



## CASE STUDY: CHILD FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

Participatory video and most significant change evaluation  
UNICEF Sierra Leone & Development Initiative Programme  
**SIERRA LEONE 2016**



"WE REALIZED THAT WE AS CHILDREN COULD BE AGENTS OF CHANGE WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY, SO WE MOBILISED OURSELVES AND STARTED SINGING SONGS OF PEACE"





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## THE BACKGROUND STORY - A CONFLICT OVER A BUSH AREA AND A RIVER

In the chiefdom of Kpanga Kabonde — in the Pujehun district in the South of Sierra Leone — there are strong social ties between the people living in several small villages near the river Waanje. Their collective story started roughly 150 years ago when their forefathers settled in the area. Now, only several generations later, the community has grown to several hundred people who have spread their roots over four neighbouring villages: Sawula, Baoma, Longo and Kpetema.

For their livelihood, the people in the four villages depend on access to the river and the surrounding bush area. They fish in the river, harvest wood from the bush and cross the river and bush to access the land where they grow and process crops like cassava. Some community members make their living by selling their produce and by trading other goods at a small scale. Besides the natural resources, the communities share the same school and health centre which are both based in Sawula.

Over several decades, in order to manage the scarce resources, the chiefs and people of the villages had made several customary agreements, for example that no one should fish in the Waanje river without the collective consent of all the chiefs from the four villages. One day in March 2013 a young man named Saffa from the village of Longo violated this agreement. He was caught fishing in a pond area (part of the bigger river) that had been reserved for fishing by women only. This incident started a long conflict between Longo and Sawula, which later grew to also involve and influence Baoma and Kpetema.

*“We used to be together and live as one family. We used to have all sorts of celebrations. Dancing, playing, laughing, spending time on the beach at the river side. During the conflict we stopped all those good things that we used to do together. The burials, the feasts, they suddenly stopped.”*

***Kula Swaray, female, age 60***

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The conflict had a big impact on the livelihoods and wellbeing of people in all four villages. Many were wounded in fights and some people, mostly women, were arrested and held in custody at the police station in the nearby town of Pujehun for three days and nights. The majority of children stopped coming to school and access to the health centre was restricted, which caused several tragic deaths on the banks of the river. Over the course of the conflict that lasted for a year and a half, most people lost their savings as everyone had to pay their share to the chiefs and police who they trusted to rebuild the peace.

*“During this dark time, I lost a daughter to an illness, that could have been prevented if we had health service close, but no one came to sympathize with me. This made me very sad, it touched me in my heart, my own family in Sawula showed no comfort. This was my turning point, I am the father of the community. I then realized how blind I had become and how deep the division was in our family.”*

***Kandeï Koroma, male, age 70, Longo***

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In February 2014, a man from Longo asked an international NGO to mediate in the conflict. This international NGO brought the chiefs and some representatives of each of the villages together in Pujehun. At the end of three days of meetings the gathered representatives agreed on several new boundaries between their villages in an attempt to manage access to the land and river and settle the feud. Unfortunately these boundaries fuelled the fight even further.

In April 2014 staff from the Development Initiative Programme (DIP) heard about the conflict from the small group of children that were still attending the school in Sawula. The staff were at the school to teach the children about their right to learn in a safe and child friendly school. During the session the children identified the big community conflict as the main barrier to their education. After that, DIP supported representatives of the four villages to start regular meetings to work towards a solution. During one of these meetings a group of school pupils showed up calling for peace. They explained to their parents and other community members that they wanted the conflict to end so that they could all go back to school. The children's demonstration, together with a big symbolic peace event facilitated by DIP and supported by UNICEF, finally managed to bring the villages back together in August 2014.

*"After receiving the training from DIP we realized that we as children could be agents of change within our community, so we mobilised ourselves and started singing songs of peace to the members of all three villages. Our messages were noted by our parents."*

**Alhaji Kemokai, male, age 11, Sawula**

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In the spring of 2016, 1.5 years after the big peace celebration that marked the end of the conflict, UNICEF Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Education Science and Technology — the two initiators of the Child Friendly School Programme that was implemented by DIP in 20 schools in the region — selected the school in Sawula as the location for an in-depth evaluation to better understand the relationships between peace, conflict and children's education. The evaluation was carried out by a mixed group of eleven people who were trained by InsightShare, who specialise in the use of participatory video for positive change.

Over the course of 13 days these trainees learned how to use participatory video methods combined with the most significant change methodology to carry out story collection and selection processes to gather insights into the changes experienced by the community members over the course of the conflict and the role of the Child Friendly School programme. This case study accompanies the community-made videos and provides an overview of their findings and recommendations.

**YOU CAN WATCH ALL THE VIDEO OUTPUTS OF THIS PARTICIPATORY VIDEO CASE STUDY HERE**





# THE PROGRAMME – A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILD FRIENDLY EDUCATION

Between 2012 and 2016, UNICEF Sierra Leone explored the relationship between education and peacebuilding through the Child Friendly Schools (CFS) action research programme, part of UNICEF's global Peace Building, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) programme.

The CFS initiative provided a holistic and rights-based approach to education by exploring the total needs of the child as a learner through the use of seven standards, which were developed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) from Sierra Leone:

1. Effective Leadership and Management
2. Rights-Based and Inclusive of All Children
3. Gender-Sensitive and Girl-Friendly
4. Child-Centred Teaching and Learning
5. Healthy, Hygienic and Nutritionally Adequate
6. Safe and Protective Environment
7. Engaged with Community

The main goal of the programme was to explore localised conflict issues that could potentially impact education quality and outcomes, and subsequently enhance peace building through community action. The theory of change behind this approach was that minimising conflict in communities and schools could lead to improvements in the seven CFS standards and thus in the learning experience of the children.

## A CASE STUDY—INSIGHTS FROM THE STAKEHOLDER'S PERSPECTIVES

It is not always easy to gauge and communicate the impact and outcomes of a programme or activity. Those best positioned to explore and convey these messages are the beneficiaries themselves and the people around them – they can speak first-hand about changes that matter to them. This case study however did not just aim to capture if and to what degree the CFS project influenced significant changes in the lives of the children at the school in Sawula and the surrounding communities. It also aimed to provide insights into how those changes have taken place and if there were any significant links between peace, conflict and children's education.

### **Phase 1 – training in participatory video and most significant change**

In February 2016, two trainers from InsightShare supported a diverse group of trainees to carry out the evaluation. The group consisted of 4 youths from Pujehun, 1 young person from Sawula, a local councillor, and 5 staff members of DIP. Over the course of 13 days these trainees learned how to plan, shoot and edit videos through a participatory video (PV) process. They developed technical, social and storytelling skills through experiential learning with fun exercises and reflection sessions. They got used to switching the key roles (director, camera person, sound person) and learned to work together as a team and to make all key decisions through consensus.

During the first few days of the course, the trainees also learned to use the most significant change (MSC) approach to capture, process and analyse stories. Stories played a central role in this evaluation because they help us to understand how change happens in people's lives. In addition, they enable us to answer questions such as: What role did the CFS project play? And which other factors (interventions, people, events etc.) influenced people's experiences of change positively ('enablers') or negatively ('blockers')?



## Phase 2 – story collection, selection and filming

After developing basic video planning and shooting skills and experiencing the full PV MSC process themselves, the trainees planned and prepared for their field work. For this part of the process, fifteen representatives of six stakeholder groups had been invited to participate. It was essential to hear from such a range of stakeholders in order to get a good understanding of the links between education and peace/conflict in the villages surrounding the school.

Over the course of three fieldwork days, the trainees split into two teams that spent a full day with each stakeholder group. The days started with a story circle during which each of the participants was invited to share their personal story in response to the following open but time-bound question: **What has been the most significant change, in relation to peace or conflict, that you have experienced or observed in the last two years?** These circles resulted in the collection of 87 stories, which were all documented and transcribed.

### STAKEHOLDER GROUPS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE STORY CIRCLES

- 15 members of the adult CFS Action Research group, from the 4 villages,
- 13 boys of the children's CFS Action Research group, plus 2 out of school boys
- 13 girls of the children's CFS Action Research group, plus 3 out of school girls
- 13 members of the CFS Steering Committee, mixed gender
- 15 community adults, from the 4 villages, mixed gender, aged 36-70
- 15 community youth/young adults, from the 4 villages, mixed gender, aged 20-35

After listening to one another's stories the participants were asked to indicate which of the stories they felt indicated the most significant change and to explain why. Subsequently, the trainees developed criteria by asking the participants how their reasons for selection could be generalised so they could be used as measures for significant change. So a reason like 'because the story explained how the conflict stopped us from coming to school', would be translated in 'access to education' as a criteria. These criteria were then used by the participants to discuss and compare the various stories and come to a consensus as to which of stories from their circle best reflected the kind of change(s) that they valued as most significant.

Subsequently the trainees helped the group of participants to make a visual representation of the key moments or events of the story that they had selected. On a series of flip charts they drew a storyboard consisting of simple drawings that they then used to plan six to eight scenes to dramatise the story. The visual representation was a helpful guide to the selected storytellers who retold their story in front of the camera (click here to watch the six testimonies). After deciding on locations, actions and props the story circle participants spent the afternoon in Sawula acting out the story, whilst the trainees captured each scene on video. At the end of the day everyone enjoyed the pleasure of watching back their work.

### Phase 3 — data processing and preparation for the community screening

Over the following three days, the trainees worked hard to process all the data that they had collected. They typed up the 87 stories, translated the 6 selected video stories into English and learned how to add the footage of the drama scenes to the testimony videos with video editing software. After the big transcription job was finished, they carefully read through the stories of all six stakeholder groups to identify which changes, blockers and enablers each storyteller had mentioned. In preparation for the participatory analysis in phase 5, they then recorded the key data of each story onto different coloured cards: red for blockers, yellow for enablers and white for changes. (see the findings on page 9)

During the process of transcribing, reading and unpacking all stories, the trainees and trainers gained some valuable insights that informed their design of the community screening event. In addition to screening the testimony videos and collecting feedback from the community members, they decided to facilitate participatory drawing sessions with the children and two focus groups to stimulate the men and women of the four villages to look ahead and decide on some future actions to strengthen their relationships and faith in their collective abilities to work towards positive changes without help from outsiders. All trainees were assigned a different role in the facilitation of the big event.

### Phase 4 — the community screening and celebration event

On the day of the community screening event almost all of the men, women and children that had participated in the story circles returned to the school in Sawula to watch back the results of their collective work. In addition, other men, women and children from the various villages had come down to join. The complete audience of approximately 130 people squeezed together in one of the classrooms of the Sawula school. Those who couldn't fit into the space were able to follow the stories thanks to the presence of loudspeakers.

After watching the testimonies the trainees split the audience into five groups. One group of boys and one group of girls were brought together to make two big participatory drawings to capture their views of how children can contribute to peace in their communities. At the same time a group of women and a group of men — with representatives of all four communities — participated in two focus groups in which they discussed their ideas on how they could work together to strengthen the peace within and between their communities. Finally, the remaining adults of the audience, were engaged in an extensive feedback session during which they shared what they learned from the video testimonies. (see page 20)

### Phase 5 — participatory analysis and video report shooting

During the last three days of the evaluation project the trainees carried out a large participatory analysis of all the collected story data. They used the coloured cards that they had made during phase 3 to find commonalities between the changes that the story circles participants had experienced or observed. They then establish the common factors that had contributed to positive changes or blocked their wellbeing.

The ease with which they could group the cards into smaller sub groups, and the amount of cards in each of them made it clear how many people in the four communities had had similar experiences over the past year. As each card represented one story with a few key words, it was easy to see how many people had mentioned a similar change, blocker or enabler. After giving each sub group a title, the trainees used these header cards to discuss and make a visual representation of the relationships between the key changes, blockers and enablers. What was found was that they could be organised together in domains of change such as education, health and wellbeing, and external support.

On the last two days the trainees worked together to shoot a video report in which they presented their findings and recommendations. [Click here to watch their video report.](#)





## FINDINGS – INTERRELATED DOMAINS OF CHANGE

### KEY CHANGES, BLOCKERS AND ENABLERS

Through the sorting of the cards during the participatory analysis, the trainees got a visual impression of the number of participants that mentioned the same or similar changes, blockers and enablers. Through the presentation of the cards they were able to see how the experiences of the 87 storytellers related to each other, what changes were mentioned most by participants and what blockers and enablers were most commonly experienced. The changes, blockers and enablers that each of the participants chose to speak of provided the first layer of insight into what adults and children in the four villages value.

#### Indicators of significant change

The second layer of data was collected during the story selection processes. In each story circle, after everyone had shared their story, each participant was asked to indicate which of the stories of their stakeholder group they felt was the best example of most significant change and give a reason for their choice. As can be seen in the table below, the majority of the participants gave reasons that related to community cohesion (32 people) and children’s empowerment (28 people).

#### Five key domains of change

Some of the key changes, blockers, enablers that the trainees identified through their participatory analysis are best explained as part of a particular area or domain of significant change (see page 14 to 19). The other blockers and enablers that relate to the conflict and the peace building process in general (and influenced multiple domains of change) are discussed on page 10 to 12

<b>Community cohesion</b>	• social relationships, peace and unity	22 people
	• community action, collaboration and peace building efforts	10 people
	• freedom of movement, stopped movement, peaceful movement	2 people
	• threats so violence	3 people
<b>Children’s empowerment</b>	• education access, quality, awareness of the importance etc.	17 people
	• children’s actions, their value and responsiveness to them	11 people
<b>Health</b>	• access to health care	10 people
<b>Livelihood and security</b>	• poverty, progress, shared services	8 people
<b>Leadership and support</b>	• effective, good, responsible leadership, support from DIP	7 people



## THE KEY BLOCKERS

The evaluation provided an overview of the key factors that the participants mentioned as barriers to the changes that they presented in their stories. The most frequently mentioned blockers were:

1. conflict between the villages—56 stories
2. poverty, dependence and natural resources—30 stories
3. disruptions to teaching and decreased school attendance—23 stories
4. instigators — Saffa and the former headmaster—22 stories
5. financial contributions to the conflict—22 stories
6. restricted movement—17 stories
7. the intervention of an international NGO—17 stories
8. fear, worries and stress—16 stories
9. limited social interactions—12 stories
10. limited social interactions—12 stories

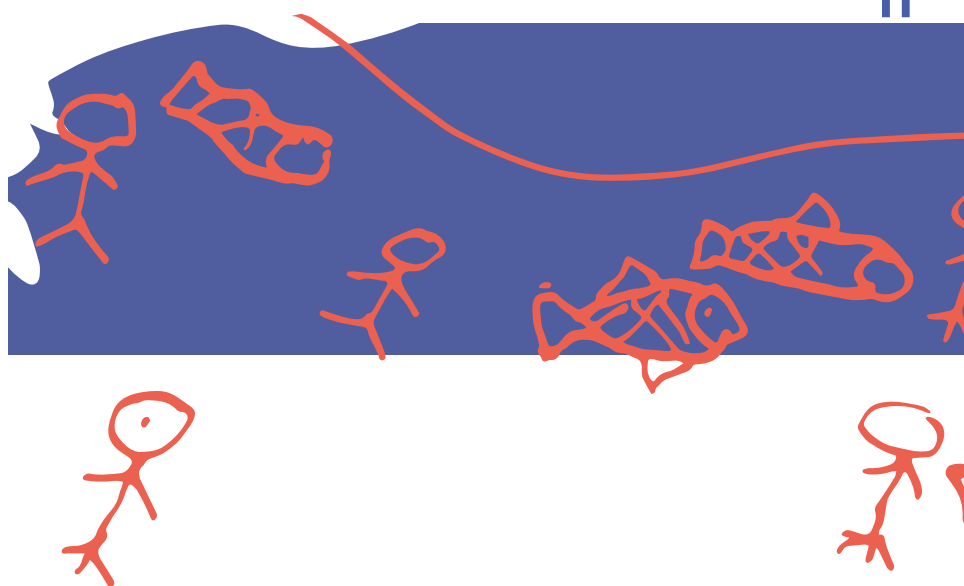
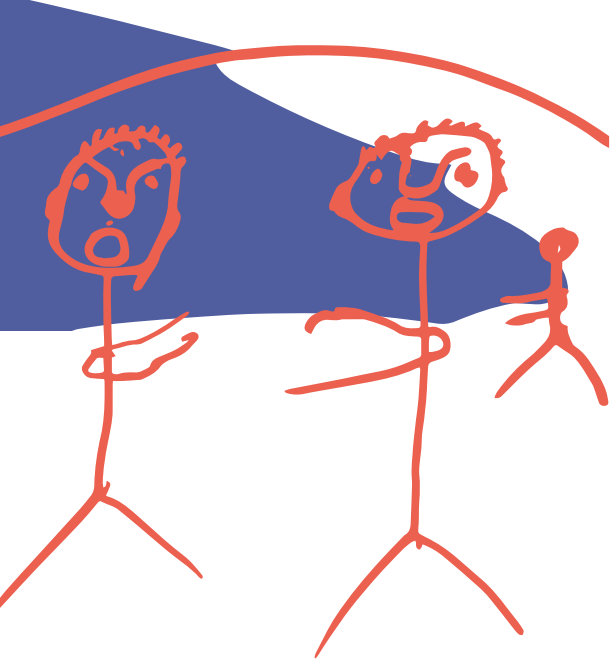
The main blocker to significant change, mentioned by 56 participants, was unsurprisingly the big conflict between the villages. The second and fourth most frequently mentioned blockers are discussed below as the stories suggest that they are at the root of the conflict. The other blockers are presented on page 14 to 18 as they are most easily understood as part of one of the domains of change.

*“The conflict and fighting between Baoma, Longo and Sawula started over very small things, a meagre fishing pond and a stick in the forest which they use to carve a canoe.”*

***Ibrahim Massaquoi, male, age 55, Baoma***

### Resource dependence and instigators

Underneath all the complexities of individual actions and the collective responses of the various villages lies the deeper cause of the conflict that is rooted in the shared dependence on the same natural resources: the river, the bush and the farms lands. Many participants mentioned how before the conflict the villages lived peacefully together. This peace was based on shared use of the resources regulated by a customary law. Many stories also show that the actions of individuals (in particular a man called Mustafa Feika (Saffa) and the former headmaster) ignited or further stirred the conflict. Finally, the stories demonstrate that agreements that divided the resources and restricted the access (put into place by outsiders) further fuelled the conflict.



### **[Vandi Gumah's story about the social implications—click here to watch](#)**

The participants in the story circle consisting of adults from the four villages chose Vandi Gumah's story because he talked about the social implications of the conflict. In his story he emphasised how the people in the villages share the same forefathers and how they used to share their resources and work, celebrate, trade and grief together. Through his own personal experience he illustrates the social and livelihood struggles that the conflict caused.

*"Everyone turned against me, saying that I was an informant, so I decided to leave the community and relocate to Saluwa. I was regarded as a traitor and suspected of passing the conflict between them."*

***Vandi Gumah, male, age 45, Longo/Sawula***

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### **[Bockarie Conteh's story about the instigators and mediators—click here to watch](#)**

The boys wrote a long list of reasons for why they decided to select Bockarie's testimony in their story circle. There was a consensus amongst the boys that Bockarie did a great job in explaining the conflict, including the causes, the support of DIP and the outcomes after the peace celebration. In addition, many of the boys chose the story because of Bockarie's emphasis on the role of the instigators, such as Saffa and the former head master, as well as the way he illustrated the role and the power of the children.



## THE KEY ENABLERS

The PV MSC evaluation also provided a clear insight into what the stakeholders felt were the things that supported the significant changes in their lives and in their community. Based on the analysis of all stories of change, the enablers that were mentioned most often were:

1. DIP's intervention — 50
2. children's actions / their call for peace — 16 stories
3. community action — 16 stories
4. new school materials and furniture — 12 stories
5. the big peace celebration — 11 stories
6. the new headmaster / removal of the former headmaster — 11 stories

The key enabler that was mentioned by a large majority of adult and child participants was DIP's intervention in the conflict. Eleven participants were more specific by mentioning 'Child Friendly School' or 'CFS', and seven participants specifically mentioned the AR groups or methodology.

### Lahai Samah's story about DIPs intervention

This story of DIP's district supervisor — which was chosen as most significant by the trainees — provides DIPs perspective on the conflict and clarifies what their intervention in Sawula consisted of.

In 2014 DIP travelled to Sawula after the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology had identified the school in Sawula as one of the 20 CFS Action Research locations in Pujehun district. Like they did in the other locations, they invited 15 adults of mixed gender plus 15 boys and 15 girls (including 3 out of school boys and 3 out of school girls) to form one adult's and two children's Action Research Groups.

During the first session with the children, after DIP staff had introduced the 7 Child Friendly School standards, the boys and girls, selected standard 6 — a safe and protective environment — as their focus area. The children explained that because of the conflict their learning environment was not safe and they asked DIP to engage their parents. Unfortunately, during the Adult AR Group sessions “the parents would bring in other issues and shy away from the safe and protective environment topics that were not conflict related”. Because of the attacks in the villages, DIP staff were initially hesitant to speak of the big elephant in the room. But when they explained that the children had indicated that the conflict was disturbing their learning, the parent's response was “as if they had been waiting for us to bring this up.”

After that session two DIP staff members visited the other communities to hear their side of the story and found out that they too were tired of the conflict but that they simply didn't know the solution. In response, DIP invited them to join the adult AR group. Two male and one female leaders from both Longo and Baoma accepted the invitation and so two weeks later the six leaders from Baoma and Longo joined the AR meeting. During that first session they were surprised by a visit from the children of their communities.

*“We saw them coming into the town, singing but with a serious facial look. They looked serious, they looked desperate, urging their people to strike peace, to compromise and that they are tired with this issue. That they are tired of running into the bush and getting wounded. That there is no teacher to teach. That they can't concentrate on their learning. They actually want their parents to make peace. That was the whole part that made the whole situation change. The chiefs that came were embracing each other laughing. They started telling one another this thing is getting too serious, even the children have taken notice of what we are doing. Children are getting to know that this is harmful to their future. Let us do something about this, let us urge everybody to stop.”*



During that first meeting, DIP clarified to all leaders that they would have to carry the peace message back to their communities. From then on the AR group met up every fortnight and more and more people started to indicate that they had an interest in coming over to witness the gathering. After several sessions when DIP staff realised that the community members “were ready for that peace that they had been talking about” they informed UNICEF of the situation. With UNICEF’s support they then organised a big gathering to bring together people of all villages to seal the peace. During the celebration everyone ate, sang and danced together but most importantly the communities exchanged kola nuts.

*“There is a proverb that says, he who brings kola brings life. (...) If you share kola nut with your brother or sister, or your neighbouring community that you are in conflict with, then later if you bring again conflict, there is a strong conviction that it would lead to a kind of curse (...) The three chiefs shared kola nuts, followed by the nuts being shared by almost all community members that were present at the meeting.”*

#### **[Thomas Conteh’s story about the role of the steering committee—click here to watch](#)**

This story was selected in the circle of steering committee members because they found it was the best example of increased awareness amongst the community members in terms of the importance of community collaboration, responsive leadership, health as well as children and their education. The story also illustrates the role the steering committee played in addressing the negative effects of the conflict.

One day the members of the CFS steering committee in Pujehun district were notified by DIP that the head master of PDC Sawula had not prepared the documents for class 6 pupils to participate in the National Primary School Examination exams. These exams are used to assess if the pupils are ready to enter into secondary schools. After hearing this news the steering committee invited the head master to their next meeting during which they discussed his behaviour and decided what recommendations they would report back to the Ministry of Education.

*“After deliberating on the issue, the committee recommended for the immediate removal of the head master, deduct money from the head master’s monthly salary, and send a member of the education committee to process the documents of pupils at national level.”*

## LIVELIHOOD AND FINANCIAL SECURITY

### The chiefs, the police and court meetings – financial contributions

At the start of the conflict the police were called to interfere. The police arrested some people, including a few women, who had to pay (or get their families to pay) large sums of money for bail.

*“I was part of the group of people who was arrested and put into a police cell. (...) The little money I had saved to start a business and money that my husband had, we lost it all. (...) When I came out, I was back to zero, with no food and no money, nothing.”*

*Salaimatu Feika, female, age 20, Longo*

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When the instigator of the conflict, Saffa, refused to appear in front of the Sawula chiefs, the matter was referred to the Native Administrative Court in Pujehun. Over the course of the conflict the members of all communities were asked for financial contributions to cover the time that chiefs and police spend on mediating in the conflict. People had to use their savings or sell possessions in order to pay their share.

### Thieves, vandals and fighters – loss of possessions and savings

On top of their financial contributions for conflict resolution, several households also suffered financial losses because their possessions were stolen or damaged during the conflict. Machines, fishing nets and boats were damaged, cash, crops and other possessions were stolen. Some households also had to spend money on hospital treatments and medicines after family members had been injured in fights.

*“During the conflict people destroyed all the bridges. We couldn’t cross the point to get to our fields so birds ate all our rice. We used to process gari to sell to earn our living. One day we left three huge quantities and our machine for farming in our farmhouse. During the night someone burned everything. The machine, our cassava, our farm house, we lost everything.”*

*Safiatu Kemokai, female, age 19, Sawula*

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### KEY BLOCKERS – livelihood

- financial contribution to chiefs, police, court cases (22 stories)
- the intervention of an international NGO (17 stories)
- restricted movement (17 stories)
- lack of family support / family conflict (12 stories)
- damaged or stolen money or possessions (10 stories)

### A failed NGO intervention & ebola – restricted access to farm lands

In response to a mediation request from a man from Longo, an international NGO invited representatives of the villages to come together in Pujehun. After three days of meetings, they helped the representatives who had managed to come down to draw up new boundaries to manage access to the river and bush.

Unfortunately it proved hard for the representatives to spread the feelings of the new peace amongst their community members who had not been present. Seventeen of the participants mentioned the NGO intervention and most of them pointed out that it didn't resolve the tensions. In fact, as many explained, the new boundaries ended up further fuelling the conflict as people's movements were even further restricted than before and some people could no longer access their land for cultivation.

*“The NGO stepped in and called some of us together in Pujehun but many of us couldn’t go. Some of us heard what was said during that gathering in Pujehun. But some didn’t hear, so quarrels continued.”*

*Satta Conteh, female, age 35, Sawula*

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*“They suggested a win-win, where no one had the right anymore to free access to anyone else’s portion of land or water. Everyone went back home and sat down for a while, we tried to work together, but soon another matter came between us and we walked back to conflict.”*

**Kandei Koroma, male, age 40, Longo**

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The ebola epidemic further restricted peoples’ movements. When the epidemic was at its peak the people could no longer go to their farm lands and many people lost their crops.

*“Before the outbreak of Ebola I had planted six bushels of rice and two hectares of cassava. Then Ebola came and everyone had to stop planting, while we waited in our homes my harvest was destroyed by wild animals. I was only able to process a small amount of the cassava into gari while I lost all the rice.”*

**Sheku Conteh, male, age 29, Sawula**

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### **Significant change – feelings of deprivation**

The result of all the financial losses is that many people now feel deprived. Ten people mentioned the loss of money or personal possessions, whilst five people pointed out that at least they no longer need to contribute money to the conflict. Four people also explained that communal savings — that had been raised for things like road construction and children’s education — are all gone. Twelve story circle participants expressed feelings of deprivation and/or appealed for support to relieve their suffering. Finally, six people expressed their doubts about the sustainability of the peace.

*“The money that was saved and the properties that were accumulated over many years was wasted on settling court costs, stripped away like locusts eating cassava. (...) The future of our children is in our hands, if we don’t come closer and stand together as a family we will not be able to educate them and give them the best. Equally our own future is at risk. As the older generation, we need our children to be there for us when we grow old.”*

**Momoh Kpaka, male, age 40, Taibor**

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### **[Mamie Conteh’s story about the financial implications — click here to watch](#)**

Mamie’s story was selected by fellow members of the AR Group due to of various reasons: some people selected her story because she gave a complete version of the conflict, including the role of the instigator and the big impact on people’s movements and social relationships; others chose it because she explained how the intervention from the international NGO was ‘to no avail’, describing the burden of the financial contributions as well as her feelings of deprivation.

### KEY BLOCKERS — health & community

- violence, fighting and weapons (20 stories)
- restricted movement (17 stories)
- fear, worries and stress (16 stories)
- limited social interactions (12 stories)
- lack of family support / family conflict (12 stories)
- illness and non-conflict related injuries and deaths (9 stories)
- ebola (7 stories)

### Violence

The regular fights that took place during the conflict resulted in many people getting wounded. Next to people getting wounded as a result of attacks from others, the fighters themselves got hurt whilst running through the woods in the dark. Some people got so heavily wounded that their family members had to use their savings to send them to the hospital in Pujehun for treatment.

*“One of my brothers was badly wounded (...). We spend our own money to take him to hospital and buy medicines. This big expenditure hurt us a lot.”*

**Mannah Kpukumu, male, age 30, Baoma**

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### Fear, limited social contact and family support

Because of the regular fights, people feared they would get hurt if they would go to any of their neighbouring villages. As a result of this fear people from Longo, Baoma and Kpetema stopped travelling to the health centre in Sawula for medical services, advice, treatments and medication.

From November 2013 onwards the Ebola epidemic brought additional suffering onto the four villages in the midst of the conflict. The fear of attacks and Ebola stopped people from visiting their family members and friends in the neighbouring communities. Many story circle participants mentioned how the conflict limited their social interactions and several shared that they had lost family members during the Ebola crisis.

*“During the Sawula, Longo and Baoma conflict I lost my daughter, my cousins from across the river did not come to sympathize, the divisions between us was taking us backward as a community.”*

**Mustapha Conteh, male, age 50, Sawula**

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In addition, fifteen stories demonstrated the important role that family support plays in the villages. Fourteen participants presented family conflicts or a lack of support from family members as blockers in their stories and six participants talked about support from family members as enabling factors.

*“My elder brother, Banjul came and called a family meeting. It was in the family that we agreed that our sister Emma should adopt two children from our wider family to give her hope again. With that decision our sister is well again and now happy, caring for the children she has adopted.”*

**Victor Sengeu, male, age 35, Kpetema**

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### Physical and policy barriers

Before the conflict, whenever the river was too high to easily wade through by foot, there would often be volunteers with boats who would help people with the crossing. If people's conditions were too serious for effective treatment in Sawula, they would be referred to the hospital in Pujehun.



*“I clean and nurse people’s wounds. Before the conflict, when our health facility was doing well I was very happy. Lots of children and adults would come to us. (...) During the conflict I used a canoe to access medication. I continued to talk to people and take them across the river to access the health facility. But only a few people would still come.”*

**Momoh Tucker, male, age 35, Sawula**

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During the conflict the river became a physical barrier to health care. As one young woman explained, whenever the river was high people from Baoma needing treatment would get stuck at the side of the river shouting for help as there would no longer be any boats or volunteers to help them to cross. On top of this, during the Ebola crisis an emergency policy proscribed women from giving birth in their homes, making them travel to a medical facility. As a result, several pregnant women and their babies died on the riverbanks whilst waiting for help with the crossing as mentioned in their stories.

*“During the conflict so many women experienced problems because they were not allowed to deliver their babies in Baoma. (...) So we suffered a lot. You would end up in lots of pain at the side of the river, delivering your baby at the river. That kind of delivery is not safe. Many women died from bleeding.”*

**Massa Tucker, female, age 30, Baoma**

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Massa also clarified that when people would arrive at the hospital in Pujehun without a referral from the health centre in Sawula they would be referred back to Sawula. The staff in Pujehun would be unable to treat them because policy dictated that people had to use the health facility nearest to them.

### **Significant change — peace and restored freedom of movement**

Now that the peace has returned (39 stories) people of the four villages are once again able to meet each other (17 stories). Now that the fighting has stopped, people once again have freedom of movement (13 stories). As people no longer have to fear that they might get wounded whilst travelling to another village, adults and children can safely move around again to socialise, work, trade, celebrate and mourn together, and access the health centre and school.

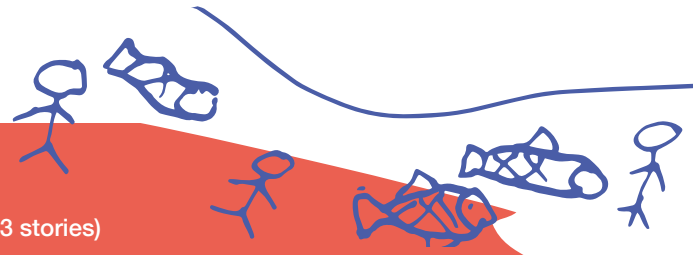
### **[Massa Tucker’s story about the suffering of women and children—click here to watch](#)**

Among the young adults Massa’s story was selected because she clarified the importance of peace by emphasising how the conflict brought so much suffering onto people in all communities, but specifically on women and children. Her story was also chosen because it provided the perspective of the villages opposing Sawula. Her story clarifies that Baoma got involved in the conflict because they decided to secretly carve a canoe with wood from the bush area that was assigned to Longo.

*“Our painful story is that every time a sick person needed treatment and came to Pujehun for treatment, the people there would refer them to Sawula. As there is a big river between our village and Sawula we decided to carve a canoe to cross the river, but people from Sawula tried to stop us from carving the canoe. Anytime someone needed treatment we would stand at the side of the river and call for people to help us to cross. But the people from Sawula would not come to help us to cross.”*



## EDUCATION AND CHILD EMPOWERMENT



### KEY BLOCKERS — education

- disruptions to teaching / decreased school attendance (23 stories)
- former headmaster (21 stories)
- fear, worries and stress (16 stories)
- lack of / stolen school materials and/or furniture (11 stories)

### Fear of violence and decreased school attendance

During the story circles, many participants referred to a decrease in school attendance. According to DIP district supervisor Lahai Samah, the enrolment and attendance registers of PDC Sawula indicate that there were more than 250 children in the school prior to the conflict. Over the course of the conflict the attendance level dropped to roughly 50 at the time of the first CFS session.

Many adults and children also mentioned how the former headmaster played a key role in the conflict, as he left Sawula and joined the opposing villages. Some participants explained that he was one of the people who would come down to Sawula to fight and how he mobilised people from Longo and Baoma for several attempts to burn down the school.

Other stories clarify that because of fear of getting hurt in attacks, three of the five teachers and many children from the neighbouring villages stopped coming to school.

*“Our friends from the other villages were afraid to come to school here, their parents thought they would be hurt. We the children were the victims of the quarrels of the adults around us, our own parents.”*

**Mikailu Swaray, male, age 8, Sawula**

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### Lack of teachers and school materials

Eleven children mentioned the lack of school materials because their former headmaster had stolen the learning materials that had been donated to the school by UNICEF. In addition, two children claimed that the head master was using school subsidies for personal expenses. Several stories clarified how after the head master’s departure, the two teachers from Sawula would still come to school but that they struggled to teach without the school materials. Because of the lack of teachers and materials slowly less and less children would come to school and many stayed at home.

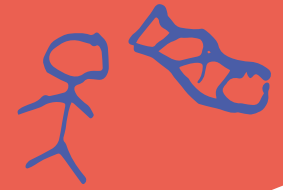
*“The other teachers were discouraged because they had no one to guide them. When we came to school we would just sit down with no teacher to teach us, then we would get up and go home empty.”*

**Fodie Swaray, male, age 9, Sawula**

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### Learning and children’s actions

In terms of enabling factors, the stories of the children clearly show that they understand what peace and conflict means and how it affects their education. Several children shared in their stories that they had learned about peace and conflict from DIP. In addition, ten children and eight adults talked about the appointment of the new headmaster and/or the new furniture and school materials as enablers. Finally, sixteen children and adults talked about the role that the children played in the peace process.



*“DIP empowered us by showing us methods to resolve conflict, the Action Research circle – define local problem, expose the root causes, take action, reflect on action. After the training we felt stronger, we mobilised ourselves demanding peace, we were able to meet with leaders and other community stakeholders to share our side of the conflict and explain how it was affecting us as children.”*

**Alusine Swaray, age 10, Sawula**

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*“DIP also told us about peace and how to deal with conflict. If I now see people fighting I will talk between them and ask them to sit and make peace and work together.”*

**Jattu Fortune, female, age 14, Kpetema**

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### **Umu Noah’s story about the impact on children’s learning – [click here to watch](#)**

In the story circle of girls, Umu’s story was selected because she clearly expressed how unhappy the children were about all the negative effects of the conflict on their learning, and how delighted they were with their new headmaster, the new school materials and the return of their teachers and peers. Her story was also chosen because she mentioned that it was them, the children, that asked their parents for peace.

### **Significant changes – children’s empowerment through education**

In the education domain, the most significant changes are related to the encouragement and empowerment of the children in the villages. Attendance levels have gone back up (mentioned in 17 stories) as children are once again able to attend school without the fear of getting injured (although not all children from Sawula’s neighbouring villages have returned yet). In addition, fifteen participants mentioned the fact that children can learn again or that their learning has improved thanks to the new school materials, the new head master or the simple fact that teachers can teach again.

*“We are really grateful to DIP for our school materials, radios, solar lights, bags, books and the rest. Before DIP came, we used to sit on the floor. (...) I like the radio. It can record. The teachers record lessons and then in the evening our teachers gather us around, all of us, and we listen. It makes us learn more.”*

**Ginnah Fortune, female, age 10, Kpetema**

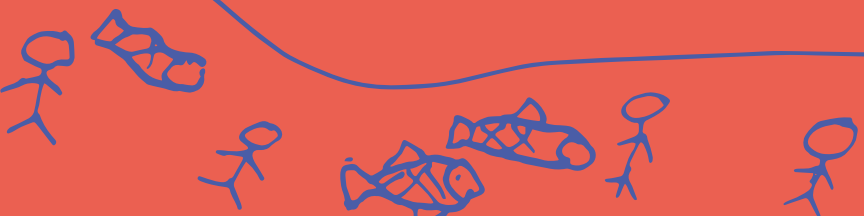
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Other significant changes are that children have learned how they can play a role in conflict resolution (13 stories) whilst adults are more aware of the importance of education (7 stories). The adults and children of the four villages can continue to use the Action Research groups to identify issues and work together towards solutions.

*“We are all now benefiting from this school. CSF has brought awareness with the seven standards, our safety is a priority for us, this is now in reach now that we have total peace between our villages. By setting up the Action Research group we were able to participate in the peace building initiative. We now also have a structure to continue to get involved in the future development of our community.”*

**Mohamed Jaleba, male, age 10, Sawula**

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# COMMUNITY SCREENING – A CELEBRATION OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

## The need to avoid feelings of dependence

In their stories, fifteen percent of the participants talked about how their community members and/or children played a role in the peace building process. Fifty-five percent of the adults and children however talked about DIP and their work as the force that brought the peace back. In addition, a significant amount of the participants appealed to DIP, UNICEF and other organisations to come to their aid. Some people requested organisations to help them strengthen the peace whilst others asked for technical, material or financial support, in response to the losses they suffered during the conflict.

The trainers and trainees therefore felt it was important to use the community screening event as an opportunity to respond to feelings of deprivation and dependence amongst the community members. They agreed on three main aims for the community screening event:

- clarify the relationship between the evaluation and potential future support
- celebrate the achievements of the community members, especially the children
- strengthen peoples' believe in their collective strength and their ability to work independently

With these aims in mind, representatives from UNICEF and DIP spoke at the start of the event. Aiah Mbayo from UNICEF spoke about the value of the evaluation, and in particular the value of the video products. He explained to the community members that UNICEF would use their powerful story to campaign for the importance of children's education in general and for ongoing financial support for programmes that focus on the links between peace building and education in a particular. Building on mister Mbayo's words, Lahai Samah from DIP shared that they have the intention to keep supporting PDC Sawula and the surrounding communities and that they hope that the videos will help to engage other donors and organisations. However, he also clarified that he could not give any guarantees about future support and he urged the communities to keep building on their collective strengths.

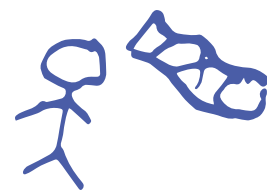
## Concrete plans to strengthen the peace

Fortunately, the atmosphere at the event was clearly one of celebration. The screening event included several hours of conversations, singing, dancing, and eating during which the representatives from the various communities mingled a lot. The passionate responses of people indicated that all three aims were achieved. Following the screening of the testimonial videos, the adult audience was split into three groups. One group of mixed representatives discussed what they had learned from the testimonies. For the focus groups, male and female community members were separated and engaged in a discussion that was structured around two key questions that inspired the participants to develop several concrete plans.

- How do you feel about the peace and what could you do to strengthen it?
- What could you do to avoid future conflicts and respond to conflict drivers?

### 1) Rotational cross-community celebrations and gatherings

In the male focus groups the men agreed to organise several more cross-community gatherings to celebrate and strengthen the peace. In addition, the women decided to start regular women's only meetings during which they will work on collective plans to contribute to wellbeing in their communities. Both the men and the women came to the same conclusion that to engage everyone equally, the location of the gatherings would have to rotate between all villages.





## 2) Spreading the message of peace within their communities

The female focus group started with expressions of joy over the fact that women from all the villages were finally together in one place again. Soon after, one of the women however expressed her doubts over the sustainability of the peace as she had observed and heard how in her community many people don't yet 'feel the peace in their heart'. In response to this honest concern, several women confirmed that the situation was the same in the other communities and all representatives pledged to do their best to spread the message of peace, particularly amongst those who do not yet seemed convinced.

## 3) Solving conflicts between themselves

In the male focus group there was a consensus that they never again want to accept a conflict between their communities because they feel they are one family. As they learned that engaging outsiders is expensive and can cause additional frictions between them, they decided that they will start a development advisory committee consisting representatives of all the villages. The purpose of the committee would be 'to look into their grievances, instead of taking every little matter to court'.

## 4) Independent income for women

In response to the question about conflict drivers, the women agreed that poverty is at the root of their conflicts. They also agreed that having reliable and independent income sources would enable them to contribute to peace as they use their money for the benefit of their children, families and communities at large. Subsequently they discussed two concrete ideas for income generation: continuing to fish together (and sell fish at the market) and starting vegetable gardens.

## 5) Saving groups

The ideas for income generation, also inspired the plan to start a savings group and appeal for access to microcredit. The women would use a saving group to save for investments in their own families, but also for things that would benefit the wider community, such as sending a few selected children to higher education.

## 6) Support for material investments

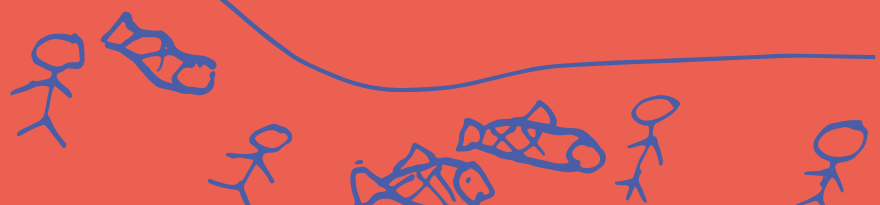
In the male focus group, the prompt to consider their strengths and assets inspired feelings of pride and power. The men agreed that because they managed to survive the conflict, they have the means to work themselves out of poverty again. They however also expressed that they would not be able to do it entirely independently. They have lost their savings as well as their machines and they therefore ask donors to 'meet them halfway' by providing them with machines to cultivate the large farm lands that they have access to. In addition, in the third group, a man from Baoma requested support to start a school in Baoma, and a man from Longo appealed for help to bring safe drinking water to his community.

## 7) Support to finalise the peace

Finally, in both the male and female groups, people requested additional support to continue the peace building process. Whilst the men requested support from DIP to engage the people that were the main conflict drivers in their cross-community meetings, a woman from Baoma requested support to reach out to Vandi Gumah, as she had heard that the people of Longo wish for him to return to their village as he used to be such a strong positive force in their community.

*"I am a bit disappointed. The reason for that is that some of the people who were leading this conflict are not here today. For the past days that you have been working here I haven't seen Saffa. I am still in doubt if this peace is here to stay. (...) Now, even after all the interventions we are still separated."*

**Sata Conteh, female, age 35, Sawula**





## CONCLUSIONS AND OUTCOMES

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### Action research aims achieved

The findings from this evaluation show that the Child Friendly School Action research programme reached its aims in Sawula and the surrounding villages. With UNICEF's support DIP identified the key localised issues affecting children's education, and successfully used the Action Research and Steering Committee groups to sow the seeds for peace by requesting responses from all relevant stakeholders, including teachers, parents, children and the wider communities.

### Additional enablers, blockers and links identified

During the Action Research sessions DIP staff enabled adults and children to explore the links between the CFS standards and key drivers of conflict. This evaluation helped to further clarify these links as well as additional blockers and enablers in the wider community that directly or indirectly influenced children's wellbeing and education. Findings of the participatory analysis emphasise how interrelated all the enablers, blockers and changes are, and what a big influence local social relationships and the natural environment can have on the education opportunities of children and the quality of their learning.

### Increased knowledge and awareness

The stories of this study demonstrate that the children have a good understanding of what peace and conflict are and how they influence their education and their communities. In addition, some stories indicate that the storytellers value education and the role that children can play in peace building and conflict resolution. In order to understand what role the CFS project played in stimulating this knowledge and appreciation these findings would need to be compared to baseline data (see recommendations).

### Findings that could inspire other NGOs and communities

Whilst the findings confirm that children can play a key role in conflict resolution and peace building by influencing their peers as well as their community members, the stories illustrate how NGOs, children and community members can work to enable everyone to do their part. Through this case study and the various video products the stories and findings can now be shared to raise awareness of programmatic lessons amongst NGO staff working at the intersection of peace building and education.

### Products that have the power to appeal

The added value of this evaluation is captured in the outcomes that support the CFS hypotheses communicated through people's voices and faces. This case study and the videos show and tell what the links between conflict, peace building and education look like in the lives of children and adults in Pujehun district. These products, in particular the summary videos, can be used to engage decision makers at local and national levels, as well as donors around the world.

*“The latest intervention has convinced me to bring back my children to this school to ensure a good future for my children. I am very happy with what has been happening, especially with the engagement in the school. It makes me very happy to see all these people here today in this room, because I have not seen these people for some time. I now have confidence in this school and in the future of my children.”*

**Amie Conteh, female, age 35, Sawula**

### **Insights into the views of different stakeholder groups**

This evaluation engaged different stakeholder groups in dialogue. Through collectively planning, reenacting, watching and discussing the most significant change stories — children, adults and young adults from the various communities heard each other’s perspectives. Moreover, by expressing what changes they value most and why, the participants were able to challenge and inspire each other.

### **A contribution to the peace through the involvement of the different stakeholders**

By sharing their stories in the trusted environment the participants were able to evaluate what changes have taken place around them over time. Expressions of empathy between people who were part of opposing groups, suggested that the stories enabled people to reflect on the similarities and differences between their experiences. Subsequently, by working together on the dramatisation of the selected testimonies, the story of the conflict between the four villages came to life in a new way.

*“Other people who were actually hurt in the conflict were still in doubt until the coming of InsightShare (...) There was that kind of true confession, like truth and reconciliation. They sat in that meeting and confessed their wrong doing to their neighbours and then the other one confessed or said something that was burning, that hurt her or hurt him, but at the bottom they always appreciated the peace that they finally reached.”*

**Lahai Samah, district supervisor DIP**

### **Mobilisation of people and concrete future plans**

The four-day engagement in Sawula further encouraged people’s participation in the peace building efforts and stimulated feelings of ownership over future community developments. The community screening event enabled the representatives of communities to see, discuss and celebrate their collective achievements and express their remaining needs for support. At the community screening event in Sawula, the mobilisation effect of participatory video could be observed in the big numbers of people that were present and could be heard in the passionate plans, pledges and appeals that were expressed.

### **Building skills in trainees**

During the evaluation the eleven trainees developed new skills in data collection, processing and analysis. They also practiced with the facilitation of group discussions and focus groups and learned the basics of participatory video planning, recording and editing, as well as story transcription and translation. As five DIP staff members were amongst the trainees, DIP could use this capacity in their ongoing community engagements.







## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Compare the findings

Compare and triangulate the findings of this very focused and qualitative case study with other baseline and evaluation data of the CFS project in Sierra Leone, to assess if Action Research groups could stimulate similar impacts in other villages around the country.

### Share the learning

In response to the requests of the participants share their stories so others can learn, use this case study and the various video products to share the insights of this evaluation and the general ethos of the CFS project with other NGOs working on education and peace building.

### Inspire other communities

In response to the great success of the community screening event, use the testimony videos to inspire other communities to work together to maintain peace and prioritise the education of their children.

*“We are happy with how DIP handled the matter for us in planting peace in our community. I hope my story will be useful to help other communities to resolve conflict and to grow peace.”*

*Lihai Pallay, male, age 9*

### Facilitate a transition

In response to the plans made during the community screening event, facilitate training sessions with the AR groups as well as the newly formed groups (the development committee and the women’s group) to strengthen their ability to self-organise and continue their work without DIPs support.

### Appeal for support

In response to the appeals related to the structural challenges of the communities, reach out to government officials and NGOs for financial and in-kind support for the mothers club, the construction of a purpose-built health centre, school maintenance, the provision of clean drinking water in Baoma, etc.

### Look for partners

In response to the plans from female representatives of the villages, reach out to NGOs that could support the villages with training in sustainable farming techniques or that could help them set-up saving groups.



*"It makes me very happy to see all these people here today in this room, because I have not seen these people for some time. I now have confidence in this school and in the future of my children."*

**Amie Conteh, female, age 40, Sawula**

Children Singing For  
Peace



Ministry of Education,  
Science and Technology

