

Mohamed Massaquoi, Digital –print Technician

James Golia, Digital-print Technician

Mamadu Y. Jalloh , Octavia I. Jusus, volunteers

Cross-section of YAD staff/volunteers, a growing winning team in development

Photo show of our youth groups in Kenema city

Gbo-Kakajama Youth in Action for Progress

Nyandeyama Youth in Action for Development

Action Star Youth Club

Combination of girls from the three teams

This page shows diverse project activities

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