



YACAN

Youth And Child Advocacy Network



THEORY OF CHANGE

2019 - 2024

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1. Background

YACAN's work builds on efforts made over the years to address challenges facing children, girls/young women and youth. Despite the strides made, these target groups in Sierra Leone remain largely marginalized, poor and unable to participate in decision making processes. The myriad of challenges facing children, girls/young women and youths in Sierra Leone include lack of access to quality education, low investment in vocational education, drug abuse, gender inequality, teenage pregnancies, unemployment, underemployment. Adolescent girls face similar challenges compounded by their vulnerability to sexual abuse, inadequate exposure to sexual and reproductive health education, harmful traditional practices including female genital mutilation, early marriages and unfair patriarchal systems. These conditions have resulted to increased discrimination, illiteracy, poverty, deep negative cultural perceptions surrounding their conditions and exclusion from key social and economic services. Sierra Leone is also not an exception to child rights violations, with children exposed to subordination, child labour, domestic violence, inadequate health care among others.

As indicated in the 2015 Census Report; persons under 35 years of age make up about 80% of the entire population of Sierra Leone. Females (51.3%) outnumber males (48.7%) in the total population of young people¹. However, in rural areas males outnumber females in the age groups below 15 years, but at older ages females predominate.

Despite being signatories to international conventions and protocols relating to children and women, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC), African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children, Forced Labour Convention; Convention on the worst forms of child labour; Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment; evidence shows that rights continue to be violated in many societies. This goes for women empowerment, youth and children's rights. National laws including commissions and institutions have been set up to

¹ Sierra Leone 2015 Census Report

protect the rights of children and women including the 3 Gender laws, Child Rights Act among others. Despite the setting up of these institutions and Ministries, they remain grossly underfunded and under staffed. YACAN takes note of the fact that protecting and promoting the rights of marginalized groups is not just about enacting legislation or setting commissions but; rather ensuring a free and just society that is inclusive of all persons and citizens where equal opportunities prevail.

YACAN focus is biased on children especially girls and youth especially young women and believes that improving the lives of children in Sierra Leone requires sound national policies that identify and articulate key challenges facing children and the best approaches to overcome them. By developing this Theory of Change, YACAN intends to ensure that policies are grounded in thorough assessments of the status of all children and that they are developed in participatory ways that influence the lives of children positively. Our advocacy therefore, is about influencing changes in policies and legislation; building the skills and confidence of children and young people to effectively advocate, provide space for network members to influence society's norms and attitudes relating to children.

Through implementing this Theory of Change, YACAN wishes to bring about key changes in policy, legislation and practice that will have a lasting impact on children, girls/young women and youth. YACAN realizes that it cannot bring about all the changes alone. Thus, in developing this Theory of Change, a range of stakeholders including service providers, commission, MDAs for children and women themselves were consulted.

2. YACAN's THEORY OF CHANGE (2019 To 2024)

Slot problem statement

YACAN's Theory of Change defines the conceptual model for achieving our (YACAN) vision. It defines the linkages among our advocacy activities, desired impact and goal along with the underlying assumptions that are related to these linkages.

YACAN's Theory of Change is biased on children especially girls and youth especially young women and focuses on the Community, Government and Civil Society Organizing Theory that propounds that groups (in this case children, girls/young women and youth) can create power by taking mutual action to achieve social change. YACAN believes that organizing requires building the capacity of those affected by problems to address them. Additionally, efforts on changing institutions, policies, legislations, practices and attitudes are key to achieve the change we want to see.

For YACAN, advocacy is defined as "systematic activities intended to influence legislation, policies, perceptions, attitudes and actions in order to achieve positive change in the lives of children, girls/young women and youth in Sierra Leone". This advocacy strategy explains how YACAN will work to build advocacy into its programmes. This strategy provides a set of specific interventions focusing on empowering community, government and civil society and local efforts to strengthen the protection of children, girls/young women and youth from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence. This Advocacy Theory of Change is about challenging opinions and mindsets on education, child protection, economic empowerment and gender based violence, seeking political will for justice and human rights, changing policy and legislation to support the target group to speak out and deliver evidence based recommendations to decision makers to influence legislative and policy outcomes; all aimed at making lasting positive differences in the lives of children and youths.

YACAN's Theory of Change is biased on girls and young women. in this respect.....**If children, girls/young women and youth and communities are sensitized on their rights and responsibilities, institutions and decision makers mobilized through advocacy; then negative attitudes and social norms will shift; legislation and policies improved, political will enhanced. This will lead to improvement in the social status and well-being of children, girls/young women and youth at all levels.**

METHODOLOGY

Consultations were held with beneficiaries of YACAN representing children, girls/young women and youth in three communities in the Western Area Rural and Urban (Mar jay Town, Kroo Bay and Dworzark communities). Similar consultative session was held with YACAN staff and CSO partners in Freetown to discuss a Theory of Change systems for organisations, solicit feedbacks on the role of the Community, Government and CSOs in the implementation of the Theory of Change. Below is an analysis of the outcomes validated by the YACAN Senior Management led by the Director of YACAN.

Community

- increase awareness and understanding of key community stakeholders (children, girls, young women and youth) on the importance of addressing gender based violence, retention of girls in schools, child protection, legislation and policies and low employment rate.
- children, girls/young women and youth are aware of their rights and how to claim them
- key community leaders and stakeholders act as campaigners of change
- youth and young women are more able and willing to reflect on GBV and other empowerment issues
- - community leaders develop and harmonize community bye-laws on education, child protection, GBV related issues
- - community leaders and other stakeholders adopt, implement and monitor better policies and strategies that seeks to address issues of low employment opportunities, child protection and GBV related issues
- improve community implementation of child rights Act, child marriage Act, National Education Sector Plan and the National Youth Policy
- stronger engagement with Local Councils, Chiefs, Youth and Children on access to post primary education and job and entrepreneurship opportunities

Achieving the above will ensure increased community/ public support at local level for children, girls/young women and youth to increase retention, address GBV and increase job opportunities.

Government

- MSWGCA officials prioritize and commit to address child protection and GBV by the government
- MOYA officials prioritize and commit to address youth empowerment and employment issues
- MBSSE and National Teaching Service Commission officials prioritize and commit to address education and retention of children especially girls
- MSWGCA review of the 2007 Child Rights Act and other related child protection policies
- MOYA review and harmonize TVET strategy and curriculum and review and implement the NYP
- MBSSE and TSC review TCC, Education Sector Plan and develop operational guide for School Management Committees
- MSWGCA increase dissemination and popularization of policies and reviewed 2007 Child Rights Act and other related child protection policies
- MOYA increase dissemination and popularization of policies and reviewed and harmonized TVET strategy and curriculum and implement the NYP
- MBSSE increase dissemination and popularization of policies and reviewed and harmonized TVET strategy and curriculum and implement.

Achieving the above will ensure effective implementation, enforcement and monitoring by government at central, district and local levels of the reviewed 2007 Child Rights Act and other related child protection policies, TVET strategy and curriculum, NYP, TSC, TCC and Education Sector Plan.

CSO

- coalitions and networks working with YACAN realize the importance of working together in support of children, girls/young women and youth and jointly put recommendations of the CRC, Human Rights Coalition and African Charter on the Rights of Women and Children on the agenda of duty bearer
- improve coordination of coalitions and networks with YACAN in advocacy, lobbying and monitoring and evaluation of government's performance on the rights of children, girls/young women and youth to economic empowerment, protection and gender based violence

Achieving the above will ensure increased influence by coalitions and networks with YACAN on government's in ensuring the rights of children, girls/young women and youth to economic empowerment

Youth and Child Advocacy Network (YACAN) Organizational Theory of Change 2019 to 2024



Conclusion

It is important for YACAN to invest on the capacity development thus;

- capability to act and commit itself in the empowerment of children, girls/young women and youth structures to represent the voiceless
- capability to deliver on objectives, making use of timely research to reinforce monitoring and lobby informed advocacy
- capability to adapt and self-renewal. YACAN to update, review and implement strong organizational policies and practices
- capability to relate. YACAN should build, strengthen or drive new networks, coalitions, consortiums and collaborative partnerships with common agenda.