

ACTIVITY REPORT 2013

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Development (FDID-SL) is a civil society organization that has its headquarters in Freetown and a regional office in Bo City (Bo District) in southern Sierra Leone. (FDID-SL) is a Child and youth serving Human rights and development-oriented organization that has championed Youth Issues in Freetown and other parts of the country, especially in the Bo and Bonthe districts of Sierra Leone, since its inception.

FDID-SL works to enhance Youth's active participation and involvement in upholding and promoting a sustainable development culture and participatory governance at grass root levels, through effective information dissemination, advocacy, lobbying, dialogue, civic education and community driven activities.

In a bid to work on youth issues and operate a smooth human rights/development agenda, (FDID-SL) has partnership agreement with other civil society organizations in the country. Because the motto of FDID is "Development through Civic Engagement", our operations are geared towards the grass root in every community. Our slogan: "Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much" reflects the well-being of the majority of the people we defend and work with.

POPULATION SIZE ESTIMATE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV

The National HIV/AIDS Secretariat contracted FDID-SL to undertake a survey on Sierra Leone population size estimate in the fight against HIV from the 28th of February to the 12th March, 2013. FDID-SL send six personnel to the four (4) Regions of the country to map out how many people do inject drugs in the country. The task was carried out efficiently and the results handed over to the secretariat.

POPULARISING DRUG PREVENTION AND DEMAND REDUCTION MESSAGE

FDID was consulted by GOAL Ireland an international NGO to send in their peer mentors for a six (6) months exercise in taking their drug prevention techniques to other youths in their hide outs. FDID provided fifteen outreach workers who have worked closely with GOAL Ireland to propagate the drug prevention message through outreaches from February to June 2013

MEETING WITH STREET KIDS AND YOUTHS IN SIERRA LEONE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Street youths in Sierra Leone are very vulnerable to disease as they very heavily indulged in risky behaviors. They can be easily spotted in parks, city centers, street corners, and bus stations looking for menial jobs to make living.

Street youths in Sierra Leone are mostly not considered by successive governments. This makes their situation worse as they sleep outside and live in filthy environments with very poor food and sometimes they can go days without food. They also have access to little or no medical facility right across the country.

Seventy percent (70%) of street youths in Sierra Leone considers themselves abandoned by both the local administration and the central government.

Today in Sierra Leone, Street youths are no longer restricted to urban areas but they can also be seen in rural areas. Before the war in Sierra Leone, street youths were male dominated but today there are a lot of female street youths who are very visible at night around entertainment areas. Most of them sell sex in exchange for money and food.

A good number of street youths in Sierra Leone do drugs and are most times very violent and ill-mannered as perceived by the general public. Their own argument is the complete opposite. They say they are very friendly and law abiding but that they are often misunderstood by the general public; they also argue that they are being marginalized from basic social amenities in the country. They further argue that they are not treated as citizens of the country because there is nothing they enjoy as rights but on the other hand, the public expect them to be very responsible.

One leader of a youth sect "Long Bench" at Brookfields in Freetown Sierra Leone's capital told me that the public should excuse them because he said most youths were conscripted into the warring factions as child combatants and fought in the decade long rebel war and were

Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Dev. A youth serving agency in Sierra Leone met with Street kids to discuss the problems they face in Sierra Leone.

FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRATIC INITIATIVES AND DEVELOPMENT (FDID-SL) In COLLABORATION WITH THE U.S. EMBASSY ENGAGED YOUTHS OF BLACK STREET (STADIUM CAR PARK)

With a long standing bilateral relationship between Sierra Leone and the United State of America, the US has always kept to their fundamental principles of helping developing countries.

In a bid to foster Good Governance and Peace Building FDID-SL a non-governmental organization currently working on drug prevention and demand reduction in collaboration with the American Embassy on the 27th of February engaged street youths in a hideout call Black Street in western part of the city.

Given the welcome address, the Communication and Outreach Officer of FDID-SL Mr. Edward N. Blake stressed the need for an urgent intervention as most of the country's youths are now involved with one illicit drug or the other. This he said should be addressed so that this country will not slide into another violent conflict.

Highlighting the purpose of the visit and delivering a message of hope and inspiration, the Executive Director of FDID-SL Mr. Hindowa E. Saidu implored on the youths that he was not strange to them and also the problems they face, but that their challenges are being channeled to the stake-holders and it is as a result of this he did not come alone, that this time he was there with a senior official of the United States Embassy. He said these people were there to see how best they can collaborate with FDID to look for possible solutions to their problems.

Making a statement and at the same time advising the youths on the dangers of taking drugs, the head of political affairs of the Embassy MR. Joshua E. Stern said if Sierra Leone is to change today, then the mind set of youths need to change and they should be engage in things that would bring both socio-political and economic change to their country. He lauded the effort of the president in making youth issue of paramount focus in his agenda for prosperity. He also assured the youths that the U.S. embassy will hold consultations with FDID in order to address the problems of the youths especially the once at Black street.

Most of the youths who spoke thanked the joint team from FDID and the United States Embassy for coming to visit them. They blamed the Government for not given them employment facilities. Most of these youths claimed to be drivers and indeed they produced their driving license, others said they were masonry, carpenters, auto mechanics, tailors etc. A clarion call was made by the head of black Street to the authorities who are supposed to be addressing issues or challenges confronting the youths of Sierra Leone.

The occasion was climaxed by a question and answers session which left the youths with opening ears looking forward to agencies who can work with them to make them gainfully employed or send back to school those who are of school going ages.

The Political Affairs Officer of the US Embassy Joshua E. Stern, the Executive Director of FDID-SL, Hindowa E. Saidu and some unemployed youths.



FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRATIC INITIATIVES AND DEVELOPMENT (FDID-SL) SHIFT'S ITS DRUG ADVOCACY TO SEWA GROUNDS (VICTORIAL PARK)

The condition/situation of youths is becoming serious by the day in this country as drugs or illegal substances are seeing as an alternative source of seeking solace, as the vast majority of the youths in the country are uneducated, unskilled and unemployed

Foundation for democratic initiatives and development(FDID-SL), a youth serving and drug prevention organization in sierra Leone, engaged street youths and children at the Sewa Grounds(Victoria park)a hide-out in the central business district of Freetown on the 4th of March 2013.The team was led by the executive director of the organization and other members of staff and were also accompanied by a consultant from the united states of America who was in sierra Leone to conduct a training for FDID-SL and other organizations.

At the Sewa Grounds, the leader of the hide-out (BRA) Mr. Sampha Kamara called the meeting to order by calling on the youths to be very attentive. He also praised FDID-SL as the only organization who ventures into hide-outs with drug prevention and education messages. He further went on to say that the youths are ready for a complete change of life if only the necessary opportunities are given.

Giving an overview of the visit, the Executive Director of FDID-SL Mr. Hindowa.E.Saidu took off by introducing MELISSA DITMORE a lead consultant for the HIV/AIDS secretariat in Sierra Leone. He said Melissa is in the country for the next two weeks on population size estimation but then looking at key populations. Mr. Saidu implored the youths that they are serious about the problems of the youths, and that they are trying to see how best they can help as a civil society in lobbying Government and other stake holders in solving their problems.

Surprising to see that afternoon were children ageing between Nine (9) to Fourteen (14) years. Most of them were under the influence of drugs at that time of the day and some were sleeping as the meeting went on. One important message FDID-SL got from the youths at Sewa Grounds was that, just last week they had buried sixteen (16) of their colleagues as a result of the proliferation of unregulated sachets alcoholic drinks that are easily accessible and affordable in the market. The youths said these products are dangerous for consumption.

Melissa Ditmore thanked FDID-SL for the wonderful job they are doing in trying to engage the minds of these young people and educating them from taking drugs and other illegal substances, she said an alternative health care was one thing they needed as well as jobs.

Making a statement and at the same time thanking the visiting team, one of the longest serving female members of the hideout Kadie Kaisamba also known as (Granny) said she is a hair dresser and wanted start up kits. She said her husband who is also member of the hideout is a

driver and most of the in-mates are skilled in other areas and if only they can receive help from government and other NGOs, they will leave the street. Various speakers appealed to Government to come to their aid so that they may also be able to use their potentials in the development process of their communities and the country as a whole. A ten (10) year old child Mohamed Kargbo told his audience that he was ready to go back to school as he left his home because his parents were unable to take of his needs.



HEALTH AND SANITATION

To make our environments clean and safe from malaria, typhoid and cholera dieses, FDID-SL mobilized a group of community youths ahead of the raining season on the 20th and 21st of April, 2013 to clean the Susan’s Bay Community in the Eastern part of Freetown and also using mega phones to sensitize the population about the hazards of these disease and how to prevent them.

NATIONAL TOBACCO CONTROL STRATEGY

FDID-SL in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and other partners lunched the National Tobacco Control Strategy for 2013-2016 on the 15th June, 2013

ENGAGING YOUTHS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY (AFTER A PEACEFUL ELECTIONS- A FOLLOW UP PROJECT-12TH – 30TH APRIL, 2013

Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Development- Sierra Leone (FDID-SL) with funds from British High Commission Sierra Leone has concluded a follow up project to enable youths participate in governance at local level in Koidu and Bo Cities.

FDID-SL engaged the service of local expert to train youths in governance issues in order to increase participation in civic activities which will cultivate a sense of responsible leadership and public accountability. The service of a lawyer and a governance expert were hired to these town hall trainings.

FDID-SL team entered Koidu City on the 10th of April 2013 and met with deferent youth organizations to explain to them the reason for the town hall meeting and to extend invitation on the 12th of April about sixty-five (65) youths drawn different youths hangouts across the city of Koidu benefited from this training. The training which was very interactive lasted for few hours. A Freetown base lawyer took the youths through a training package which taught the youth how to behave responsibly with the ham bit of the law. His session lasted for two hour Mr. Khefala Amadu a renowned governance expert took over the training session which also lasted for two hours. At the end of the training the youths were pleased for having got such a wonderful training. In his remarks the District youth chairman thanked the facilitators for making the training so friendly and interactive.

In the same vain the FDID team travelled to Bo on the 28th April to organize the youths in City for the same training.

On the 30th of April, 2013, at the New London Hall in Bo City, the training attracted eighty-five (85) youths. These youths were drawn from five (5) city sections within the city. The Bo City youths were also taught to how be Law Abiding and how to engage the city council constructively. The training was very interactive. This will contribute to effort at post to reduce conflict through reduction of potentials for violence and a wider increase in participation in governance at more levels of society. These youths in election violence in prone cities in two of Sierra Leone's elections hot sport were equipped with transferable skills in civil participation, governance, inclusion and increased tolerance for political diversity. The youths were thought skills to act as systems of cheques and balance for the activities of the local councils. Youths in those two (2) cities were shown leadership roles with a few of reducing the influence and manipulation of local politicians.

Key activities completed.

1. Four (4) community visitations to organized and invite the youths to these town hall trainings
2. Two (2) town hall meetings were held in both cities

Key challenges emerging actions and responsibilities

Challenges

Getting the youths to attend to such formal meeting was a very big challenge in both cities

Actions

FDID-FL has reached over one hundred and fifty (150) youths with a prodemocracy and community cohesion training in Bo and Koidu Cities

Responsibilities

FDID-SL will follow up the youths those two (2) cities

Recommendations

Imaging issues reviled that, the youths are little or not properly educated on their rolled and responsibilities to local councils. Also on the side of councils, their undertaking should made public or at list report their activities to youth groups so the list youths will be knowledgeable on developmental strive by the councils. FDID-SL therefore recommends that similar training should be replicated in other district and city councils for the cultivation of responsible leadership and public accountability.

STREET KIDS SCHOOL PROJECT IN BO AND BONTHE DISTRICT

SUMMARY REPORT

FDID in collaboration with Bo city and Bonthe district councils have implemented a 6 months project to get back street kids of school going ages to school. This project was done in these two (2) communities because there are an alarming number of street kids who have left their family homes and also gone out of school. FDID early in 2013 under took three visits in Bo and Bonthe districts and met with stakeholders. FDID also met with school pupils and street kids

and had an opportunity to exchange information. These pupils and street kids showed a strong interest in their education and what their communities stands to benefit should they realize their dreams. However, majority of the street kids express fair that poverty will serve as a storming block to realizing their dreams. The results of the three (3) visits gave FDID a strong signal with a project laying bases for the promotion of the street kids education project. A meeting with representatives of the Bo city council and Bonthe district council was another step forward to work this project.

The promotion for education of the street kids had reached out to the afore mentioned districts. FDID in collaboration with the two councils engaged business houses and well-meaning community elders who in turn provided funds for this implementation.

Twenty six (26) street kids in both districts were identify and brought back to be reunited with their families and subsequently were re-admitted in various primary and junior secondary schools in the township of Bo and Bonthe.

Sixteen children were brought to school in Bo and ten in Bonthe. Ten kids in Bo and Seven in Bonthe are still in school up to this moment. On the other hand, six kids in Bo and three kids in Bonthe went back to the street for lack of fund to support their schooling.

CHALLENGES:

It is estimated that \$250 is needed in order to keep a child in school for a year. FDID currently do not have the resources to keep more street kids in school.

RISK:

More children may return to the streets due to funding constrains.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Both the parents and the communities including the local councils are willing to cooperate in getting back street kids and poor children to school.

LEASON LEARNT:

You cannot seek the welfare of the kids without empowering their families to take care of them in school. You are likely not to succeed without empowering the parents to sustain the children in school.

CHILD LABOUR

On 12th June, 2013, FDID engaged community radios in Freetown and Bo on advocacy against using children as laborers. FDID also issued a press statement condemning the act and warning citizens to avoid such practices

DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD: BRINGING THE FOCUS ON STREET CHILDREN IN SIERRA LEONE

Street Children are any boy or girl who is yet to reach adulthood. Who seeks a livelihood or residence in the street. The demography is growing globally with an estimated one hundred and twenty million (120,000,000) or one in every five children turning to the street. A quarter of them which account for about forty-five million live in Africa and majority of them are boys and are mostly visible in urban settings across African Countries.

The Day of the African Child (DAC) is commemorated on June 16 every year by all African States. This is done to have a sober reflection on the on the 1976 massacre of South Africa Children by police in an uprising in Soweto South Africa. A Protect against Apartheid by school children resulted in the killing of thousands of those defenseless and unarmed protesters by police officers under the command of the Apartheid Regime then. After this massacre, people who are committed to the rights of the children saw the need to focus on the rights of children on the continent, in consolidating their efforts in addressing the obstacles for realizing these rights.

The African Child's Day (DAC) also provides an occasion for Government, International-Institutions and child right organizations to renew their on-going commitments towards improving the plight of marginalized and particularly vulnerable children by organizing activities aimed at including these specific children.

The theme for this year's 2013 commemoration is " Estimating Harmful Social and Cultural Practices Affecting Children: our Collective Responsibility". This is to draw the world's attention to the need of eliminating Harmful Social and Cultural Practice affecting the African Child. The DAC 2013 will help create awareness on the importance of involving children in their own issues and promote togetherness among children from different African country or backgrounds. It is said that Millions of children will be reached out via electronic media, Special Publications, banners and other promotional materials throughout the continent.

But the question that comes to mind is how does the child fit into all of this? If not all but most of the street children on the continent will be marginalized by this project for the simple fact that most of them are either not educated or do not have access to electronic gadgets like radios. Over the years street children all over Africa especially in Sierra Leone have not been included in the commemoration of the Day of African Child. Is it that the street children are not African Children?

All children have the right to education, protection, health Care and participations in their communities. But this is not in the case of street involved children in Sierra Leone. The street Children in Sierra Leone are always left out of any good thing that is supposed to influence the lives of children in this country. If all our children feel safe in their communities and go to school; there will be no need for these children to seek refuge in the street.

Governments as the main actor should realized the rights of street involved children through their active participation and build their capacity to protect themselves. There should also be a national child protection and child welfare system that are sensitive to the right of street children to care and protection and should be adequately funded to operate effectively and efficiently.

Furthermore, organizations working in rural areas on issues of childhood migration need to link with government and other agencies in urban settings to reduce the level of vulnerability that arise with mobility of street children.

Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Development Sierra Leone (FDID-SL) a youth serving organization have met with so many gangs of street involved children across Sierra Leone who have registered their disappointment in successive governments for doing little or nothing to alleviate their plight.

They question they would ask always is " are we not Sierra Leonean children?"

On the 16th of June FDID-SL met and fed over 40 street children at the Red Pump Community in Freetown. The meeting was very interactive with the children telling their stories to the FDID team and thanking them for throwing light on their plight in the country. They pleaded with FDID to continue such a good work in advocating on their behalf as they cannot afford to engage and lobby government. The FDID team assured the children that as a grass root oriented organization, they will not stop at anything short of raising awareness of the plight of street children in this country the Communication and Advocacy Officer declared.

To climax the occasion, food and drinks were served to all the street children that were present to grace the occasion,

Members of the Red Pump Community also thanked the FDID team for quit a beautiful intervention to salvage the problem faced by street children in the country.



INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DRUG AND ILLICIT TRAFIKING

Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Development in July called on the attention of the authorities concern about the spate of violence in the country in a press release. This was done because we believe that the violence in the country is not unconnected to alcohol and drug abuse.

PRESS RELEASE

POLICE BRUTALITY

Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Development (FDID-SL) has issued several press releases on police brutality ranging from the Bo killing, Tongo Fields, Bunbunna, Wellington in Freetown, Adonkia, Beach Road Lumley, Aberdeen and now Guards Street right in the heart of the Municipality.

FDID some four months ago issued a press release calling for the resignation of the Inspector General of police. The later refused to resign and instead went on vigorously defending the actions of his men. Very prominent in his Defence was the shooting of the U.S Marine at the beach Road, Lumley. He argued that the shooting was mere observation of the rules of engagement. Barely months after this unfortunate incident, the police officers involved were dismissed. Why dismissed Officers for merely observing the rules of engagement? This action to our estimation was a strong indictment not just on the police force but also its head who is always in haste to justify the diabolical actions of his men.

On Monday the 11th of November 2013, Sierra Lean witnessed the killing of the two young promising school pupils at Guard Street, Freetown. The trigger happy police were again very reckless and unprofessional in their handling of the public. The Sierra Leone Police has become the most dreaded force today and very much reminiscent of the RUF days

FDID-SL is maintaining its usual position that drug and alcohol abuse is responsible for a spate of violence across the country. Police brutality has a very strong link with drug and alcohol abuse. We are demanding that random and regular drug test be done on police officers nationwide.

We are again urging the government to pay strung attention to fight against drug and alcohol abuse in order to save our youths from becoming a failed generation and further laying the foundation for a strong and prosperous nation.

OVER DOSE PREVENTION TRAINING HELD IN NEW YORK ON 23rd JULY, 2013

Drug and alcohol abuse is both a health and social issue globally. This concern has precipitated rigorous scientific research in finding ways of cubing this menace that has plagued societies for ages. This training entitled “Over Dose Training” was held in New York on July 23rd, 2013 and Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Development (FDID-SL) benefited. This training was to introduce participations on the administration of Naloxone Hydrochloride, a newly discovered medicine for the treatment of person overdosed with drug and alcohol. This idea is based on the belief that every human person has a right to live a dignified life and society therefore has the responsibility to provide cure for persons over dose with drug and alcohol.

Drug and alcohol overdose has become a global concern as overdose is quietly competing with vehicular accident in western countries. In America overdose is a leading cause of accidents, injury and death. Opioid drugs are leading surge, contributing to the loss of sixteen thousand Americans every year. The focus of the training was providing compassionate, acceptance based and non-judgmental environment from which to explore an approach to support the development of self-regulation skills to promote positive change. Central to this approach is the desire to cultivate non- judgmental awareness of drug intake and alcohol drinking patterns and to develop ways to reduce risk and enhance well-being.

Upon returning from the over dosed training in New York, The Director of FDID-SL Hindowa E. Saidu called a meeting at his River Side Drive Office with Journalists, medical practitioners, heads of drug Cartels/shooting galleries and drug users explaining the purpose of the New York

training receptive for such innovations and therefore urged all present to treat person with over dosed with drug and alcohol like every other members of society.

Mr. Saidu told participants that they are currently lobbying government to allow the use of this newly discovered drug as he has established contacts with few non-governmental organizations in the United States who are willing to donate that drug to FDID. A sample of this drug was shown to all participants.

REPORT

Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Development also engaged in a community project implementation titled of **“ADDRESSING THE COMPLEX HEALTH & SAFETY NEEDS OF COMMERCIAL SEX WOKERS IN FREETOWN”** From August through December with funds from the **British High Commission in Freetown, Sierra Leone**. This project seeks to address three issues that affect commercial sex workers: Access to Sexual Health Information, Increased Protection from Security sector to reduce incidences of abuse and exploitation, and the Wider Community **“Acceptance”** of the real situation”.



Participant at the training



His Excellency

The President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

State House

Tower Hill

Freetown

26th November, 2013.

RE: SECURITY THREAT ON THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

As a civil society organization working on drug, alcohol and violence across the nation we feel obliged to bring to your notice certain anomalies in the security sector.

His Excellency, as an organization, we have issued out press releases on police brutality especially the indiscriminate killing of peaceful protesters. We are emphatically stating that in all democracies, citizens have the unfettered right to peaceful protest against injustice and other vices they perceive can derail the peace and development of their nations. We have observed that the police have taken upon themselves to deprive the people the right to a peace demonstration s, this claim can be envisaged in the killings of peaceful protesters in Kono, Bumbuna, Willington to name but a few.

We have further observed that the police is inept in handling internal security issues and have thus lost confidence of the people. In lieu of the above, we are humbly asking His Excellency, to set up a commission to look into police leadership.

Our attention was drawn to the 21st and 22nd November, 2013 editions of the satellite newspaper stating that a certain David, a West African citizen came to Sierra Leone to report a looming security threat on the nation. We were greatly moved by the story and subsequently made a follow up on that story. We contacted senior personnel at the Office of the National Security (ONS), The senior ONS officer told us that David's statement is no threat to national security. If David's statement is no threat to national security why then is he still held behind bars for about two months now? The nation is curious for an answer to the aforementioned question. We made frantic efforts reaching the Director of the criminal Investigation department (CID) to get their own side of the story but all efforts proved futile.

However, we were able to contact the said David at the CID headquarters in Freetown on the 22nd of November who told us that a consignment of drug and ammunition was somewhere stocked in neighboring Guinea with its ultimate destination being Sierra Leone.

On the above premise, we are kindly asking His Excellency being the commander In Chief of the armed forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone to look into the above with the aim of ascertaining its truth.

We are grateful for your kind audience and promise to be regularly communicating with you through this medium.

Yours faithfully,

Hindowa E Saidu

Executive Director

Cc: Director of Office of National Security

Inspector General of Police

Director Criminal Investigation Department

Head of Delegation – DFID

Head of Delegation- EU

High Commissioner, British High Commission- Freetown

The Ambassador of United States of America

The Ambassador, German Embassy- Sierra Leone

President Sierra Association of Journalists

FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRATIC INITIATIVES AND DEVELOPMENT (FDID-SL)

Inspire Freedom Campaign Report from Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Development (FDID)

Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Development on the 25th of November visited the Baptist Junior Secondary school in the Central Business District of Freetown Sierra Leone's capital to engage the school pupils on the inspire Freedom campaign.

The FDID team explained to the pupils the need to protect themselves from alcohol and violence as the intake of alcohol is on the increase among school children and their communities as a whole. They were informed that alcohol affects the brain. Drinking alcohol leads to loss of body control, poor judgment, slowed reflexes, distorted vision, memory problems and even blackouts.

The Executive Director of FDID Mr. Hindowa E. Saidu also impressed on the minds of the pupils that alcohol slows down the normal body function. It goes directly into the blood stream and can increase the risk for a lot of life- threatening diseases, such as Heart Disease, Digestive problems and Liver Disease.

The program officer Mr. Habib T. Kamara told his audience that alcohol inhibits and impairs judgment. Drinking alcohol can lead to risky behaviors such as unprotected sex he concluded.

The male students were especially encouraged to protect their female counterparts and report any form of abuse or violence against the female students.



FDID Program Officer Mr. Habib Kamara addressing the pupils against Alcohol induced violence against women and girls

Press Release

18th November, 2013

Is Alcohol Taking Over the Youths of Sierra Leone?

As youth unemployment is on the increase in Sierra Leone most of these idle youths have now taken to alcohol misuse and violence in almost all communities within the country. In time past alcohol misuse was only restricted to urban youths, but today alcohol is being widely misused by even the rural youths of the country.

Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Development a civil society youth serving organization that work for and with youths that are associated with drug, alcohol and violence have visited six (6) youth hide outs across the capital Freetown with an alcohol prevention and violence free campaign. The youths hideouts that benefited from the alcohol prevention and violence free campaign are the King Harman road car wash organization, Lumley car wash association, Base organization, Susan's Bay youth organization, Oloshoroh youth organization and Fourah Bay youth development association.

In all the 6 visits the youths were taught the negative effect of alcohol on their wellbeing. They were taught that drinking large amount of alcohol at a time or very rapidly can cause alcohol poisoning, which can lead to coma or even death. They were also taught that alcohol can hurt even nondrinkers. If you are around people who are drinking, you are at risk of being seriously injured or affected by violence. At the very least, you may have to deal with people who are drunk and sick, out of control or unable to take care of themselves.

The youths were also taught that mixing alcohol with other drugs can cause; Nausea, vomiting, fainting, heart problems and difficulty in breathing. Mixing alcohol and drugs can also lead to coma and most times death.

They were taught how to abstain from alcoholic drinks as there is a proliferation of alcoholic sachets in the country. The youths were happy to receive such prevention message from FDID-SL and they pledged that they will abide by the prevention.

FDID-SL is now set to take on alcohol policy and design effective community based actions in the fight to prevent alcohol harm among the youths in Sierra Leone.



Two FDID Para- legal on the 25th of November solicited the release of eleven commercial sex workers involved who were arrayed before magistrate Komba Kamanda of magistrate court number (2) in Freetown for loitering along the main streets of Freetown. FDID hired a defense lawyer who pleaded for the release of these young girls and women. All of them were subsequently released and FDID continues to make a follow up on them.

CONNECTING MEN

Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Development have engaged street youths and young men in five (5) different community sections in Bo and Kenema Town respectively from December, 9th to 13th with an advocacy project titled Connecting Men.

These youths and young men were implored to stop using violence against women but on the contrary always try to defend and protect women against abuse and gender based violence.

They were taught to respect women and build a relationship with them.

FDID team also encouraged these men to speak out and stand up against alcohol and drug violence against women in their various communities. They were further requested to always try to help women who suffer from violence related to drug and alcohol abuse in these communities.

The communities that benefited from this engagement are Kissy Town, Njagboima and New London Communities of Bo City and Nyandeyama and Maxell Kobby Park Communities of Kenema Town

FDID will continue these engagements in 2014 as a means of reducing or if possible eradicate alcohol and drug violence against women and girls in Sierra Leone.

REPORT ON WORLD CONDOM DAY 14 FEBRUARY

Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Development on the 14th of February commemorated world condom day in the central Business District of Freetown. The aim of this campaign was to scale up access to free condoms and to educate and make people especially youths who are on drugs be aware of why everybody should opt for safer sex. Condoms are the best form of protection apart from abstinence that can help stop the transmission of STI, HIV/AIDS and also prevent unwanted pregnancies among the youths. FDID rolled out ten thousand condoms to school children and other youths on that day and encouraged them to always use it.

PROJECT REPORT:

FDID poised to address the complex health and safety needs of commercial sex workers in Sierra Leone in general and Freetown in particular has again engaged sixty (60) sex workers in the Murray town community of Freetown on the 18th of February 2014 in a one day seminal. This meeting was held at the Murray town community hall and it attracted stake holders from the community. Five (5) police personnel including managers attached to the family support units at the Murray town police post and the Congo cross police station were also in attendance. Eight (8) ward committee members and thirty five (35) male youths predominantly from the community also attended this one day seminal.

Miss Millicent Yama Fonnier Gender and advocacy officer at FDID welcomed all and sundry into the meeting. She thanked everybody for being present at that meeting and admonished them to be very attentive and participatory. In his opening remarks, the chairman of the meeting who happens to be the Director of FDID Hindowa E. Saidu pleaded with stake holders especially the police to make sure that the Human Rights of sex workers should not be trampled upon. He pointed out that sex workers MUST be protected from all kinds of violence from perpetrators within and without the community. Finally he said that sex work if not properly handled by the authorities concerned will impact negatively on the fight against sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.

Mr Habib T. Kamara and Lloyd H. Jusu Esq facilitated the entire meeting which was highly participatory. They encouraged sex workers to inculcate the habit of using condoms and also impressed on their minds to be regularly going to seek medical attention at the various community health posts. At the end of the meeting everybody present made an undertaken not to discriminate against sex workers within or without the Murray Town community. Female and male condoms were being supplied to all and sundry to climax the occasion.

The vote of thanks was delivered by Memuna Kamara a sex worker that resides in this same community. She thanked FDID for such a brilliant project in trying to secure their lives. She

further pleaded with other members of the community to show some understanding and respect for their Human Right. We are humans and members of this community and therefore other members of our community should not look low upon us because of what we do she lamented. In spite of what we do we are all humans and therefore should live as a community she concluded”



A cross section of participants at the work shop

Project Report March 2014

By a way of reaching out to youth and children who are into drug related issues risky behaviors in the western district of Freetown, the Wilberforce community has benefited from a one day workshop. Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and Development in their strives to address the complex Health and safety needs of commercial sex worker at the Wilberforce community center. Wilberforce being the last of five communities in the western of Freetown attracted 78 participants as well as health service providers, a representative from the family support unit and local authorities.

In his welcome address Chief Hindowa E. Saidu the Director of FDID registered that this meeting is serving as summary to the previous meetings in other city sections. He was very pleased with the

turnout and said this is a clear manifestation in demonstrating their commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS. He also told participants present that their personal health should be treated with the utmost seriousness and concern.

The Chairman Mr. Edward N. Blake in his opening remarks affirms that if only such meetings are replicated in the entire country the issue of HIV/AIDS will not just become a thing of the past but would also have help in enlightening commercial sex workers on their reproductive health. Mr. Blake furthered that drugs, alcohol and commercial sex are intertwined inseparable so much that it affects the psychological makeup of humans.

With a brief overview of the project Mr. Habib T. Kamara one of the facilitators stressed on the incidences of abuse female commercial sex workers face whenever they are arrested by police officers in various communities. Reproductive health care was another critical topic that was discussed as the relationship between health service providers and our clients (commercial sex workers) must be cordial. The issue of discrimination was a serious concern expressed by the participants. Mr. Kamara educated them on how to prevent themselves from STI's and other health related problems.

Reacting to the incidences of abuse by police officers a representative from the family support unit attached to the Congo Cross police Station assured all that they will punish any police officer who will be found wanting. He concluded by given a piece of advice to all participants to remain law abiding.

This meeting was very interactive followed by a question and answer session. At the end of the meeting male and female condoms were shared/ distributed among participants.



A cross section of participants at the work shop

FDID is currently implementing a six month project titled “Zero Tolerance for Drug Abuse in ten Community schools in the western district of Lumley. This implementation is targeting pupils in ten community schools in addressing the problems of drug abuse among teenage school pupils in those communities. This project intends to reach school children to make them aware of the effects of alcohol on their health, academic work, their families and the communities as a whole. We have started building schools anti-drug clubs in the targeted schools. This project is being funded by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (UNODC)



A cross section of Pupils Emmet Junior Secondary School, Lumley, Freetown