

### *My Passion is Women and Children*

Traprock Center for Peace and Justice and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Sierra Leone: Partners in Peace and Justice for Women and Girls



Sierra Leone in West Africa was a key departure point of Africans enslaved by predatory European countries and the United States, and it was in turn a place of refuge for returning former slaves in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the early 1990s, guerrilla war spilled over from Liberia into Sierra Leone and devastated the countryside during 11 years of war for “blood diamonds,” with widespread violence, sexual violence against women and girls, atrocities and exploitation of girl and boy child soldiers. Sierra Leone replaced Afghanistan as the poorest country in the world with the highest rate of maternal and infant death.

In 2018 Pat Hynes of the Traprock Center and member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) US met Kadie Sesay, the founder of a new chapter of WILPF in her country of Sierra Leone, while both were attending the WILPF international triennial conference in Accra, Ghana. The first day was dedicated to the African Women's Feminist Peace Conference. Read more on the conference in this article: [African Feminists Emphasize Key to Global Peace.](#)



By way of introduction, Kadie said to Pat, “My passion is women and children,” when they first met in Kotoka International Airport in Accra. And thus began an enduring sisterly bond based on a shared commitment to human rights for women and girls, ending violence against them, and working toward a world of peace and conflict resolution over war.

### **The Children's Book Collaborative for Peace, Justice and Environment**

Over the course of the conference Sesay and Hynes discussed and agreed to a partnership in which WILPF Sierra Leone (WILPL SL) would adapt Traprock's collaborative program with local libraries in Franklin County, Massachusetts, entitled the Children's Books Collaborative for Peace, Justice and Environment, to Sierra Leone schools. Traprock then raised \$1,000 to purchase 70 children's books and further funds, with the help of WILPF Boston chapter, to support WILPF Sierra Leone's purchase of a computer and printer for their new modest office in the capital city Freetown.



This marked the first time that Traprock’s book collaboration reached beyond the local area, indeed across the Atlantic to another continent.

On July 2, 2019, WILPF Sierra Leone launched their Peace and Environmental Education initiative in 2 schools in impoverished districts of Freetown. School administrators held a school wide event for all the students and committed to using the books on peace, social justice and environment within the school curriculum. Read more about the collaboration and program: [Traprock Center Helping Young People Build a Better World through Books](#)

Since 2018, WILPF Sierra Leone has built an organization with growing membership, offices in two cities (Freetown and Bo), a strong board with a dynamic communications director, Pastor Peter Alfred founder/director of the Christian Outreach Justice Mission. Traprock has continued to support many of their initiatives and programs. These include:

### **[The Sports and Peace Program December 2019](#)**

Sierra Leone has been experiencing violence in sport, especially soccer, among school youth for quite some time at higher proportional levels than at any time since the war ended in 2001. It has included destruction of property, which poses serious threats to peace and security of the people and the country. WILPF Sierra Leone partnered with Christian Outreach Justice Mission Sierra Leone to sponsor soccer games for boys and girls teams from two schools, with themes of sport-free violence, environmental restoration through tree-planting, and ending violence against women and girls. They coordinated with the schools’ principals and coaches and with the support of the Traprock Center provided sports gear and equipment for the youth. Each of the four youth teams wore a different color outfit, each color representing a different theme:

- abolition of killer robots (drone war) - Red
- world peace - Blue
- abolition of domestic violence - Yellow
- a better environment for Sierra Leone and beyond - Green



The event attracted many attendants and the message of peace and nonviolence, environmental education, and ending violence against women and the girl child was presented by WILPF SL President Kadie Sesay and well received by the audience.

Teachers, parents, and members asked many questions: for example, how can we further take these messages within schools and communities elsewhere? Can environmental protection be done by tree planting alone? And how can the campaign to stop violence against women and the girl child be stepped up in Sierra Leone?

Ms. Sesay encouraged everyone to take global warming and environmental issues seriously as Sierra Leone is the third most prone country in the world to environmental hazards, as evidenced by the massive flooding in 2016 across the

nation and the August 14, 2017 mudslide, which destroyed properties worth millions of Leones and claimed about five thousand lives in Freetown alone. She also encouraged all present to focus on tree planting in the communities nationwide to afforest the land. She further remarked that the government should pass laws that, if upheld, will discourage indiscriminate timber logging and felling of trees for burning fuel wood, and that the government should create alternative means of livelihood for the people.

About violence and sexual violence against women and girls, more laws have to be passed at state and local levels to restrain and punish offenders, she said, like the sexual offense act just passed by Parliament. Additionally, the civil society and both print and electronic media should join the campaign to educate the public at all levels of the society. She then called on men and boys present and in Sierra Leone to stop violence against women and the girl child as well as exploiting them sexually.

In his response, Pastor Peter Alfred held that in order to spread the message of peace in sport, environmental education, hygiene and clean environment, “we will continue to open these clubs in schools and communities for greater participation to increase knowledge in these areas to practice them.”

### **Respect for Girls Project**

Under the direction of the Traprock Center’s, Peace Education Coordinator Sarah Pirtle, the Long Line for Racial Justice young women teamed up with young women in WILPF Sierra Leone and, the Gage Ambassadors in Syracuse, New York. Together they created the Respect for Girls Project to address sexual harassment of girls in schools and promote female leadership and empowerment. *Girls are the future leaders of tomorrow* is their mantra.



WILPF Sierra Leone Respect for Girls Youth and Director and Staff

### Mission Statement of Long Line for Racial Justice Activists

*Our mission is to amplify girls' leadership in community circles as we work to protect girls from sexual harassment, disregard, mistreatment and violence in schools and communities. Our vision is to connect committed local groups around the globe and share resources in order to galvanize all our work. We invite you to use resources we've created as you help your own school and community take action to insure respect for girls. Our songs, our interviews with inspiring women and girls, our skits shown on YouTube, our program ideas, and our T shirts can all be employed to make conversation happen.*

See their website and listen to the concert organized by Sarah Pirtle that raised generous funds for the Sierra Leone Respect for Girls program being planned for schools there: <https://www.respectforgirls.com/>

### Covid Education

As the second wave of the virus caused much death, WILPF Sierra Leone undertook a campaign to sensitize communities to continue regular hand washing, maintain social distancing, frequent use of hand sanitizers, and reporting suspected sick relatives and neighbors to curb the fight against the virus. Engaging market women in two communities at selling points, one peripheral health unit, and a cross section of WILPF members strengthens collaboration with other organizations in the fight against COVID 19, as well as complements health workers who are working with the risk of the virus under strenuous health challenges.

The Traprock Center for Peace and Justice supported WILPF-SL in partnership with Christian Outreach Justice Mission in the above-mentioned event in Bo city in four communities, namely:

1. Gbongo Market
2. Musa street market
3. Batiama layout community health center
4. Focus on Success Organization for Women

### Activities

1. Supplied COVID protection materials (buckets and hand wash basin, face masks, liquid soap, hand sanitizers and tissues), in four vulnerable communities including WILPF office in Bo for continuous distribution of remaining items to their member groups in Bo.
2. Engaged prison officers at the Female Correctional Center, which is in full compliance with Covid-regulating prevention and protection measures.

3. Had bilateral discussion with partners at WILPF office in Bo, for coordination and continuous networking



### Planned Follow Up

Continuous community outreach and sensitization on Covid 19 regulation mentions

1. Community media engagement through radio and television stations





## Media Strategy

WILPF Sierra Leone has launched a nationwide outreach through the electronic media, community radio, television stations, and print media and through round table conversations with policy makers and community stakeholders. This engagement will focus on peace mediation and peace building, community ethnic cleansing, child labor, sexual harassment and abuse, domestic violence, and human trafficking. This campaign is also geared toward a membership drive and mobilization, establishing regional and district clusters with constant networking and information sharing.

National party politics, with politicians using vulnerable youths and children to promote ethnic and regional tribal hate speech, are early warning signs that the fragile peace we are enjoying as a nation is at stake, according to WILPF-SL.

This calls for peace mediation through constructive engagement and dialogue with political party leaders, ethnic groups especially vulnerable youths in the communities. The emergence of clicks and gangs in our local communities is waging unrest, ranging from thieving, arm rubbing, social violence that result to fighting,

stabbing and killing. Below is the activity and time line for media engagement through community radios, televisions, newspapers, and community stakeholder’s dialogue sessions.

See planned media outreach timeline through December 2021

**Planned activity time line April 2021 to December 2021**

<b>Timeline</b>
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GO AL	Activity	Responsible person	Location	Timeline											
				Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	D ec			
	TV/radio Discussion	Maada Boima	western area urban	✓											
	TV/radio Discussion	Maada Boima	western urban/rural		✓										
	Radio discussion	Maada Boima	northern region				✓								
	Radio discussion	Maada Boima	eastern region					✓							
	TV/Radio discussion	Maada Boima	southern region									✓			

WILPF Sierra Leone is a heroic partner in the human and ecological restoration of their country, working for the human rights of women and girls, peace, and a sustainable environment. Traprock will support our partnership through seeking capacity-building opportunities for WILPF Sierra Leone, raising funds, collaborating where feasible and sustaining our transatlantic friendship.

With thanks to all the staff, youth, and volunteers of WILPF Sierra Leone, especially Director Kadie Sesay and Communications Director Pastor Peter Alfred.