

Youth in Action for Development

Multipurpose Youth Resource Centre

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YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN POST CONFLICT SIERRA LEONE: HOW FAR ARE WE PREPARED TO GO?

Major global leaders have adopted over the years, diverse policies that ensure empowerment of young people all over the world. The commonwealth for example, has series of funding windows through which it acknowledges and supports the great contributions of young people to community developments across the Commonwealth states. United Nations and the European Union have their own programmes through which they promote young people in diverse ways.

Sadly enough though, youth are featured in every news of our society - both locally and internationally - as they contribute to nation building. Only few readers and listeners usually pay attention to them. Unlike in the 18th and 19th centuries when scientific discoveries and community leadership were only attributed to the aged, our planet today is gradually succumbing to the leadership of young citizens - scientifically, technologically, democratically, and monarchically. These include communities that are traditionally, culturally and religiously fanatic, such as Asia and the Middle East.

Most successful legends of our lifetime began their careers during their youth. Bill Gates for example, the brain behind the world's most popular software application (Microsoft) wrote his first software at the age of 13. Mark Zuckerberg discovered Facebook at the age of 20 and became the world's best social media innovator at 30. Faiq Jefri Bolkiah of Brunei, the richest footballer in the world, is just 20 years old. Sebastian Kurz became the world's youngest national leader as Prime Minister of Austria in October 2017 at the age of 31; Kim Jong-Un, who succeeded his father as supreme leader of North Korea in 2011, is just 33. Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani 36, is the Emir of Qatar - a post he took over in 2013 from his father; Emmanuel Macron 39, became France's youngest-ever President in May 2017 after founding his own political party, En Marche! The list is endless...

This is why world leaders are investing in the youth from diverse fronts. Some UN agencies have even established databases of potential young leaders emerging from many countries across the world with diverse professional backgrounds. The United Nations Alliance of Civilization (UNAOC) for example, has established the Intercultural Leaders Network, a platform that keeps track of thousands of outstanding young leaders with whom it has worked over the years as agents of peace and positive social change in their own localities.

The above tells us that the youth no longer fit our usual traditional classifications such as ordinary hikers, marijuana addicts, burglars, cults or clique groups. They are now true stakeholders in community building.

Speaking at the Commonwealth Intergenerational Dialogue in November 2017, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Ret. Honourable Patricia Scotland said "Young people have a critical role to play in delivering Our Common Future. In the Commonwealth and across the world, we have seen incredible examples of young people who are being the change they want to see. Their engagement and empowerment is essential to ensuring a prosperous future for all."

The next Commonwealth Youth Award, which includes cash grants and round trip tickets for the recipients to participate in the award ceremony, will take place in March 2019 during the Commonwealth Week in London. The theme of the ceremony shall be: 'Safe Spaces for Youth'.

On 12th August this year the government of Sierra Leone, in collaboration with its donor partners celebrated the International Youth Day and National Youth Leadership Summit in the eastern provincial capital of Kenema under the same theme: "Safe Spaces for the Youth". This clearly demonstrates our government's readiness to imitate our colonial masters. But when closely looked at the socioeconomic and political scenario in which our youth are living today, one would like to ask: how does our country fit into the international framework of youth empowerment? How far is our government ready to go in the struggle to create a "safe space for the youth"?

For argument's sake, let us assume that "creating safe space for the youth" really means reserving a piece of land for the youth. According to the last census, our population is about 7 million occupying 71,740 sq. km. This means that if we were to share the portion equally, about 97 people would own a sq. km. So how much of this space is truly owned by any young citizen, whether by direct procurement or inheritance?

... the youth no longer fit our usual traditional classifications such as ordinary hikers, marijuana addicts, burglars, cults or clique groups. They are now true stakeholders in community building ...

In Sierra Leonean tradition, ownership of family properties - including farmlands, plantations and houses - chiefly depends on individual ages which allows the oldest, by default, to always assume ownership on behalf of the rest; thereby rendering the younger members powerless to have a fair share. This tradition exists in our main political parties as well. Every party has a young generation wing, which eventually motivates the youth to ghettoize themselves according to their demographic identity, which in itself restricts their chances to assume leadership in the main executive.

Interestingly, whenever we interface with decision makers about youth empowerment in Sierra Leone, they quickly point fingers at few young people who have been appointed to key political positions, and some politically motivated development projects targeting the youth, as undeniable signs of their commitment and contributions towards youth empowerment. A development expert would then like to ask: what does youth empowerment really mean in post conflict, post Ebola and post-mudslide Sierra Leone? Is the taste of political power by few of the politically motivated youth the best way of empowering the rest of our youth population? I strongly doubt that...

Oh yes, appointing some youth in key political positions is a positive step towards empowerment. However, from a development point of view, those appointments are just political compensations for being members of the ruling parties and a magnet to woo in more youth in future elections. It is a token gesture at best at times. Therefore, they should not be viewed as a sustainable approach to youth empowerment in a poor community like ours; hence, longevity of the power depends on the next election result. This tells us that the appointees are not genuinely safe and empowered.

Since the war ended in the year 2002, every government has expressed its commitment to youth empowerment and reduction of youth poverty. However, sadly enough, we are yet to see a comprehensively streamlined plan of action towards effecting true positive social change in our society, in putting the youth as spearheads. Instead, most of what we have seen are mainly focused on attracting media attention or satisfying donor benchmarks. The truth is, the Sierra Leonean youth are terribly thirsty and famishing; not only for food and water but for all the basic ingredients of human empowerment, ranging from quality education, skill knowhow, habitable homes, nutritious food, access to justice, gainful employment, moral respect, dignity, inclusion in decision making, just to name but a few.

After graduating from universities and colleges with the hope of attaining a gainful employment in Sierra Leone, the youth suddenly face the agony of the prerequisites needed to fill those vacancies. Every vacancy advertised is attached with multiple strings of unfulfillable requirements, such as powerful connections to individuals who would answer to the infamous question: who knows you? and several years of job experience. But wait a moment: job and job experience, which one comes first? How can someone gain experience without being employed? What an irony... After managing to squeeze themselves into some offices, the youth have to bootlick again for years. While the boys receive less salary than they deserve, the girls have to sleep their way through in order to maintain their jobs.

The above begs the questions: are we ready to create a youth empowered Sierra Leone? If yes, how far are we prepared to go?

According to the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment, "Young people are empowered when they acknowledge that they have or can create choices in life, are aware of the implications of those choices, make an informed decision freely, take action based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of those actions. Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others".

Youth empowerment therefore, is an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement changes in their own lives and the lives of other people, including adults.

Until decision makers change their "attitudes" towards the youth by creating the appropriate "structures" that can eradicate the "culture" which exploits the economic weakness of the youth, introduce a positive and sincere youth transformational "process", the Sierra Leonean youth empowerment plan shall ever remain an ordinary hallucination.

However, our past governments' lack of sincere commitment and readiness to challenge the journey towards youth empowerment over the years provoked some positive developments, as it brought about many youth initiatives at grassroots level in forms of CBOs, NGOs, Associations, Clubs etc. While some are subterfuge created by smart

people in order to win donor funds, some belong to power thirsty elites who use the youth as instruments of campaigns during the electioneering process. Regrettably, the life span of such selfish and politically motivated youth organizations depends chiefly on the availability of donor funds; since the central government itself has no independent funding mechanism for youth empowerment. Those created for election campaign purpose do not last beyond the election results. Meanwhile, Youth in Action for development (YAD), is one of the few non-political, nonreligious, non-ethnic and non-profit making organizations that had hitherto maintained their paths towards achieving youth empowerment in our traditionally and culturally youth neglected society. All YAD projects are directly aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the central

government's strategic development plans that are purely managed by young citizens. Yes, YAD is a force to reckon with...

As the adage goes, a journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step. This piece will therefore highlight some of YAD's success stories and challenges over the last 500 days (September 2017 to December 2018), as it strives to effect positive social changes in our society with our young citizens as the spearheads. Those who had the chance and time to read the 2016 episode would have little to ask.

And those who didn't but still want to, are advised to grab their own free copies from YAD headquarters at Maxwell Khobe Street in Kenema City.

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About the author

Born and raised in Kenema district, eastern province, Simma Sheriff is a development volunteer, youth activist and conflict scholar. He is the editor and publisher of Critique Echo Newspaper: www.critiqueecho.com; a web-based Sierra Leonean intellectual platform where objective analyses about peace, governance, human-right, democracy and development are exclusively discussed in an open forum.

With a bachelors degree in Mass-media and Communications and masters in peace, conflict and development studies (conflictology), Sheriff has formulated and implemented over the years billions of Leones worth of development projects with funds from diverse donors abroad. He is chiefly focused on community infrastructural development and economic resuscitation projects, fostering interethnic, interreligious and sociocultural cohesion among the young population in Kenema district.

Sheriff is also a member of many international peacebuilding initiatives, including the United Religious Initiative (URI), International Association of Educators for World Peace (IAEWP), Intercultural Leaders Network and Youth Solidary Fund program of the United Nations Alliance of Civilization (UNAOC).

***Note:** opinions published in this column are selected on the basis of their relevance to the youth, facts, correctness, balance, novelty, creativity, readability, interest level, regional context, identification of problems facing youth and provision of meaningful solutions to them. Therefore, if you have any opinion on youth empowerment in Sierra Leone whether for or against the above piece, please submit it via email at editor@critiqueecho.com. We will either publish it in our next edition of this newsletter or in Critique Echo Newspaper online for public consumption. Your objective opinions about youth empowerment in post conflict Sierra Leone is highly solicited...*

OUR PAST 500 DAYS

As we cruise into the journey to attain sustainable development under youth stewardship, we were able to implement the following projects during the period under review:

YAD IN BASIC EDUCATION



The organization believes that the fastest path to poverty reduction and sustainable development is a cost free educational system, which would allow poor citizens to gain access to quality education and to realize their own potentials. Therefore, the board and management of YAD would like to hasten to say Bravo!, Bravo!, Bravo!, to His Excellency President Maada Bio for making this dream a reality; by declaring primary and secondary education cost free for every citizen and for the first time in our country's history. Many pessimists believe that the policy is ambitious, but we at YAD believe that it can be achieved through sincere commitment and good governance. If a poor farmer can afford to pay school fees for at least, two of his numerous children, why not the government who has control over all our resources. When viewed from a just point of view, the free education policy is not only accelerating the country's pace towards attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but it's also an indirect way of giving poor citizens their own share of the national cake from which they have been deprived since political independence. Every citizen should therefore embrace, contribute and pray for everlasting sustenance of the government's free education agenda.

In this vein, some of YAD's recent contributions towards education include the following projects:

⇒ The Niawa Chiefdom Secondary School

Co-funded by overseas main partners like Fambul Tik and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation, the project entails six standard classrooms, the principal's office, staffroom, library, toilet and solar light. The school is situated at Gandorhun town, Niawa Chiefdom, Kenema district. The objective of this project is to make free quality education available for children of Niawa chiefdom and its surroundings. The school is current accommodating children from Niawa, Langorama and Barri chiefdoms respectively.



Niawa Chiefdom Secondary School

⇒ The Millennium STEM and Learning Centre

Situated at SLC compound in the central heart of Kenema; a project that is funded by Professor Amara and his family who are based in Winnipeg, Canada. YAD's contribution to this project includes the supervision and provision of enabling administrative environment to facilitate the successful implementation. The main objective of this project is to make science education accessible to and affordable for school pupils at the earliest stage. The project is still ongoing.



The structure has already reached a wall height

⇒ Teachers Lodge for Matakan Community Primary School

This project is funded by the North-South-Bridge foundation, Fambul Tik and YAD. It includes a five-room apartment block, toilets, kitchen, store and solar light. The main goal is to provide a conducive accommodation facility for trained and qualified teachers who have been assigned to the school by the central government. YAD believes that the lack of conducive housing for teachers is another challenge that might jeopardize President Bio's free education agenda.



Teachers' lodge for Matakan Community Primary School

YAD IN GOVERNANCE AND PEACEBUILDING

YAD believes that true peace and sustainable democracy can be only nurtured in a united community. This is why the organization focuses on uniting its targeted communities through social mobilization programs – especially sports, and provision of desperately needed social infrastructures in order to strengthen good governance and the rule of law. During the period under review, the organization concentrated more on Niawa and Nongowa chiefdoms in Kenema district.

The organization organizes annual Youth Cohesion Matches amongst its affiliated youth groups between November and December every year. They conduct the matches in a win-win spirit, as no participant loses; hence, all participants receive prizes. This model has maintained friendship and solidarity amongst the youth in the region. The matches are accompanied by the messages of unity and peace and the organization emphasises on sociocultural cohesion and friendly coexistence among the participants.

Some of the major events and projects recorded in this thematic area include the following:

⇒ Community Unification Matches in Niawa Chiefdom

Situated along the Pujehun Blama highway, Mabondor and Teyema sections are two of the five sections that make up Niawa chiefdom. Geographically, the Niawa chiefdom itself is strategically situated but constantly neglected due to its economic situation. The chiefdom is situated under the forested hill that divides south and eastern provinces, Pujehun and Kenema districts, but it is not a home for precious minerals and cash crops. This makes life very miserable for the youth, women and children in this part of the country. While YAD mobilizes them to engage in other community development projects, it is also using community unification sports as a magnet to unify them to resist poverty.



Teyema and Mabondor community ready to lock horns



Teyema and Mabondor Community being sensitized on peace

⇒ Youth Cohesion Matches in Kenema city

The Youth Cohesion Cup was introduced in the wake of a massive campaign against ethnic based politics, religious and cultural discriminations; a project funded by UNAOC in the year 2013. Since then, YAD has maintained the cup for its affiliated youth groups. The 2017 match took place in December between Gbo-kakajama Youth in Action for Progress and Action Star Youth Club.

In collaboration with Synergie Inkasso GmbH, a debt collection company based in Berlin – Germany, YAD organized the match at the police training field in central Kenema and it attracted participants from all over the city. Gbo-kakajama boys won the Football match while Action Star girls won the volleyball match. The cups and prizes were presented at the youth unification party which took place at YAD office on the same day.



Annual Youth Cohesion Match 2017, volley ball teams



Annual Youth Cohesion Match 2017, football teams

⇒ Community Mobilization and Conflict Resolution Centre for Matakan and Golahun Vama Villages

Co-financed by the Nord-South Bridge Foundation, Fambul Tik and YAD, the project provided modern community mobilization centres for the residents of Matakan and Golahun Vaama towns, in Niawa Chiefdom. Included in the centres are offices, stores, toilets and solar light. YAD adopted this model after it realized that the lack of mobilization centres makes it difficult for many communities to meet and discuss developmental issues. This problem affected the people in the rainy season as well as the dry season as they scouted about searching for appropriate meeting grounds. The solar light included in the project makes electricity reachable for the rural dwellers that lived in constant darkness. It also makes it easier for them to use mobile phones, as the centres have now become a source of electricity for phone users.



Community Mobilization and Conflict Resolution Centre for Matakan



Community Mobilization and Conflict Resolution Centre for Matakan



Community Mobilization and Conflict Resolution Centre for Golahun Vaama



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 help 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.



A cross-section of photographers and YAD staff



The deputy Mayor of Kenema Municipality, Esther Guanya Kaisama presenting digital cameras to photographers on behalf of YAD

YAD IN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

While struggling to maintain itself, the organization introduced a microcredit scheme over the years through which young photographers are able to attain self-employment, while at the same time pursuing other careers. The organization purchased and distributed digital cameras to young photographers on revolving loan bases which they used to collect photographs from birthday parties, wedding occasions, convocations, school thanksgiving programs, and bring them to the digital lab for final processing. This scheme is innovative because it keeps both the young photographers and YAD volunteers who worked in the lab constantly employed.

⇒ Digital Photo and Desktop Publishing

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 introducing young vocational graduates to diverse desktop publishing techniques, 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

THE “MULTIPURPOSE YOUTH RESOURCE CENTRE” CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

YAD shares the view that young people can only feel safe when they have proper education, skills-knowhow, secured jobs, and reliable sources of income. This also means that unhindered access to justice, the right to decide with whom to live or associate, healthy and sound family life, affordable housing, hubs and co-working spaces, learning centres such as schools and community libraries, good recreational centres such as theatres and sport complex, and more promote this view. This is the reason why the staff and volunteers of the organization had been living with serious apprehension, in view of the unstable nature of the rented space they have been using as an office. In May 2017, the organization successfully hammered home its proposal to erect a “Multipurpose Youth Resource Centre (MYRC)” which should serve as its own headquarters and a true “safe space for youth” in the region.

Co-funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Fambul Tik and YAD, the MYRC project entails two major phases, each with distinct features:

⇒ MYRC Phase I

This phase entails a modern assembly hall, cafeteria, digital library, digital photo lab, conference rooms, administrative offices

and temporal lodging. The entire facility is powered by a 23KW solar system that makes it completely energy independent.

⇒ **The Genesis of MYRC Construction Project**



The land was partly occupied by a dilapidated government quarter, J1



The rest of the land was a mere bush; a caterpillar was needed to clear it



Manual labour being used to uproot trees



Power saws being used to cut down trees



The Town Chief of Kenema city, Alhaji Kenei Momoh Ngombulango speaking at the launching ceremony



Mr. Morie Gbetu, current Provincial Secretary, then Senior District Officer, speaking at the launching occasion



Karamoko Kabba, the then Residence Minister—east and Alhaji Kenei Momoh Ngombulango, pouring the foundation soil



A cross-section of YAD staff and the Deputy Mayor of Kenema Municipality, Esther Guanya Kaisama shortly after the launching

⇒ **MYRC after construction**



Front view of MYRC building



The Peace Assembly Hall can take more than 250 guest



The building has 72 solar panels, largest private grid in Kenema



The successful completion of this phase in record time serves multiple purposes:

- 1- It has created a solid sustainability foundation for YAD as a youth led institution; hence, it shall never pay rent and light bills again.
- 2- It highlighted how innovative the youth can be when they have the opportunity to participate in the process of shaping their own future.
- 3- It can easily be replicated by the central government in other regions as a workable prototype of “safe spaces for the youth” without spending precious time and money on pilot implementations and endless researches.

4- It demonstrates how eager the Sierra Leonean youth are for a better life and their readiness to contribute to achieve it.

As the name, “Multipurpose” implies, the centre also serves as a complain-desk where disgruntled or disadvantaged youth can settle their disputes without police involvement; and it provides guidance and counselling for many youth who seek advice about their family entanglements and future careers.

⇒ **MYRC Phase II**

This phase entails mainly skill training facilities. The objective is to facilitate access of underprivileged youth to high quality skills, which could enable them become self-reliant and economically independent. It includes dressmaking, cosmetology, catering, secretariat and office management, screen-printing and sport. The sport component provides many modern sport apparatus such as gymnastic gadgets, billiard, table tennis, table football etc. This phase, when successfully completed, shall be called Youth Resource Academy (YRA) and it shall turn the MYRC into the safest youth kingdom in Sierra Leone. This project is currently ongoing with the hope of completing it by December 2019.



Youth Resource Academy (YRA)

**YAD WINS INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION
“The King Hamad Youth Empowerment Award”**

Sunday, 25th February 2018 added another chapter to the endless pages of YAD’s success story as the organization bags the King Hamad Youth Empowerment Award 2018. The unprecedented ceremony took place at the King’s palace in the Bahraini capital of Manama, and was witnessed by many stakeholders including all government ministers and representatives of United Nations.



A special jury team of nine individuals from various stakeholder institutions in diverse countries including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain, Government of Arab State of Kuwait and the Government of United Arab Emirate, conducted the reviews. According to their report, a total of 633 applicants from 87 countries applied for the awards with 21 applicants from the private sector, 488 from

individual category, 111 from nongovernmental organizations and 22 from the government sector.

After careful reviews and verification of application documents including recommendations received from referees and evidence of impacts independently obtained elsewhere, Youth in Action for Development (YAD) was selected as the winner from the non-governmental organizations sector; Gulf Petrochemical Industries Co. of Kingdom of Bahrain selected from private sector; Youth Foundation under the President of Republic of Azerbaijan from the government sector; and Ms. Hadia Ali Sheerazi of Parkistan from individual category.

In a carefully worded letter dated 29th January 2018, the Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs, Hisham Bin Mohammed Al Jowder wrote YAD prior to the award:

"GREETINGS FROM THE MINISTRY OF SPORT AND YOUTH AFFAIRS OF BAHRAIN. IT'S MY PLEASURE TO EXTEND TO YOU MY SINCERE GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATIONS FOR YOUR EFFORTS TOWARDS THE YOUTH. IT IS OUR HONOR TO INFORM YOU THAT YOU ARE THE RECIPIENT OF THE KING HAMAD AWARD TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN THE NON-PROFIT AND INTERNATIONAL NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION SECTOR.

WE WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND TO YOU AN INVITATION TO ATTEND THE AWARD CEREMONY IN BAHRAIN. CONGRATULATIONS ON BEING THE RECIPIENT OF THIS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD AND WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING YOU AT THE AWARD CEREMONY IN BAHRAIN."



The King Hamad Youth Empowerment trophy

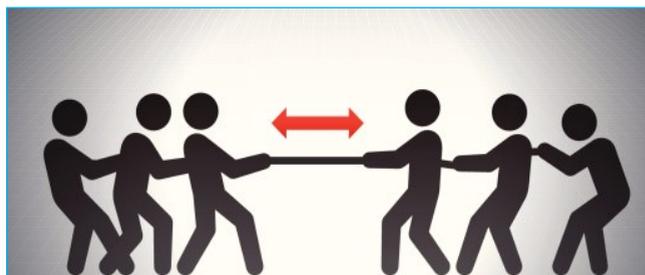
In his keynote address before presenting the awards, His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Kalifa thanked the awardees for their tremendous contributions to empower the youth and to accelerate attainment of the global Sustainable Development Goals in their various countries. He then admonished them to keep up the good works regardless the herculean challenges they might be facing. He further commended youth organizations like YAD for recognizing themselves as the catalysts of global peace and development. "Our youth are on the right path, and are preparing themselves academically and practically as they are responsible for building the future", he stated.

The King's award included a trophy, certificate and cash.

The award recognizes young people's endeavour to be effective and productive citizens, contributing to the welfare of their communities and environment, as well as institutions that improve the enabling environment and infrastructure for youth to make a positive impact in all the United Nations Member States.

CHALLENGES IN RETROSPECT

Managing a voluntary youth organization like YAD can be best described as a tug of war. Unfortunately many people usually mistake the positive impacts as sign of enjoyment. There are many challenges which can cripple youth organisations like YAD. One of them is the lack of support from local authorities, which is rooted in their lack of respect and recognition for youth. They place rigid bureaucratic barriers that debar the progress of youth initiatives. For some of them, a youth activity is only meaningful when backed by a political motive and dividends. The process of acquiring the piece of land for the construction of YAD's MYRC is a short but sad story that is worth a narration, as it explains some of the difficulties faced by youth-led initiatives in the country.



There is no difficult task on earth like running a charity in post conflict Sierra Leone where most people have endless list of unmet needs

In 2015, YAD approached the central government with a request for a piece of land to construct a Youth Centre. The process went through a series of unnecessary bureaucratic corridors and gridlocks, which almost sent the project into jeopardy. If the organization was not well-focused and determined in its community development ventures, with an unshakable desire to effect positive social changes in the society, it would have abandoned the project. Ironically, the challenges came directly from the very authorities whose efforts are being complemented by the organization.

A second challenge is youth mobility. The organization trains young people who often move to bigger cities in search of better opportunities, or even move during the implementation of capacity-building programs. This means that the human capital built is lost, and that the organization needs to identify and train new young people in less time; thereby affecting project outcomes. It is difficult to build a solid youth club in most communities, as members tend to relocate frequently in search of future goals. This is mainly because opportunities are limited and mostly centralized in Freetown. In a desperate effort to enhance social mobility, it ironically becomes one of the unending challenges as well.

Thirdly, the lack of donor confidence is another challenge. However, some donors, including UN agencies, have demonstrated over the years their willingness to fund youth-led initiatives, but most of the funding windows have rigid prerequisites, resulting in a limited chance for the implementing youth organizations to build their own capacity with the fund. For example, short implementation periods with the expectation of targeting a huge number of beneficiaries and realizing greater outcomes and impacts, can put enormous pressure on the implementing agency. In some cases, where such organizations fail to meet the rigid funding benchmarks, even though they might have very genuine intentions, there is the tendency to assume that funds may have been mismanaged, which could result in donor fatigue. So every project contract signed by YAD is accompanied

by new challenges to meet donor benchmarks, to satisfy the beneficiaries and to keep the organization's image shining.

On the other hand, some donors simply do not fund youth-led initiatives at all, either due to lack of trust and confidence or simply because a youth organization cannot meet their funding requisites, such as audited reports, track records or proof of financial self-sufficiency.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

After witnessing the rapid growth of YAD over the years, many people are now mistaking such a voluntary initiative for a donor, as they address to us financial requisitions on daily basis. Just because we are helping ourselves doesn't mean we don't need any help. As a matter of fact, the organization constantly depend on donor supports and voluntary contributions. We therefore need every ounce of your help!

You can help YAD financially, materially, emotionally, morally or physically. You can even help us spiritually by remembering us in your prayers in the church or mosque. We have witnessed Peace Corps and development volunteers coming from the western world to offer their expertise in our country; you could also do the same by just volunteering with us, if you have special expertise in some of our thematic areas. Or if your career occupation cannot allow you to do so, you could simply help as follows:

- ⇒ Recommend YAD to potential donors;
- ⇒ Inform YAD about funding opportunities;
- ⇒ Simply sign YAD's documents such as attestations, registration certificates, if you are in a high position
- ⇒ Book our event management system to generate income for the organization
- ⇒ Orally complement and acknowledge YAD's efforts in order to motivate its staff and volunteers.
- ⇒ If you are a journalist, promote YAD in the media

COLLABORATING PARTNERS

After you have read through this newsletter, you might have already sensed that our success depends chiefly on partners. Our partners include government departments, donor agencies, voluntary nongovernmental organizations and affiliated youth groups. The following list is not exhaustive:

- ⇒ Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany
- ⇒ 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
- ⇒ National Youth Commission (NAYCOM), GoSL
- ⇒ Ministry of Planning and Development, GoSL
- ⇒ Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs, GoSL
- ⇒ Ministry of Technical and Higher Education, GoSL
- ⇒ Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, GoSL
- ⇒ Ministry of Health and Sanitation, GoSL
- ⇒ Kenema City and District Councils
- ⇒ Kenema District Youth Council
- ⇒ North-South Bridge Foundation, Germany
- ⇒ International Association of Educators for World Peace
- ⇒ Prof. Francis Aamara and Family, Winnipeg, Canada
- ⇒ Affiliated youth groups

**GOOD NEWS
FOR EVERYONE**

YAD Boosts Government's Free Education Program in Kenema

The management of YAD wish to inform the general public that the organization will be launching its digital library service (first time in Kenema city) in January 2019.

School pupils, tertiary students and academic researchers are now invited to browse our internet in the box with more than 1 million electronic books, academic publications and research materials without paying any internet cost.

For further information regarding opening hours and beneficiary illegibility criteria, please visit our headquarters at 55a Maxwell Khobe Street in Kenema!!

**Always work and no play can
give our youth a freaky mind**

Come party with YAD!!

**Book the best
hall in town**

YAD wish to inform the general public that its newly constructed hall will be available for public hire effective from 1st December 2018.

For further information regarding the rules and conditions of hire, please visit our headquarters at 55a Maxwell Khobe Street in Kenema city!!

Please note that YAD does not offer its facilities for any political, religious, clique, cult or court meetings...

Our Development Vision:

“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”

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