

## Building Sustainable Peace in Sierra Leone by Developing Leaders and Transforming Conflict

**Rotary Global Grant:** GG1981756

**International Club:** Magnolia Texas Rotary Club, District 5910

**Host Club:** Bo Rotary Club, Sierra Leone District 9101

**Cooperating Organization:** Mediators Beyond Borders International

**Area of Focus:** Peace & Conflict Resolution/Prevention

**Geo-Focus:** Sierra Leone, West Africa

**The “Why”:** Sierra Leone’s peace, at 15 years young, follows a long and brutal civil war, multiple coups, the devastating 2014 Ebola epidemic, and the August 2017 mudslides and floods. The Magnolia Rotary Club joins with the Bo Rotary Club and Mediators Beyond Borders International (MBBI) to assist this resilient society in keeping the peace during such overwhelming challenges by training leaders in conflict management skills. Together, we will continue the peace-building work, helping Sierra Leone sustain its peaceable society while fulfilling Rotary Foundation’s aims as set forth in the Area of Focus Policy Statement “to promote the practice of peace and conflict prevention/resolution.”

**The Need: Develop women and youth leaders to:**

- Guide Sierra Leone’s institutions and continue to develop its socio-economic infrastructures
- Address the challenges of today and tomorrow without resorting to violence

**The Goal:** Enhance leadership and peace-building competencies by providing:

- Leadership skills training targeted specifically for Women, and Youth.
- Conflict management skills training including a train-the-trainer component

**Recent Impacts of Similar Projects:**

- 350 members of civil society in four regions capable of leading their communities as peace ambassadors.
- A growing cadre of Community Leaders now with the ability to prevent and transform violent conflict.

*A recent country needs assessment has confirmed developing capable women and youth leaders in Sierra Leone will contribute to sustainable peace for future generations!*

**Budget/Timeframe:** \$115,000. Implementation of Leadership Programs 2019.

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## Project Overview

Sierra Leone has struggled to maintain peace following a long and bitter civil war. The Ebola crisis and 2017's mudslides and floods have placed additional strains on the country. Women have historically been marginalized in society. UN Resolution 1325 calls for the increased participation of women at all levels of decision-making, in peace negotiations, and in mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict. The first resolution for youth peace and security, UN Resolution 2250, emphasizes the importance of youth as change agents in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. The large population of young people in the region is facing a high rate of unemployment and an economic crisis. Confronting these issues is critical to building sustainable peace. For these and other reasons, the Sierra Team which includes Mediators Beyond Borders, International (MBBI) has developed a program to train women and youth to assume leadership positions.

### **The program intends to provide in-depth and long-term support to leaders who are:**

- Skilled in conflict prevention and resolution
- Empowered to take active roles in sustaining peace and building societal resilience
- Actively-engaged in Sierra Leone's ongoing development

The program is designed to provide training via a core, five-day intensive learning program followed by personalized coaching, a robust network of in-country colleagues and peers comprising a vibrant support system, ongoing training and skill refreshers (live and virtual), and a dedicated team and resource materials available as appropriate to facilitate leadership and change agent processes. Specific training blends theory and practical learning in leadership, conflict management, communication, civic responsibilities, personal leadership and development processes, and team effectiveness, among other topics. Approximately six months after the original five-day session, participants will join a webinar to share experiences and practices.

Up to 28 regional women and youth will participate in each session, each selected by local leaders based on their potential to lead and train others in their communities. The targeted curriculum covers Women's Empowerment courses that equip women with political aspirations to seek public office in line with Sierra Leone's goal of increasing women in political leadership to 30%, as well as to serve as leaders in their respective communities. Sierra Leonean culture faces additional challenges as changes to gender roles threaten traditional family and social structure. This resulting widespread disruption also makes the country vulnerable, and our program will seek to empower women to build the capacity to manage these risks and become leaders while managing conflict situations.

The Youth Leadership curriculum, designed for participants ages 21-35, raises awareness of leadership potential of young people who comprise the majority of the population, empowering them with skills to address issues such as unemployment and conflict management in order to.

During the recent trip in February 2018, four workshops on Building Unity for Peaceful Elections were held with 300 participants from diverse stakeholder groups from civil society. Tribal Chiefs also attended and supported the workshops. The MBBI team and local partners conducted needs assessment interviews and focus groups with corporate CEO's, UNDP, women's and youth leaders, youth and women. Data collected overwhelmingly support the challenges of women and youth in society, and the need for building the capacity of women and youth leaders.

The Program Objective is to significantly increase collaborative problem-solving and consensus building skills for 56 participants over a 12-month period so that at least 80% of participants will go on to establish peacebuilding programs in their community. This is based on discussions with our partners which are still ongoing.

The direct Beneficiaries will be approximately 28 women and 28 young people participating in the programs. These participants will then impact potentially hundreds in their communities throughout the country. Participants will learn more about Rotary, and members of the Rotary Clubs will also learn more about conflict resolution.