**SPACE(S) FOR YOUTH**: Localising youth-led community transformation in urban informal settlements and low-income communities in Sierra Leone

**1. Objective and relevance (the world around us)**

**1.1. Objectives of the intervention**

***The early years***: YDC-SL and Dreamtown have grown up together. Dreamtown was created in 2010 to support the group of passionate people around YDC-SL who, on a free and voluntary basis, provided non-formal education for vulnerable young people. For the first many years, the partnership between our two organisations focused on building the capacity of YDC-SL to run non-formal education activities.

***The transformative years:*** In 2018, we decided to expand our focus and support the well-being of young people by working directly within the communities where they live. Through the CISU founded project ‘Creating space for young people in Sierra Leone’, we literally left the classroom and ventured into nine vulnerable urban communities located across Sierra Leone. Since this was the first project we did directly within a public space setting, we saw a need to fully grasp what young people saw as the most important factors contributing to their well-being. Their answers would allow us to *localise our approach to urban development*. To facilitate this process, we teamed up with the University of Canberra in Australia and the University of Makeni in Sierra Leone. Based on a rigid research design, we talked to more than 1,000 young people. The outcome of the research process[[1]](#footnote-1) was a success, as we ended up with a highly reliable dataset. Based on this research, a Call for Action[[2]](#footnote-2) was formulated, outlining a number of priorities for strengthening the well-being among young people. These include i) Access to education and skills; ii) Access to safe and inclusive spaces; iii) Access to green and pleasant places; and iv) Governance and leadership.

***Older and wiser:*** This intervention is a direct follow-up on the project ‘Creating space for young people in Sierra Leone’ by targeting the well-being priorities of young people. While this includes targeting a number of critical and alarming trends threatening youth well-being in the communities, a key motivation for the follow-up project also stems from the positive findings. We know from our research that almost 72% of youth in the communities feel confident that they can achieve the things they want in life. And 89% of youth expect that their life will be better in the near future. Building on this confidence and positive outlook, the project seeks to support young people in playing an active role in improving their well-being and their communities. In so doing, the project pursues the following objectives:

**Development objective:** Improved well-being of young people in urban informal settlements and low-income communities in Sierra Leone.

**Specific objectives:**

* ***SO1:***CSOs facilitate youth-led programmes and have the capacity to scale up interventions in the future.
* ***SO2:*** Young people are empoweredand have the capacity and life skills needed to take the lead in community development and in their own lives.
* ***SO3:*** Young people take active part in shaping the public space in their communities.
* ***SO4:*** Community and local authorities increasingly support CSOs and youth groups’ initiatives and involve young people in community development.

**1.2. Challenges that need to be addressed**

Young people living in urban slums experience a number of threats to their well-being. These include lack of voice and participation in decision-making within their community, lack of access to education, lack of employment opportunities, exposure to poor housing conditions, sexual and gender violence, early pregnancy, limited access to health services, drug and alcohol abuse, criminal activity, etc. Below is an outline of the key challenges that will be addressed in this specific project. These challenges reflect some of the most important threats to youth well-being identified during the research of the previous project within the projects eight target communities. The challenges are aligned with the project’s four specific objectives.

**Challenge 1: Limited access to civil society support for young people:** Our research on youth well-being shows us that having access to community organisations that support youth is associated with higher well-being (as is having access to support from family and friends). However, many youths in the target communities do not have such support networks that can help them move forward in life and support them during challenging times. This is indicated by the survey findings which show that a massive 94% of the youth feel that ‘lack of opportunities for young people’ is a significant problem, and 74% have not participated in community activities in the last three months. In these communities, civil society organisations and community-based organisations have a key role to play in supporting young people to transform their dreams through collective actions into outcomes that improves well-being. Thus, there is the dual need of strengthening the capacity and presence of civil society organisations that engage young people within the communities, and helping these organisations create opportunities for marginalised youth.

**Challenge 2: Limited access to capacity building and skills development opportunities for young people:** In our research, we also found that those who are satisfied with their access to education generally had much higher well-being compared to those who are dissatisfied. With many people having experienced severe disruption to their opportunities to access formal education, many have had to turn to informal means of obtaining key skills. Additionally, some critical skills are not necessarily provided in most formal education settings, for example capacity building to enable youth to successfully communicate their needs and desires with leaders and decision-makers. In addition, having assistance in learning how to use the internet was associated with higher well-being, as was having assistance with literacy and numeracy – skills that are lacking among youth in the informal settlements and low-income communities where many have not had the opportunity to go further than primary school. Key findings relevant to this challenge include that 57% of youth were not currently involved in any education or training, 57% have received no support in learning how to communicate with government and leaders, and 64% have received no support in learning how to get a job. In this project, we will provide access to such critical learning opportunities for young people. The approach to this service delivery will however be strategic; we will focus on providing training for those youth who are actively involved in community development. This is based on the hypothesis that strengthening the capacity of youth leaders will not only improve their well-being, as the increased skills they acquire will also have a positive ripple effect on the community at large through the actions the youth leaders engage in.

**Challenge 3: Lack of access to youth friendly public spaces:** Our survey showed that access to safe and inclusive public spaces was associated with higher well-being. This echoes the importance of SDG 11.7 which advocates for the ‘*universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green public spaces’*. In the first project we made significant strides towards reaching this goal by collaborating with youth and community members around the establishment of eight youth centres across the target communities, as described below in section 1.3. However, as the survey showed, a lot more can be done in terms of improving public space in these communities. In particular, the survey showed three core dimensions that are important to consider. The first is ***safe public spaces***. Not feeling safe is associated with much lower well-being – especially lack of safety in markets, school, and work were associated with much lower levels of well-being. Findings from the research shows that only 39% have a safe place where they can meet with other young people outside their home, 83% rate violence (people hurting others) as a moderate or big problem, 69% feel that men attacking women is a moderate or big problem, and 68% feel that not being able to walk safely home at night is a moderate or big problem. This highlights that having access to safe public spaces in communities is likely to be a significant influence on a person’s well-being, particularly in communities where many homes have limited amenities. The second dimension is ***green public spaces***. Having access to pleasant, nature filled, and safe green spaces was consistently associated with higher well-being. This suggests a need for considering how the design of public spaces also integrates vegetation and nature-based design, while also ensuring the ability of residents to functionally use spaces during wet weather. The survey showed that 56% do not have pleasant places outside their home they can go to spend time in and relax, and 62% do not have nature or ‘green’ (plant-filled) spaces they can safely spend time in. Finally, the survey showed a lack of access to ***creative space***. 75% of the youth in the target community do not have access to space where can go and be creative.

**Challenge 4: Poor cooperation with and support from community and local authorities:** A key challenge for the youth in Sierra Leone is that community authorities hardly grant young people the opportunity to engage in issues that have to do with their well-being. Another challenge is the lack of structure in the youth groups in the communities; most of the groups are formed as social clubs without organized leadership and are not seen as productive towards community development by community authorities. Furthermore, many community authorities do not have trust in young people's leadership, and the youth groups lack the needed knowledge and communication skills to engage in strong advocacy for change. In the first project, we saw good examples of how community-based organizations (CBOs) and young people did succeed in mobilising support from community stakeholders to their initiatives. In some of the Makeni and Koidu communities, the establishment of the community centres were supported with materials, equipment, and access to land, and local chiefs, chairmen and councillors provided support. However, in some communities, particularly in Freetown, collaboration has been challenging. This is also evident in the evaluation of the first project[[3]](#footnote-3), which identified key challenges having to do with poor relations between youth and community authorities, as well as the lack of support from community stakeholders and authorities to youth and CBO initiatives. Key findings in our research exemplifying this challenge include 58% of youth in the communities feeling that ‘young people not being listened to’ is a significant problem, and 94% feel that ‘corruption in government’ is a significant problem. From our youth well-being survey, we learned that well-being was higher amongst those who felt that young people were listened to and viewed positively. It is evident that the quality of youths' relationship with community stakeholders has a strong positive correlation with stakeholders' level of participation, responsiveness, and support for youth-led development programs. Therefore, there is a good reason to work to improve the relations between youth and community stakeholders and authorities.

**1.3. Extension of previous intervention**

**Results achieved so far:**Below is a summary of the major results achieved during the previous project. A more detailed account can be found in the end-of-project report and the evaluation submitted to CISU.

***Youth well-being research:*** The research was facilitated across nine communities and included the participation of more than 1,000 young people, lead by the University of Canberra and the University of Makeni. ***A Call for Action*** was developed, based on the key findings from the research, which was presented to local and district level authorities across the three cities. ***Establishment of public spaces for youth:*** Young people in all of the target communities were engaged in the participatory design and development of eight community centres. Across the nine communities, the evaluation revealed that construction of the youth public spaces engulfed community support and participation also from non-direct project beneficiaries (men, women, other youth, and community stakeholders) and strengthened collaboration between youth and elders. As a youth from Kono stated during the external evaluation: *“Community elders realized the need to work with us as responsible youth to make our dream (establishing youth public space) a success. I must confess that our youth public space project's key anticipated outcome is that it has bridged our relationship with our senior community stakeholders”.* The community youth centres used actively for a wide variety of community activities. In the last year of the project, in which COVID-19 broke out, the public community centres were also equipped with water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities, and YDC-SL engaged the local project partners in an awareness raising response at community level. ***Capacity building of CBOs:*** Nine community-based organisations strengthened their capacity within project management and advocacy, and, together with YDC-SL, presented the Call for Action to community, local and district level authorities. ***Youth participation:*** Community youth played a critical role throughout the project. In the establishment of the community centres, youth contributed by participating in the labour and construction work, they provided local building materials and safeguarding materials, fetching water, and cooked. Youth were also instrumental in bridging gaps between youth and community stakeholders on issues that would affect the project, through frequent engagement during and after the establishment of the centres. The project has helped build the mindset of youths and has allowed them to assume roles and responsibilities. As a result, we have also seen more young people starting to engage community stakeholders, lobbying on matters affecting their lives and wellbeing, and minimizing community disputes through dialogue. In several communities, there has been an increase in visible inclusion of youth. As examples, in Koidu, youth groups from the three target communities have established a coalition and registered with the District Youth Council, and in Makeni, youth reported increased recognition by community stakeholders and are now invited to community decision meetings. As a youth from Makeni stated during the evaluation: *“During the implementation of the youth space project, I had witnessed demonstrable changes in my community. Key among others include youth male and female had regular fruitful project planning meetings with community stakeholders at all facets of implementation”.* This perspective is echoed in a statement by the local leaders in the community: *“In regard of the existing peaceful co-existence in this community, my recognition of youth as a legitimate huge fraction of our community population has significantly increased”* (Community chief in Makeni)*.* ***Youth organisation and influence:*** The project also inspired young people to organise in various types of groups. For instance, in Freetown, young people formally registered advocacy and youth welfare committees; in Koidu, community management committees have been established, and two of the youth participants have been elected as area chief and section chief; and in Makeni, community bye-laws have been established which make youth participation in development compulsory.

**Challenges that remain:**Despite a long list of positive results, challenges still persist towards youth well-being within the target communities.For instance, though collaboration between youth and community authorities have improved, there is still a strong need for strengthening these relationships. This is especially the case inFreetown, where community stakeholders' responsiveness to the project has been lower compared to Makeni and Koidu, and there have been more challenges in the collaboration with community stakeholders and authorities. According to our evaluation, this has been due to low community stakeholder involvement and support, lack of capacity building for youth, and low management capacity and inadequate structure among partner CBOs. These challenges will be followed up on in the new project, where focus is increased on support to the CBOs in the two target communities in Freetown. We believe that engaging more directly with local youth groups will strengthen the community platform to implement the activities. Furthermore, since the previous project was designed as an entry project focused on developing linkages with youth and stakeholders, a number of the major threats towards youth well-being still persist, such as issues to do with access to education and skills, safety, ad access to safe and pleasant places.

**Same target group and development objective in the follow up project:** The previous intervention and this intervention have the following things in common: Both projects pursue the development objective of strengthening the well-being of young people in low income communities. This is an ambitious goal, which takes time to achieve, and thus, Dreamtown and YDC-SL perceive this as a long-term goal that will guide our joint interventions in the years to come. Furthermore, the previous intervention focused on youth in nine informal settlements, located in three cities across Sierra Leone. In this project, we will move on with eight of the nine communities (three communities in Makeni, three in Koidu, and two in Freetown). In partnership with YDC-SL, we have chosen not to continue the project in the community Congo Town in Freetown due to lack of community collaboration and support. As the two remaining target communities in Freetown are home to the biggest populations of youth, we only see it fit that YDC-SL will be able to focus their attention better here. Thus, the target group of youth in eight informal settlements remains the same across the two projects.

**New strategic approach in the follow-up project:**In this follow-up intervention we have developed a new strategic approach based on a new set of specific objectives. Overall, the new strategy is much more ambitious with regards to the results we expect to achieve. From focusing on building the capacity of a few selected CBOs, this intervention will strengthen the capacity and network of 40 youth groups. From approaching public space as the construction of youth centres within the targeted communities, this intervention looks at public space at a wider scale with the ambition of making whole communities more safe, green, and creative. From focusing the advocacy work on developing an evidence-based call for action and establishing linkages with relevant local authorities, this intervention will push for the advocacy priorities to be put in to concrete action by local authorities and establish permanent platforms where young people engage local authorities in dialogue on a regular basis.

**1.4. Context of the intervention:**

**Sierra Leone:** Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world, with more than half of its population of 7,6 million people living below the international poverty line of 1.90 US Dollars a day (UN 2019). Economy remains challenged by pervasive corruption and undeveloped human capital. The country has experienced its share of hardships over the past 30 years including a devastating civil war from 1991-2002, recurrent flooding, outbreak of the Ebola virus in 2014, the 2017 mudslides in Freetown and as of 2020 Covid-19. Democracy is slowly being re-established after the civil war that resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of more than 2 million people. Sierra Leone has a young and growing population and is experiencing rapid urbanization which is putting enormous pressure on cities to accommodate an increasing number of young residents in particular. Thus, many of Sierra Leone's young city dwellers grow up or settle in slums and informal settlements. An estimated 60% of the population are below the age of 25, and the age group 15-35 makes up almost 40 % of the total population (UNDP 2018). Sierra Leone is further levelled as ‘Low human development’ in UNDP’s human development index (2020). In the context of this proposal, Sierra Leone is considered a stable context.

**Youth and urbanisation:** Sierra Leone’s population is dominated by youth. After the lengthy civil war from 1991 to 2002, rapid population growth and one of the world’s lowest life expectancies means that as of 2015 more than 40% of the population was aged under 15, and 80% were aged 35 or younger (Forson and Yalancy 2017). The cities have a particular high proportion of young residents. One of the reasons for this is the migration of youth to the cities from rural areas. Sierra Leone is a country in which urbanization is putting pressure on cities to accommodate a growing number of, especially young, residents. The Sierra Leone civil war between 1991 and 2002 fuelled urbanisation, as life in the city was perceived as safer than in many rural areas. The movement of young people from rural to urban today is motivated by the search for better livelihood opportunities, both economic and social. Life in the city carries promises (although often unfulfilled) of education, employment, a higher living standard, less social control and expectations contraire to traditional lifestyles and pressure from older generations, etc. In this regard, cities are natural attractors to youth. However, the promised freedom of urban life can be far from the actual experience of an average young person in the cities of Sierra Leone, particularly those living in informal settlements. The large proportion of youth growing up in and migrating to cities challenges urban infrastructures and governance, and many youth experience challenges such as social exclusion from livelihood opportunities and meaningful participation in decision making processes. This exclusion can lead to pathways where young people experience a lack of social control, have limited support systems, and urban youth can live in what are effectively parallel worlds to mainstream society.

**Public space:** Public space can be defined as “all places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive” (UN-Habitat, Charter of Public Space, 2015). Urbanisation is increasing the importance of such spaces, because they impact the individual and social well-being of urban citizens and act as places that reflect collective community life. In a context of urbanisation, the provision of access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces (SDG target 11.7) is key to urban wellbeing. The UN-Habitat 2015 Public Space Toolkit 13 highlights the benefits and potentials of public space development to a number of important aspects of urban life, including increased income and wealth generation, enhanced environmental sustainability, improved public health, enhanced urban safety, and social inclusion. The focus on public space emerged from the growing understanding of the critical influence of urban design for the well-being of those living in urban areas, and in particular the importance of shared public spaces that provide space for formation and enactment of communities. For several decades, since seminal studies on public life and the role of public space, there has been growing recognition that space is (i) socially produced, and (ii) a critical influence on human experience in an urban context (Lefebvre, 1991, 1996; Lefebvre, Kofman, & Lebas, 1996).

**Community characteristics:** This project will take place in three cities in Sierra Leone: Freetown in the Western Urban Area, Makeni in Bombali district, and Koidu in Kono district, where YDC-SL have their three office units. The following gives an outline of the target communities where the project will take place. More detailed information and characteristics can be found in the research report. ***The*** ***Freetown communities (Funkia and Bonga Town)*** are the most ‘urban’ in their construction, being characterised by very closely built small buildings. With limited available land, these informal settlements are typically located on land with poor drainage and high frequency of flooding, frequently being reclaimed areas created through dumping waste and piling mud in areas of estuaries and drainage areas. Access to electricity varies, but an average of 79% in the Freetown communities have access to electricity at home. There is typically little to no vegetation growing within the communities, although in some there are steep hillsides draining into the community that have vegetation growing on them (and are also a source of flooding). *Funkia* and *Bonga Town*communities, respectively, border ocean and mangrove wetland.Funkia was built partly on solid ground and partly on areas where waste disposal has created new areas. The communities have a very high density of small residences, typically tin, wood or brick shanty construction. Flooding is common in wet season with poor to no drainage and drainage of water to the ocean during large rains affecting the communities. ***The* *Makeni communities (Renka, Mabanta, and New London)*** are characterised by more widely spaced homes than is the case in Freetown, with greater space around homes for vegetation, and in many cases large numbers of trees and shrubs (although not in all parts of the communities). Thehomes are made of brick and stone. While homes are larger than is the case in Freetown, they typically house larger numbers of people, with very crowded housing common. For example, in Renka, 36% of youth live in a household with 15 to 19 people, and 21% in a household with 20 or more residents. In the Makeni communities, an average of 66 % of youth have access to home electricity. ***The*** ***Koidu communities (Kainsay, Koakoyima, and Koeyor)*** are located in Kono district, which is well known for its diamond mines. The communities are characterised by small to moderately sized buildings, often with some space between them, and some vegetation, including trees, occasionally of reasonable size providing some shade in parts of the communities. Electricity access is not high in the three communities, with only, on average, 28% of youth having home electricity. In Kainsay, Koakoyima, and Koeyor, household sizes vary a lot, but tend to be a little smaller compared to Makeni.

**COVID-19 and impact in Sierra Leone:** As in the rest of the world, COVID-19 has left its marks on Sierra Leone. At the time of writing, Sierra Leone has officially detected just under 4000 cases of the virus (The Ministry of Information and Communication, March 2021). While COVID-19 has not evolved into a health crisis in the same way as seen in many other places, impacts of the pandemic have been enormous. People have suffered from lost economic opportunities, food insecurity, and increased violence against women under lockdowns, as well as disrupted civil society activities due to travel restrictions, and diminished social services. Overall, this has left many young people in an increasingly fragile situation, who were already fighting unemployment and low opportunities and support. While we naturally hope to see the pandemic loosen its grip as soon as possible, we acknowledge the challenges it may still bring in the implementation of the project (especially in the case of reinforced restrictions on social gatherings and movement). At the same time, we feel confident in the capacity we have built together with YDC-SL and other partners to operate and be flexible throughout the pandemic so far.

**1.5. Strengthening civil society organising to advance social justice**

Young people living in urban informal settlements, slums, and low-income communities experience inequality at several levels. At a societal level, they are marginalised by virtue of where they live – in slums, and within their communities, they are marginalised by virtue of whom they are – young people. Significant change requires action both at a societal and a community level. Based on our capacity and experience, YDC-SL and Dreamtown are best positioned to support this change through a bottom-up approach focusing on the local communities. In so doing, this project will advance the social justice of young people by supporting young leaders to flourish, supporting youth-led organisations to grow, and by creating linkages between youth groups and local authorities. At the end of the project, it is our ambition that young people are well organised and participate in the decision-making processes taking place within eight urban communities. This we hope will be the beginning of a longer journey towards being heard, both at the city and national level.

**1.6. Response to climate- and environmental conditions**

In the practical planning and implementation of the project, we have tried to keep the activity and monitoring trips at a minimum to have the least possible number of flights, while balancing the undeniable positive gain of being able to conduct on-ground monitoring and partnership and target group engagement. We have, as well, considered longer trips, where different activities will take place as part of the same trip. In-between the monitoring trips, we continue to improve our skills in digital and long-distance monitoring. In the activities of the intervention, we are introducing a thematic focus on green spaces, since all of the target communities are experiencing the impacts of the climate crisis. Activity 3.2.1. (Training in community responsiveness in hazard mitigation, climate change adaptation, and urban farming) will put a focus on the climate- and environmental conditions in each of the communities, and bring young people in the community together around finding solutions to the challenges experienced and ways to adapt.

2. The partnership/collaborators (our starting point)

**2.1. Experiences, capacities, resources, roles and responsibilities of participant partners**

**Dreamtown**

***Experiences, capacities, and resources:*** Dreamtown is a Danish NGO that works for the wellbeing of young people in cities, focusing on slum communities in fragile urban settings. Dreamtown currently undertakes project activities in Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Denmark. Dreamtown has grown out of what was previously the Association RETRO, and has been registered as an independent NGO since 2017. Dreamtown’s mission is to transform slums into safe, green, and creative spaces together with young people. To achieve this mission, we work with three strategic clusters: i) The Research cluster generates knowledge that is used to guide interventions and evidence-based advocacy; ii) The Action cluster facilitates projects which enhance young people’s capacity as active citizens and transform slums into youth friendly spaces; and iii) The Stories cluster empowers young civic journalists to make their voice heard and reframe negative narratives about youth in slums. Dreamtown’s secretariat is comprised of three people (CEO, Rasmus Bering, Programme Director, Nina Ottosen, and Finance Director, Thomas Chandler) who all work full time and manage the organisation on a daily basis. The team of people providing support to Dreamtown’s activities has grown considerably over the past years, in tandem with the organisation’s increasing number of projects and geographical focus locations. Dreamtown has a group of people closely connected to the organisation. Some of these are part time employed, such as Dreamtowns Urban Designer, Stine Kronsted, and Communication Advisor, Simon Sticker, and others are student interns and volunteers. Dreamtown is governed by a board of seven people, the majority of whom have been part of the organisation since its start in 2010. Dreamtown has initiated dialogue with CISU on the possibility of undergoing a capacity assessment in 2021. The goal of the assessment is to support Dreamtown to further strengthening its organisational procedures, and to prepare the organisation to apply for a CISU programme agreement in 2023. ***Roles and responsibilities:*** Dreamtown has the responsibility to carry out the overall administration of the project and transfer of funds to YDC-SL. Dreamtown’s role includes on-going monitoring of project activities and project progress. This includes support on facilitating the inception of the project; learning workshops along the way; support to YDC-SL on developing a strong project organisation with clear guidelines on roles and responsibilities within the project; quality assurance of the various tools, training packages and learning curricula used and developed; and support to the project’s evaluation. In addition, Dreamtown will work closely with YDC-SL on their organisational capacity development plan. The number of Danish man-hours allocated to support these activities reflects the need to support YDC-SL in their organisational capacity, as well as in the coordination of activities across many locations and together with many other actors (CBOs, youth groups, and community and local authorities). While the partners have a strong working relationship with many of these already, as well as a good understanding of the context of each of the communities, working with a big setup and with youth led participatory processes that link learning with concrete actions is seen as a very collaborative project between YDC-SL and Dreamtown. Both partners, as well as the project overall, benefit immensely from the co-design of as many of the project’s activities and approaches as possible. Apart from the secretariat team who will be leading Dreamtown’s participation in the project, Dreamtown’s board member Morten Clausen will work with YDC-SL on their communication and is lead on facilitating the training in strategic communication (activity 4.3.3.). Dreamtown’s communication advisor Simon Sticker will support the planned communication work (2% information funds). Our Partnership and Learning Advisor Jakob Falk (who has advised the development of Dreamtown’s newly adjusted Theory of Change (presented in our 2021-2023 strategy presented on Dreamtown’s website) has great experience with both qualitative and quantitative studies from his work with Oxford Research. Jakob will play a leading role in working on the project’s monitoring and evaluation framework, which is the most ambitious to date in the organisations history. Finally, Dreamtowns deputy chairperson, Signe Roelsgaard, will be moving to Sierra Leone in the summer of 2021. Though she will be working on other assignments, she will be available to provide ad hoc support if need be.

**Youth Dream Center Sierra Leone (YDC-SL)**

***Experiences, capacities, and resources:*** YDC-SL is a non-governmental organisation that has existed since 2007. YDC-SL works to promote education amongst disadvantaged youth, women and children by conducting free non-formal education programmes. The services provided by YDC-SL are; Non-Formal Education, Technical Vocational Skills Training, and Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Media Training. In addition to education, YDC-SL has solid knowledge on psychosocial counselling and social work targeting vulnerable youth including young women. When YDC-SL started out, the organisation focused on providing its services within their educational centres. However, based on the previous intervention, YDC-SL has shown its capacity to take its knowledge on empowering young people, from the classrooms and into the communities, where their target group lives. YDC-SL has also strong experience with working in the nexus between development and humanitarian aid. Together with Dreamtown YDC-SL has implemented two successful DERF grants. One focused on the Freetown flooding in 2017, and one focused on the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In addition, YDC-SL was able to deliver an impressive response to the Ebola epidemic in 2014-15, in partnership with Dreamtown and the Ministry of Health. Finally, YDC-SL has successfully worked with other organisations, such as Handicap International on EU grants. These achievements clearly show how YDC-SL has moved from being an educational service provider, towards being a professional NGO able to implement complex development programmes. The organisation is managed by a group of six people. The management group is lead on the day-to-day management of the organisation and on the facilitation of technical workshop and trainings such as project management, financial management, leadership, and organisational policy development. The group of more than 30 volunteers facilitate the various learning activities. Each volunteer receives a monthly stipend. YDC-SL also currently has four volunteers from the University of Sierra Leone sent by the national Youth Service commission. YDC-SL’s staff and volunteers are experienced in operating in the fragile context of Sierra Leone’s urban environments. YDC-SL has a strong presence in and knowledge about all the eight target communities, having worked there since 2018. Finally, it is worth mentioning that YDC-SL is extremely active in independently seeking capacity building opportunities for its staffs. Currently two of YDC-SL’s project managers are taking part in the Danida Fellowship Centre course "Strengthening Policy Dialogue - the role of Governments, Interest Organisations and Civil Society”. In this course, they will develop concrete action plan for advocacy, which will be rolled out together with the project team in YDC-SL. At the same time, YDC-SL’s Executive Director is attending a three-month programme in leadership transition in Ghana facilitated by The Association for Research on Non-profit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA) and the Association for Research on Civil Society in Africa (AROCSA). ***Roles and responsibilities:*** As the lead civil society organisation (CSO) in Sierra Leone,YDC-SLhas the responsibility of the day-to-day project management and is in charge of organising and mobilising community youth and facilitating the project activities in the eight communities, including facilitation and/or coordination of the different trainings for community youth, youth groups, and community-based organisations and authorities, and coordination with all relevant local partners. This also includes engaging the relevant stakeholders and mobilising their network in Freetown, Makeni, and Koidu. While coordination will be done in partnership with local community-based organisations in each community, YDC-SL’s area coordinator in each location has the responsibility to oversee all activity, and will also be lead on monitoring and giving support to the CBOs. YDC-SL will be responsible for developing narrative and financial reports, which will be shared with Dreamtown, on a quarterly basis. From YDC-SL, the main project group is made up by the Project Manager and the three Project Officers (one in each city), together with a total of six volunteers who will support the project activities, which often include coordination and management of large groups of youth in trainings. In addition, the Executive director of YDC-SL plays a lead supporting role, together with the finance team (Finance Manager and Finance Assistant), and a Communication and M&E Officer. This team is put together based on experience from the first project and considering the size of the project. The broadness of the project team reflects the coordination heavy nature of the project and is prioritised to secure continuous support and engagement of all the youth groups, the CBO partners, and maintaining an active working relationship with community and local authorities. Building on good practises from the partnership, the YDC-SL project team will keep Dreamtown updated on project progress and challenges on a regular basis.



**Other actors:**

**Community based organisations in 8 communities:** In each community, a CBO is going to support YDC-SL in the implementation of the project activities, and give support to the community youth groups. The CBOs will also, together with YDC-SL, be lead on the advocacy at district level and engagement with local authorities. The eight CBOs include six which were also partners on the first project: Children in the Media (CIM); Youth Empowerment for Advocacy, Human Rights and Development (YEARD-SL); Spring Relief Sierra Leone; Deseret Women Sierra Leone; The House of Youth Development Organization; and Children Advocacy Forum Sierra Leone (CAF-SL). In two of the eight communities, YDC-SL will identify new CBO partners to participate in the project, due to lack of collaboration and structure of the previous community-based partners in New London and Mabanta communities. Working with the CBOs moving forward in this project, YDC-SL will increase ongoing follow up and monitoring to support the CBO partners, which will include regular office visits. The CBOs will receive a monthly stipend for their participation in the project, which is justified by the high level of coordination and monitoring of activities they will be responsible for, including support to the youth groups in their communities. This setup is based on best practises from the previous, as well as other Dreamtown projects, where the CBO partnership setup has proved effective in coordinating project activities. Furthermore, when operating in several different locations across the country, broadening the partnership network is also a strategy to increase local ownership in the project activities.The CBOs will be essential in coordinating and facilitating partners in the community level activities to ensure activities and learning are rooted in the communities. At the very beginning of the project, an MoU will be developed between YDC-SL and each of the CBOs to outline their responsibilities. It is worth mentioning that each CBO naturally have different missions, interests and experiences. During the project we will ensure that the CBOs are able to inspire each other based on what they each do best. Furthermore, we will also make sure to tailor make the capacity building support given to each CBO, in order to strengthen their individual profiles and strategies.

**Youth groups:** As part of the first project, more than 50 youth groups were mapped across the target communities. These groups are more informally set up compared to the CBOs, and are, for the most part, not formally registered. These youth groups do a range of different activities, including violence prevention, community cleaning, peace building, community outreach, community security, infrastructural development, social activities, sports activities, entertainment, agriculture, education, and business activities. A number of these youth groups will be engaged through the project as a primary target group which entails capacity building and direct involvement in concrete community development activities focused on public space. The youth groups have already shown incredible commitment in the first project, taking responsibility in the process of developing the eight community centres. In this project, YDC-SL will continue to work more directly with the youth groups, who will be in charge of the activities under Specific Objective 3, leading the activities around creating safe, green, and creative spaces in their communities. Through the project, we will directly target five youth groups in each of the eight communities.

**Urban Synergies Group (USG):** Urban Synergies Group is an Australian based organisation that works with shaping healthy communities around the world, with a vision to achieve meaningful impacts in urban systems that lead to improved outcomes on health and well-being. USG has a strong focus on applied research and evidence-based approaches to sustainable urban development and health and was also a very active partner on the first project, providing technical support in the area of public space, advocacy, and the youth wellbeing research. As part of this follow up project, Greg Mews from USG will be on board and facilitate a bootcamp on public space and community development for the youth groups in each of the three cities. As a technical partner in the area of public space, USG have been adding immense value to the partnership, as a collaborator in our research engagement, and as key to important advocacy platforms. Through their networks, we have been able to show, write, and talk about the project on international urban development platforms(including World Urban Campaign, ISOCARP, World Urban Forum). Having USG on board means potential for mobilisation of additional opportunities for sharing the project with other strategic partners, such as UN-Habitat and the World Urban Campaign network – and research engagement with University of Canberra and Queensland University of Technology. Therefore, we wish to continue the partnership, also seeing that good relations have already been established between USG, YDC-SL, and the CBOs.

**2.2. Previous cooperation and use of experience in developing the intervention**

Dreamtown and YDC-SL have worked together for ten years around a shared vision of providing opportunities and education to young people. Through this cooperation, YDC-SL has grown from being a group of passionate individuals to running a country-wide organisation supporting marginalised youth. This long-term cooperation has created a number of experiences that have been put to use in designing the four specific objectives of this intervention. ***Specific objective 1*** has a key focus on strengthening the capacity of YDC-SL as an organisation. Based on our decade-long partnership, we have an in-depth understanding of what YDC-SL excels in and what the organisations can improve on. Our experiences have also informed our approach towards engaging and building the capacity of CBOs. In the first project, as well as in previous DERF interventions, YDC-SL and Dreamtown have collaborated on project models that involve support to the organisational development of CBOs as a strategy to create stronger networks, legitimacy, and roots in the local communities, including capacity support within governance, policies, project and financial management, and disaster risk management. ***Specific objective 2*** has a focus on providing education and skills training for youth leaders in the target communities. In these activities, we will make use of the experiences we have gained from implementing three larger CISU funded projects focused on exactly this: non-formal education for youth. This is in fact one of the strongest areas in the project, since YDC-SL is able to transfer its rich expertise on non-formal education from the classroom and into the communities. ***Specific objective 3*** has a focus on empowering young people to take the lead in transforming the public space in their community. The methodological approach towards using spatial co-design processes as a means towards empowering young people and increasing inter-community dialogue builds directly on top of the experiences from the previous intervention. The thematic focus of this project on safe public spaces will make use of the experiences from the project *Safe in the City*, which is currently being implemented together with YDC-SL and YMCA. In this project a number of relevant resources have been developed, including a toolkit for youth on sexual and gender-based violence, and a handbook on facilitating participatory safety planning processes. YDC-SL has had the leading role in developing these materials, which is why it will be easy to directly make use of these resources in this project. ***Specific objective 4*** has an explicit focus on engaging local authorities through advocacy. In the previous project, YDC-SL facilitated meetings with relevant authorities across the different target communities. This gave us a good understanding of how they operate, and what characterises the power dynamics in the communities. These experiences will be used to develop safe and inspiring community youth parliaments, where young people will engage local duty bearers on a regular basis.

**2.3. Development of the relationship and collaboration between the partners**

The project will develop the relationship and collaboration between several different actors in civil society: Dreamtown as an international NGO partner, YDC-SL as a national civil society organisation, community-based organisations, and community youth groups. The links already created between these actors will continue to be strengthened, while simultaneously building the capacity of the individual actors to combine efforts around community development and advocacy. Especially between the CBOs internally, there is potential for improving network and collaboration and breaking a culture of not looking beyond the scope of individual projects. In this respect, YDC-SL will provide support and help the CBOs realise a partnership culture at the city level. Strengthening the capacity of the project’s civil society actors to develop productive working relationships with authorities is essential to achieve a long-term impact for youth well-being. In the first project, YDC-SL experienced how working directly with youth groups creates greater ownership and participation among the young people at large in the targeted communities. Therefore, this follow-up intervention will place a lot more responsibility directly with the youth groups, and a core focus will be to establish direct and strong bonds with and between these groups.

**2.4. Contribution to strengthening the partners’ relations to other actors**

YDC-SL and the eight CBOs will continue their collaboration on advocating local government authorities to take action in favour of young people’s well-being priorities, based on the Call for Action formulated in the previous project. The advocacy process is based on thematic meetings with the local authorities throughout the project. The project will also facilitate bi-annual community youth parliaments. During these parliaments young people will be able to engage local authorities in productive conversations on what they perceive as the challenges in the community, what their ideas are for improvements, and how they as young people can contribute. Thus, cutting across the project’s advocacy approach is repetition of types of activities. Rather than large scale one-off events, the strategy is to build up a routine amongst our partners around meeting the local authorities. This approach is based on two considerations: 1) The partners will practice facilitating such meetings, and 2) having several on-going smaller meetings will help to build trust, knowledge and closer ties and relationships between the partners, the youth and the local authorities.

3. Target groups, objectives, strategy, and expected results (our intervention)

**3.1. The target group’s composition, participation and benefits of the intervention**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Participation** | **Benefit** | **Number** |
| **Primary target groups (groups and persons who participate directly in activities)** | | | |
| **Youth groups** in 8 communities (Covers 40 youth groups and their members, based on an average member count of 25 young people per group).  During trainings and activities, we will target app. 3 representatives from each group. However, we see the entire group as primary target groups as the groups will benefit as a whole. | Directly involved in organisational development processes; community activities (developing safe, green, creative spaces); and advocacy with community authorities *(Results 2.2.; 3.1.; 3.2.;3.3.).* | Strengthened organisation and capacity enabling groups to independently plan and facilitate community activities. | Total: 1000  F: 300  M: 700 |
| **Young people** in 8 communities (youth leaders from the 40 youth groups, 3 per group). | Directly involved in education and skills training programme *(Result 2.1.).* | Increased personal skills and capacity to take the lead in community development. | Total: 120  F: 48  M: 72 |
| **Community youth** in 8 communities who participate actively in community events (target based on an average of 200 youth per community). | Following activities will be open to all youth in the communities. Giving inputs to the advocacy drive; participation in youth parliaments; participation in the celebration of International Youth Day *(Results 3.3. and 4.2).* | Increased awareness on community development and how to participate in activities; experience being heard; benefit from access to improved public spaces. | Total: 1600  F: 800  M: 800 |
| **CSOs:** YDC-SL and 8 community-based organisations and YDC-SL (target based on an average of 5 people per CBO, and 10 people from each of YDC-SL’s 3 programme units). | *YDC-SL:* Take part in organisational capacity building *(Result 1.1).*  *CBOs:* Engage in organisational development process *(Result 1.2).* | Increased capacity to facilitate youth-led advocacy activities; improved relation with local and community authorities; strengthened capacity to engage in larger development programmes. | Total: 70  F: 30  M: 40 |
| **Authorities at community level** (target number based on 15 individuals per community)  *Includes: Town Heads, Head teachers, Women and youth leaders; Ward Development Committee reps., Child Welfare Committee reps., Counsellors, Pastors, Imams, and Traditional Society Heads.* | Participates in community youth parliaments *(Activity 4.2.1);* training in youth policies (Activity 4.1.1). Depending on their role in the communities, the individual authorities will be invited to take part in activities. Youth-groups will target the community authorities through advocacy. | Will improve their relationship with community youth. Their active participation and support can strengthen their legitimacy and support among community youth. Become better positioned to represent their communities, and advocate local government on key issues. | Total: 120  F: 24  M: 96 |
| **Authorities and key stakeholders at district level** (target number based on 30 individuals per city)  *Includes: Local government, MDAs CSOs, and private sector representatives*. | Are targeted through YDC-SL and CBO advocacy activities (Result 4). Depending on their role, authorities at district level will be invited to take part in activities. | Will strengthen their legitimacy and accountability towards the grassroots level. | Total: 90  F: 18  M: 72 |
| **Total:** **3000** ( F: 1220/ M: 1780) / **Total** **Adjusted for double counting:** 1880 (F: 872/ M: 1008) | | | |
| **Ultimate target group (persons affected by the activities without having participated directly in them)** | | | |
| **Community members at large** in 8 communities. | Do not participate directly. | Will benefit from access to improved public spaces and improved action by authorities on youth wellbeing priorities. | Total: 80,000  F:40,000  M: 40,000 |
| **Total** | | | **80,000** |

**3.2. The target groups’ participation in the development of the intervention**

The focus of the intervention is based on the well-being priorities voiced by the more than 1,000 young people who participated in the first project. The strategies and approaches of the project have been informed by feedback from the participants of the first project and by the end-of-project evaluation, which included focus group interviews across all the stakeholder groups presented above.

**3.3. Partners’ legitimacy to act as champions of the target group’s cause**

YDC-SL has a long track record of providing services for vulnerable youth within the project’s target communities as part of their non-formal education and community development initiatives. YDC-SL also works with a large group of young volunteers, several of whom grew up in the specific communities where the project takes place. Through the first project, YDC-SL has established close working relations in all eight target communities, and the project evaluation reveals that the youth in the communities value and appreciate YDC-SL’s way of working. With strong roots in the community, the CBOs take the project even closer to the target group of youth and their community context, which further contributes to the legitimacy of the partner setup. It has become clear through our two-and-a-half-year long engagement in the eight communities that people here rarely see commitment from development projects to follow up and invest in long-term collaboration. However, in the community collaboration so far, we have received very positive feedback on following up on activities and not leaving the communities behind without actual action, but supporting a real transformation through public space interventions, local capacity building, listening to young people’s development priorities and acting on through advocacy. With this commitment follows great legitimacy on the part of the community partners, youth, and also community authorities.

**3.4. Objectives, activities, expected results and indicators of the intervention**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Development objective:** Improved wellbeing of young people in urban informal settlements and low-income communities in Sierra Leone. | | |
| **Specific Objectives** | **Results** | **Activities** |
| **1: CSOs facilitate youth-led programmes** and have the capacity to scale up interventions in the future  **Indicators:**    **#** of young people aware of organisations in their community that provide support to youth *(Baseline value 7 %[[4]](#footnote-4))*  **#** of young people who feel a lack of opportunities is a significant problem *(Baseline value: 95%)* | **1.1. CBOs:** Strengthened capacity of 8 community-based organisations to support local youth groups and advocate for community development | **1.1.1.** CBOs’ organisational development process |
| **1.2. YDC-SL:** Strengthened organisational capacity and broadened human resources base within YDC-SL to manage community-based youth empowerment projects | **1.2.1.** Development of M&E framework  **1.2.2.** Leadership transition plan  **1.2.3.** Training in participatory youth facilitation  **1.2.4.** Policy and advocacy course  **1.2.5.** Media and communication strategy and training  **1.2.6.** Procurement and logistics policy and system |
| **2: Young people are empowered** and have the capacity and life skills needed to take the lead in community development and in their own lives.  **Indicator:**  **#** of young people who take active part in community activities  *(Baseline value: 26%)* | **2.1. Young people:** 120 young people across 8 communities improved their life and leadership skills | **2.1.1.** Tailor made education and skills training programme for youth leaders |
| **2.2.** **Youth groups:** 40 youth groups across 8 communities have improved their organisational structure | **2.2.1.** Development of core management and operational policies for youth groups  **2.2.2.** Youth governance and leadership bootcamps  **2.2.3.** Youth groups’ local fundraising training  **2.2.4.** Youth groups’ fundraising initiatives |
| **3:** **Young people take active part in shaping the** **public** **space** in their communities  **Indicators:**  **#** of young people have access to safe spaces where they can meet with other young people *(Baseline value: 39%)*  **#** of young people have easy access to nature or 'green' (plant-filled) spaces they can safely spend time in *(Baseline value: 27%)*  **#** of young people who have easy access to spaces where they can go and be creative *(Baseline: 22%)* | **3.1. Safe spaces:** 40 youth groupshave facilitated participatory safety planning processes in 8 communities | **3.1.1.** Training in sexual and gender-based violence and equality  **3.1.2.** Youth groups safety mapping and planning  **3.1.3.** Youth groups’ safety initiatives |
| **3.2. Green spaces:** 40 youth groups have undertaken green place making initiatives in 8 communities | **3.2.1.** Training in community responsiveness in hazard mitigation, climate change adaptation, and urban farming  **3.2.2.** Youth groups’ green place making initiatives |
| **3.3. Creative spaces:** 40 youth groups have undertaken creative place making initiatives in 8 communities | **3.3.1.** Community celebration of International Youth Day  **3.3.2.** Youth groups’ creative place making initiatives |
| **4: Community and local authorities** increasingly support CSO’s and youth groups’ initiatives and involve young people in community development    **Indicator**  **#** of calls to action achieved  **#** of young people who feel ‘not being listened to’ is a big problem  *(Baseline value: 58%)*  **#** of young people who receive support to their initiatives from community authorities *(New indicator)* | **4.1. Engagement between YDC-SL, CBOs and local authorities:** Local authorities in each of the 8 communities have acted on at least 1 of the calls to action | **4.1.1.** YDC-SL training with community authorities on youth relevant policies  **4.1.2.** YDC-SL and CBOs advocacy drive based on Call for Action for youth wellbeing and public space |
| **4.2. Engagement between youth and community authorities:** Young people in 8 communities are involved in decision making at community level | **4.2.1.** Youth parliaments in the community centres  **4.2.2.** Media and communication labs for youth |

**3.5. Strategy of the intervention**

The strategy of the intervention is designed with three sets of methodological considerations in mind, inspired by Dreamtown and YDC-SL’s previous cooperation.

**The strategy is catalytic:**At the beginning of the intervention, focus is on engaging a selected few. This includes representatives from community and local authorities (who will be engaged through trainings), and individual youth leaders (who will be capacitated through life skills and leadership programmes). Building on these relationships, the intervention will start to engage the local authorities on a more structural level (through advocacy activities) and the youth on a group level (through organisational strengthening of youth groups). Having developed a strong foundation of individual leaders and organisations, the project goes into action mode, and engages the community population at large through its various public space intervention activities and community advocacy initiatives.

**The strategy is organised around thematic phases*:*** Working through thematic phases creates a clear implementation path, and helps the various partners be aligned on what the next milestones are to achieve. Following the start-up of the project, the phases are aligned with the four categories of calls for action: Access to education; safety and security, green and pleasant places; and governance and leadership. These themes are reflected across the capacity building taking place under SO1; the skills development and the youth activism taking place under SO2 and SO3, and the advocacy work taking place under SO4.

**The strategy is methodologically repetitive*:*** The strategy is based on methodological repetitiveness to strengthen the quality of implementation. In each phase, the partners will receive capacity building; facilitate youth led action in the communities; they will engage community and local government in advocacy dialogue; they will support the youth in developing communication materials; and they will facilitate community youth parliaments. By working through repetitions, the ambitions is to build up a routine in facilitating complex activities, which we hope will continue after this project ends. These repetitions are also envisioned to build up a productive relationship between the partners, youth and authorities, since they will continuously meet over time, rather than during a few large one-off events.

**Implementation model:** Below is an outline of how the four specific objectives, in the following change processes, will unfold across the project. This is followed by a detailed description of the activities.

**Track 1: Capacity building of CSOs:** The project’s partners - YDC-SL and the CBOs - will gradually strengthen their organisational capacity as the project unfolds. To ensure that the youth and youth groups get the support they need, the intervention will strengthen the capacity, organisational sustainability, and effectiveness of YDC-SL and the CBOs, both in terms of their capacity to run larger programmes, but also in terms of facilitating youth friendly and inclusive development activities at community level, and giving on-going support and mentoring to the youth groups. The training the partners receive is based on their individual organisational needs, as well as the core technical focus areas of the project. The capacity building process follows the implementation plan of the project. This implies that capacities and plans needed from the get-go, including youth facilitation, advocacy and monitoring and evaluation, will be undertaken at the beginning of the project, whereas the more individual and internally focused trainings, related to e.g. policies and systems, will follow throughout the rest of the project.

CBOs capacity building (Activity 1.1.1): YDC-SL will be lead on an organisational development process with the CBOs. The process will build on top of the capacity building assessments of the CBOs undertaken by YDC-SL in the first project. The trainings will cut across the areas of: operations, management, and technical capacity. YDC-SL and the individual CBOs will draft specific plans that address the most relevant areas for the CBOs’ growth as organisations, as well as for their contribution to the project. Exactly how the process will look like for each CBO is yet to be determined, however, our experience shows us that relevant areas of capacity building needs are most likely to include organisational policies; human resource management and leadership; monitoring and compliance mechanisms; project management and financial management; conflict prevention; disaster and risk management; social work and psychosocial counselling; teacher-training techniques; advocacy skills; and development communication.

YDC-SL capacity building (Activities 1.2.1; 1.2.2; 1.2.3; 1.2.4; 1.2.5; 1.2.6):Based on our long-term partnership, YDC-SL and Dreamtown have identified a specific list of trainings, that can help YDC-SL to grow further as an organisation. Dreamtown will play a role in the capacity building with YDC-SL, however, we will also identify technical consultants locally who can assist YDC-SL through the trainings. The following gives a brief overview of each capacity building area. *Development of M&E framework*: Building on our experiences from the research process in the first project, we will develop a strong monitoring and evaluation framework that will allow us to monitor and continuously evaluate progress towards the project’s results and indicators. In addition to qualifying this project, we will use the experience as a point of departure for also strengthening YDC-SL’s M&E framework on an organisational level. *Leadership transition plan:* Within YDC-SL, there is a need to secure a sustainable way forward in terms of human resources and leadership. At the time of submitting this proposal, YDC-SL’s executive director is attending a three-month programme in leadership transition in Ghana. YDC-SL will follow up on this training together, and determine strategies for a succession plan within the organisation, contemplate personal development plans for the staff, and also work on how to preserve their knowledge and experience. *Training in participatory youth facilitation:* YDC-SL has rich experience in delivering structured programmes, trainings and workshops for young people. As part of this intervention, we will explore how YDC-SL can make the learning environment they create even more participatory, fun, creative and experimental. In the training, YDC-SL will be inspired to use different learning styles and facilitation techniques (examples could include drama, role play, visioning/futures thinking, feedback mechanisms, etc.) in their engagement with youth and youth groups. *Policy and advocacy course:* While YDC-SL have made important strides in building their capacity in advocacy, and are increasingly experienced with engaging different levels of authorities, engaging at the political level is a difficult exercise, and a process that will always require more focus. The capacity gap that YDC-SL sees is to link their thematic areas of operations with policy dialogue and advocacy. In the context of this project, focus will be on developing practical skills for a wider group of YDC-SL staff and volunteers (including public information and communication, campaigning, lobbying, alliances, and networking), and gaining as much practical experience as possible at community and district level. *Media and communication strategy and training:* Focus of this training is for YDC-SL to develop quality communication material that can be strategically used in advocacy, such as youth change stories. Dreamtown will be lead on the training, based on best practices from our work with community journalism in our Ghetto Go Green project in Uganda, as part of which we are currently working on a practical guide that our partners can use for developing impact stories. *Procurement and logistics policy and system:* Finally, YDC-SL will work together with a consultant to develop a procurement and logistics policy booklet that will be used internally in YDC-SL, as well as in an adjusted and simplified version for the CBOs and youth groups. The current policy used by YDC-SL was developed for ministries, departments, agencies, institutions and organisations. Therefore, the policy is technical and standard. An adopted version will be easier to apply and more fit for purpose.

**Track 2: Empowerment of young people and youth groups:** Inspired and equipped with new and creative tools and techniques, YDC-SL and the CBOs are in charge of facilitating inspiring empowerment and capacity building activities for the targeted youth and youth groups. The training will be facilitated through a two-legged process. To start out, the leaders of the participating youth groups will receive education and skills training. This will both have a direct impact on the youth leaders’ personal wellbeing, while at the same time strengthening their ability to organise and lead the youth group they represent through the rest of the project. From a focus on the individual youth leaders in the first phase of the project, we direct our attention towards the participating youth groups who will be supported at an organisational level, to strengthen their modus operandi. The trainings will be based on community-specific needs.

Empowerment of youth leaders (Activities 2.1.1): In order to create change at community level, there is aneed to invest in the individual young people, and their individual growth and empowerment, to have their support and commitment to contribute to the development of their community. Therefore, the project includes tailor-made education and skills training programmes for representatives from each youth group, which will take place in the community youth centres. Our strategy involves training lead individuals from each youth group who can pass on skills to others. We wish to leave room for customisation of the programmes according to priorities of the youth groups. However, from experience in the first project, it is likely that the skills in question will focus on different aspects of entrepreneurship, numeracy and literacy, and leadership. Included are also youth excursions to inspiring local institutions (e.g. companies, organisations, associations, etc.). In essence, this empowerment process is aimed at skilling the youth to have a better opportunity to become more self-reliant, which, in turn, will create a more sustainable platform for them to take the lead in community development, now and in the future. In the budget, we have included funding for a number of days available for trainings and excursions. However, a lot of the impact of this activity is created in between trainings, through dedicated follow up and mentorship from the YDC-SL project team.

Empowerment of youth groups (Activities 2.2.1; 2.2.2; 2.2.3; 2.2.4):Development of core management and operational policies for youth groups and youth governance and leadership bootcamps will contribute to strengthening the groups’ capacity as strong representatives of youth interests in their communities. We expect that central elements of the capacity building include institutionalisation, financial sustainability, internal governance, stakeholder engagement skills, information literacy, and advocacy skills. Recommended by the youth in the first project, we will support the groups to embark on fundraising to provide funding for the running of the community centres. Goals of the local fundraising could include additional funds for skills development at the centres; for provision of WASH facilities; electricity; solar panels; and entertainment facilities. The youth groups will also be able to use these skills to mobilise support for their own work. The training material will be adapted from YDC-SL’s participation in a course in local fundraising facilitated by West African Civil Society Institute (as part of Dreamtown’s project ‘Changing the Game’), which we have also used as part of our ‘Urban Space Challenge’ competition with YMCA in Freetown. Upon the training, each youth group will be supported with a small start-up grant for boosting their fundraising initiatives. Examples of initiatives seen in previous projects include sports events, social fundraising dinners, meetings with individuals, organisations and companies, sale of products, personal letters, and facilitating trainings.

**Track 3: Young people shaping public space in their communities:** Based on a solid foundation of capacity building support for both youth, youth groups and CSOs, the interventions will focus on creating tangible changes in the target communities. This will be achieved through empowering co-design processes whereby young people actively take part in developing the public spaces in their community, including the eight community centres. This will lead to a better environment for them to live in, within the three thematic areas of safe, green and creative spaces, which is expected to have positive impact on the wellbeing of the young people in the communities. The project includes a sub-granting mechanism through which direct funding is transferred to youth groups at the grassroots level in support of youth-led initiatives. Dreamtown has used this approach with partners in Sierra Leone on existing projects, finding that a sub-granting mechanism has catalytic effects in terms of promoting community ownership of initiative undertaken. The methodology is based on action learning and is a powerful approach for working with vulnerable groups with limited education. The amounts allocated for the youth to undertake concrete initiatives are important as i) the initiatives cascade knowledge from the youth groups to other youth in the communities; and ii) when the youth showcase their initiatives for community authorities, they demonstrate active citizenship and embody positive role models, helping break down negative stigma of youth. Thus, while the outputs of the initiatives are important for transformation of public space in the communities in themselves, the entire youth empowerment processes around them is just as central. The participatory nature of the process will also strengthen the young people’s capacity to plan and implement development projects, which they can utilize in other contexts. YDC-SL has developed a good practice for the management of the sub-granting mechanism. Upon trainings, the youth groups will come up with their ideas for initiatives (focused on safe, green, and creative community spaces) and develop a concept note and a suggested budget. This is submitted to YDC-SL for review and feedback to check if the suggested initiative falls within the scope and purpose of the project. YDC-SL will monitor the youth groups’ management of the funds, and support those that need help in financial management and reporting.

Public space bootcamp with youth groups and Urban Synergies Group (Activity 3.0.1): As part of the project’s strategic focus on public space improvement as a key to community development, we have included a bootcamp with Urban Synergies Group which will engage the participating youth groups. This will inspire the youth to look at their community in new ways, and inspire them on how to creatively work together on improvements of urban spaces in a community-inclusive manner.

Safe spaces (Activities 3.1.1; 3.1.2; 3.1.3):The approach towards creating safe spaces in the target communities will be guided by the tools and resources that we have developed as part of the ‘Safe in the City’ project that is currently being implemented together with YDC-SL and YMCA. The approach is anchored in two overall activities. The first is training in sexual and gender-based violence and equality, which will help lay the foundation of how to understand the violence that takes place in the communities. This will be followed by participatory safety planning processes whereby the youth will develop safety plans for their community. The safety plans will outline: what the main safety issues are in the community; what potential solutions could be; who to collaborate with; and what the necessary resources are to address the issues. As part of this, SGBV IEC materials will also be distributed to community institutions for community awareness. Based on the safety plans, the youth groups will be supported to undertake safety initiatives in their communities. *Examples of safety initiatives* undertaken by youth groups in other countries who have undergone a similar process include self-defence workshops for other youth, grass cutting in high-risk areas, advocacy campaigns and awareness raising in high-risk areas, participation in community policing, installation of lights in hot spot streets, conflict mediation initiatives, development of safe recreational areas, safety championing awards, and hosting of artistic peace events. Another relevant example is from a past Dreamtown and YDC-SL’s collaboration (Dreamtown project 3) where we engaged in community peace building activities before, during, and after national elections together with at risk youth groups.

Green spaces (Activities 3.2.1; 3.2.2):Similar to above, the green space approach starts out by creating a foundation of knowledge through trainings, which is followed up by action. The training focuses on community responsiveness in hazard mitigation, climate change adaptation, and urban farming. After the training, youth groups’ will be supported to engage in green place making initiatives.We have seen amazing results from working together with youth in informal settlements on urban farming and green entrepreneurship activities on our project ‘Ghetto Go Green’ with Network for Active Citizens in Uganda.Here, young people have succeeded in developing green public spaces and individual urban gardens, both improving their own, and their households’ food security, while also creating an income by selling produce from their projects. In this project, we want to introduce some of the best practices from our collaboration in Kampala. Increasing access to green space in the communities therefore also has the potential of contributing to the livelihood of the youth. To inspire the participants, the training will be supported by excursion to inspiring urban farming initiatives. *Examples of green place making initiatives* include urban gardens, community green spaces, city-trees, green roofs, green graffiti, and green walking routes.

Creative spaces (Activities 3.3.1; 3.3.2):International Youth Day 2023 will be celebrated at community level in each of the eight communities, led by the CBOs and youth groups. They will determine how to plan the celebration, but with the same cross-cutting purpose: To give young people in the community an opportunity to celebrate their voices, actions and initiatives, as well as their meaningful engagement in the communities. The celebrations will create a platform for the young people to share their passions and visions with the rest of their community, engage in fun activities, express themselves, and also discuss their diverse needs and interests. This approach is inspired by Dreamtown’s work in Zimbabwe. Here, the local youth organisation House of Arts Association has managed to create a vibrant dialogue between young people and government authorities through art-activism. During the 2020 World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi, representatives from YDC-SL co-facilitated an event together with House of Arts Association. YDC-SL was extremely inspired by their artistic approach towards development. Activities that could form the celebration include concerts, shows, parades, drama, film screening, art events, public meetings and debates, radio shows, youth forums, etc. Community authorities and stakeholders will be invited to join the celebration, which will be used as an opportunity to engage them on youth-relevant development issues. As part of the celebration (which will take place through a week), youth groups will also be supported to undertake creative place making initiatives focused on making a creative urban environment (both in and around the community centres, and at broader community scale). Consequently, the activity encompasses two sides of creating creative space; youth get to express themselves in creative ways and speak up about their development priorities through events; and take the lead in artistic and creative physical mini-projects in their communities. *Examples of creative place making initiatives* include many different forms of expression, such as performance art, dance, design, poetry, painted artwork, art installations, photography, film making, and participatory theatre for change. This activity links to the importance of community coherence and the feeling of belonging for youth wellbeing, with a focus on community identity through community specific celebrative events and place making. Part of the philosophy for including creative place making is that the presence of artistic projects is evidence of ownership in the community, which can inspire involvement in decision-making processes of urban development.

**Track 4: Localising advocacy and a youth-led agenda:** In the project’s advocacy track, theyouth groups (supported by YDC-SL and the CBOs) will take lead in advocacy engagement with community stakeholders, while YDC-SL and CBOs will collaborate and lead advocacy at city and district levels. Young people’s progressive involvement and collaboration with community stakeholders will help change the negative stereotypes surrounded youth. Finally, young people are expected to strengthen their sense of worth, value and belonging in the community, when experiencing ownership through their engagement in community development. All the youth-led activities taking place in track 3 will be used to advocate for change at the community level. Our main focus in the project is on improving relationships with local and community authorities, to create the most tangible impact possible for community youth. What makes a real difference in their lives are the decisions made, and the support (or lack thereof) given in the communities around them, rather than national policies which they never see implemented. Through engagement between CSOs and local authorities at district level, and engagement between youth groups and authorities at community level, we will work towards strengthening the authorities support to CSO’s and youth groups’ initiatives that can make an everyday impact in young people’s lives.

Engagement between CSOs and local authorities (Activity 4.1.1; 4.1.2): In many ways, Sierra Leone has strong policies on youth-relevant issued. The major challenges lie in the implementation of these policies, which is evident from e.g. reflecting on the otherwise progressive gender policies of Sierra Leone compared with the sky rocketing numbers of SGBV cases happening. Some of the challenges include that people and local policy makers are simply not aware about what the different policies means in practice, and how they should act on them. Therefore, to create a good foundation for the project’s advocacy drive, YDC-SL will start out by training community authorities in understanding relevant policies that represent the interest of youth. The goal here is to build the capacity of authorities at community level in order for them to take part in the advocacy alliance of YDC-SL and the CBOs’ targeting local government. Upon the training, YDC-SL and the CBOs will begin their ‘advocacy drive’ based on the Calls for Action for youth wellbeing developedin the previous project[[5]](#footnote-5). The advocacy drive will dive into the different areas of i) Access to education and skills; ii) Access to safe and inclusive spaces; iii) Access to green and pleasant places; and iv) Governance and leadership. This work was initiated through advocacy campaigns in the first project, but was heavily affected by COVID-19 restrictions. Priority will be to work on concrete advocacy asks, which could include a) engaging local councils to include maintenance of public spaces in their development plans and budgets; b) advocating that city planning must prioritise and budget for community greening with inclusion of youth groups in the process; c) advocating local governments to support the role and participation of youth in creating and maintaining peace and stability in their communities; d) lobbying local government for support to local non-formal education and skills training initiatives; and e) working to formalise practises for representation and inclusion of youth by local governments in decision making and planning.

Engagement between youth and community authorities (Activity 4.2.1; 4.2.2): *Youth parliaments* will be facilitated in the community centres where young people and community authorities’ and duty bearers interact and discuss youth-relevant challenges and solutions. They will be organised every half year in each of the eight communities, where local leaders will be invited to engage with youth and discuss the issues that the young people wish to bring to the agenda. The youth parliaments will also be used as opportunities to monitoring the project’s impact, since we will be able to witness how the relationship between the youth and the authorities hopefully changes for the better across time. One of the tools we want to use during the youth parliaments is inspired by ‘participatory futures thinking’[[6]](#footnote-6), aiming to inform decisions and to invite everyone (decisionmakers, youth and local leaders) to consider the future as something that can be shaped, rather than as something predetermined and fixed. This includes a focus on agency over one’s future as an equity issue (which links strongly to the focus of the project’s specific objective 2 and the building of confidence of youth). ‘Future scoping’ will be used as an approach to help to facilitate discussions about community hopes, fears, and dreams between youth and community authorities – discussions that can often be difficult, and where youth generally have little decision-making power. Our approach is to use creative tools to shake up the dialogue, so big decisions and trade-offs are made with a stronger inclusion of the people they affect – the community youth. The youth groups will also be trained and engaged through *Media and communication labs*. The labs will be facilitated by YDC-SL’s ICT and Media departments and will teach youth groups to use technology confidently to increase their ability to communicate and tell stories about issues affecting their lives in their communities. Linking with the approach in the community youth parliaments, narratives and stories are also useful tools to think about the future, helping to prepare for possible future events, to imagine different outcomes from uncertain situations, and to assess risks and opportunities. The youth groups will work on visual documentation of local innovations and their own place-making initiatives and activities. The application of participatory video and basic ICT and Media techniques will support especially non-literate or semi-literate youths to create visual proposals, as well as use video ad photo to monitor, document and evaluate impacts of their projects, and share learning across their networks. The skills will be useful in giving young people a means to show and tell about their situation, their challenges, and their achievements through their own words and images. The training and practical experience will help the participants find their voices, and share discussion about local issues of concern in their communities with the rest of their groups. Communication products (that capture young people’s art, poetry, drama, music, personal testimony, or impact stories within their communities) will be developed by the youth and shared with community authorities and stakeholders in the youth parliaments. This will create feedback loops and invite further participation and reflection, and motivate other youth to think about how they can be creative about communication and media as a tool for advocacy and lobbying.

**3.6. Intervention’s balances between the elements of the Development Triangle**

The model below illustrates how the project interacts with areas of capacity development, advocacy, and strategic services, which are all represented in the project’s four tracks as described above.

**3.7. Improvements for the target groups and strengthening the partners’ capacities after the intervention**

As reflected in the indicators of the logical framework, this project sets out to create the following improvements in the lives of young people living in the communities:

* *Young people will have increased access to organisations that support them*
* *Young people will feel an increase in access to opportunities*
* *Young people will increasingly take active part in community activities*
* *Young people will have increased access to safe spaces where they can meet other young people*
* *Young people will have increased access to nature and green spaces where they can spend time*
* *Young people will have increased access to spaces where they can be creative*
* *Young people feel that they authorities, to a larger extent, listen to them and support their initiatives*

How will this be achieved? Investing in shared, public spaces that are accessible to all is part of our strategy towards creating lasting improvements, enabling young people to better work together for their futures. The project is therefore anchored in the partnerships and the eight community centres developed in the previous project, which will provide platforms and meeting places for young people to access skills and training and support youth-led community development. Working with young people and educating them on good governance, leadership, and tolerance and democratic principles at an early stage of their life is a catalyst to mitigate drives of youth marginalization. Providing marginalised youth with resources and enabling environments to help them tackle personal and societal challenges that beset them leaves them in a better position to take lead in their own lives, and empowers them to contribute as active community citizens. In addition, to create a lasting impact at the community level, YDC-SL will build the capacity of youth groups to deal with issues by engaging their local authorities. Continuing and strengthening the local partnership at community level is also a strategy to secure local rooting of activities, and the learning and experience that they bring. The CBOs will improve capacity to support youth groups in their communities, and pass on knowledge and skills to do advocacy. YDC-SL will also strengthen communication and outreach efforts to share project results with a large audience, to help seek support from other stakeholders and donors. Across activities, they will involve community authorities and local government stakeholders through information sharing, dialogue meetings, and invitations to key activities. These interactions will be used to lobby with them for support. ***The advocacy drive is aimed at building lasting relations with community and local authorities.*** Relations that we hope will continue to flourish in the future after the project has ended. Finally, the component on local fundraising is strategically included to motivate youth groups and their communities to explore potentials of mobilising funds and resources locally to sustain their activities, as well as the community centres and their place making initiatives.

**3.8. Risks and risk mitigation**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Risk** | **Impact** | **Mitigation** |
| COVID-19 leading to restricted activities of CSOs in communities, e.g. through limited movement and social gatherings. | *Likelihood: High*  *Impact: Major* | CBO partners in each community will be able to assist coordination of activities, supported by local YDC-SL unit (limiting the need for inter-district travelling); Trainings can be facilitated in smaller groups; CSO partners have already been engaged in COVID-19 response efforts and have experience with handling restrictions in their communities. |
| COVID-19 leading to restricted travel between Denmark and Sierra Leone | *Likelihood: Medium*  *Impact: Medium* | Dreamtown and YDC-SL have a very good communication and good practises for reporting; Some trainings and workshops can be facilitated long-distance, developed into online formats, with preparation of material and online sessions. |
| Lack of support to activities from authorities | *Likelihood: High*  *Impact: Major* | The project directly targets improvement of collaboration with community and local authorities. |
| Poor collaboration with CBO partners | *Likelihood: Medium*  *Impact: Major* | Strong focus for YDC-SL on solid communication and follow up with the CBOs, including regular office visitations; CBOs will need to report to YDC-SL on a quarterly basis on their community engagements and support to the youth groups in the project; Monetary contribution to CBOs will act as motivation (and cover transportation and communication), but also as accountability tool for YDC-SL. |
| (High) community expectations negatively affect people’s motivation to take part in the project | *Likelihood: Major*  *Impact: Medium* | YDC-SL has developed strong legitimacy in the target communities and are used to managing high expectations from project participants; CBO partners will help communicate and contextualise activities with youth in the communities; Focus on transparency in all processes, especially around selection of youth groups and representatives in trainings and activities. |

**3.9. Plans to monitor, collect and use experiences along the way and at the end of the intervention**

**Real time WhatsApp documentation of activities:**A good practice that has emerged during COVID-19 is using WhatsApp to document activities. On our current projects, the partners share photos with short captions of activities taking place in real life. This gives a good overview of the extent to which we are on track, and what the atmosphere is during the activities. In this project, photo documentation of activities will be shared as they take place. This also enables Dreamtown to provide real life feedback and encouragement.

**Quarterly reporting on achieved results:**YDC-SL will submit quarterly reports to Dreamtown, narrative as well as financial. The narrative reports will be based on Dreamtown’s standard format used for all projects. This includes a specific focus on progress towards achieving the planned results. To guide this process, an implementation guide will be developed, consisting of quarterly milestones that are aligned with the planned results. The implementation guide helps YDC-SL to plan activities, and helps Dreamtown assess the extent to which we are on track with the project. As part of the quarterly report, YDC-SL will be asked to share the impact case stories develop as part of the Media and communication labs (Activity 4.2.2.).

**End of project evaluation of outcome indictors:**The end of project evaluation will include a focus on the indicators presented in the logical framework. The majority of these are taken from the research on youth wellbeing from the first project. The indictors selected are some of those associated with the greatest importance for youth well-being in the target communities. These baseline values will enable us to measure the extent to which actual progress is made towards increased youth wellbeing. To ensure that baseline results are comparable with the end of project evaluation, the research team that undertook the first research will be consulted in designing the evaluation framework to ensure comparable measurements.

***Dreamtown monitoring and learning visits in Sierra Leone:*** Dreamtown will undertake both financial and programmatic focussed monitoring visits to Sierra Leone. They will include field visits in the communities across the three cities, focus group interviews with young people, and dialogue with CBOs, youth groups and local authorities. Furthermore, one larger financial review will take in Sierra Leone, where Dreamtown’s Finance Director will go through YDC-SL’s book keeping and financial management system.

4. Intervention-related information work in Denmark

A detailed strategy for the use of the information funds will be developed at the beginning of the project, when it is also clearer to which extent the intervention-related information work can include traveling for Dreamtown to develop communication material. If not, we will develop a strategy for developing information material at a distance. Intervention-related information work could include photos, case stories, and short videos for web and social media. Communication products will be developed to feed into Dreamtown’s overall communication strategy. Simon Sticker, who is Dreamtown’s Communication advisor, will play a key role in supporting the information work, together with YDC-SL and the youth groups in the target communities.

5. Supplementary financing - N/A

1. https://www.dreamtown.ngo/research-publications [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Call for Action report: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a17221c49fc2bfdcee7e37e/t/5f9264b7fe44af57cb0ecec5/1603429583315/Call+for+Action+report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In the first project, an evaluation report has recently been finished (February 2021), conducted by the University of Makeni. This evaluation report has been submitted to CISU together with the final narrative report. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Baseline values in the logframe are based on the total sample of all community responses in our youth wellbeing study. For elaboration on the use of these values in monitoring and evaluation of the project, see section on monitoring of impact (section 3.9.) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Call for Action: Priorities for youth wellbeing and public space in urban Sierra Leone: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a17221c49fc2bfdcee7e37e/t/5f9264b7fe44af57cb0ecec5/1603429583315/Call+for+Action+report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Futures thinking represents a future-oriented mindset, that challenges our way of thinking, our current mental models, through a systematic method of exploring alternative futures. Futures thinking can offer us tools and methods to address the future, reveal biases about the future, and help to shape our image of the future. Participatory futures can be considered a crossover between public engagement and the field of futures studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)