

# RESEARCH REPORT

## ***ACTION RESEARCH ON YOUTH VIOLENCE IN SIERRA LEONE: UNDERSTANDING CAUSES AND DEVELOPING INTERVENTIONS BY CIVIL PEACE SERVICE (CPS)***



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth violence in Sierra Leone is a multifaceted issue, involving physical, emotional, and psychological harm. It is deeply rooted in the country's socio-economic, cultural, and political systems, affecting both individual safety and societal stability. Studies highlight several interconnected causes, including poverty, unemployment, low education levels, social isolation, and political abuse (UNICEF, 2019; World Bank, 2020). A study was conducted to capture youth, policymakers, and institutional perspectives on the causes and solutions for youth violence. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, 825 youth and 66 institutional heads across 11 districts were surveyed, and 33 focus group discussions were held. Data was analyzed using SPSS and content analysis to identify patterns and themes.

The research revealed results on youth demographics, education, employment, and youth violence in Sierra Leone. The majority of personal interviews and Focus Group Discussions' respondents fall within the age cohort of 21-25 years with 37.7% of the personal interview respondents. Educational attainment is primarily at the secondary level (51.8%). Employment trends show that 35.2% of respondents are self-employed, while 35.3% are students. Unemployment is a significant issue, with rates as high as 38.7% in Port Loko and 32% in Koinadugu in the Northern Region.

Youth violence is a major concern, with 40.1% of respondents having experienced or been involved in it. From the multiple response analysis<sup>1</sup>, physical (54.5%), domestic (53.8%) and political (50.5%) are the most prevalent, followed by economic and sexual violence. Root causes include poverty, unemployment, political manipulation, and gang involvement, with specific regional factors such as land disputes and political affiliations contributing to the violence.

### Key Actionable Recommendations across the districts:

- **Job Creation and Economic Empowerment:** Focus on employment and financial opportunities, as 21.6% of respondents viewed job creation as critical for the youth.
- **Innovative Education and Vocational Training:** Strengthen educational and vocational programs to reduce youth engagement in violence. There is need for a diversified short-term academic program for youth across the urban and rural areas in Sierra Leone.
- **Community Engagement and Mentorship:** Encourage youth involvement in peacebuilding and community efforts, emphasizing community engagement.
- **Mental Health and Recreational Services:** Establish mental health support and recreational centers to address youth trauma and provide constructive outlets.
- **Strengthened Law Enforcement:** Improve law enforcement's ability to handle violence and build trust in the justice system.

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<sup>1</sup> **Multiple responses** refer to a situation where respondents are allowed to select more than one answer or option in response to a single question. Analyzing multiple response data typically involves looking at the frequency or percentage of each response across the sample, and it may lead to percentages that exceed 100%, as respondents may have chosen more than one option, **Fowler, F. J. (2014):** Survey research methods (5th ed.) SAGE Publications

## Lessons Learned from this research:

- Youth violence is driven by a range of socioeconomic issues, requiring cooperation among government, NGOs, law enforcement, and community leaders.
- Youth involvement in designing violence prevention programs is crucial for success.
- A comprehensive, cross-sector approach that includes education, economic opportunities, mental health services, and law enforcement improvements is essential for long-term solutions.

The report highlights the need for tailored interventions to address regional differences, fostering safe spaces, economic growth, and educational opportunities to combat youth violence effectively.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provide the detailed background of youth violence in Sierra Leone, aim, objectives and significant of the research. In addition, the limitations and delimitations are detailed in this chapter.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Youth violence is a significant and complex issue in Sierra Leone, impacting communities across the country in various forms, including physical, emotional, and psychological harm. This phenomenon is deeply embedded in the socio-economic, cultural, and political fabric of society, with implications for both individual safety and broader social stability. Studies have shown that youth violence often stems from multiple, interrelated factors such as poverty, unemployment, limited educational opportunities, social exclusion, and political manipulation, all of which are prevalent in Sierra Leone (UNICEF, 2019; World Bank, 2020).

Addressing youth violence is critical for ensuring the well-being of young people and fostering a more peaceful and prosperous future for the nation. However, to develop effective interventions, it is essential to first understand the perspectives, experiences, and suggestions of the youth themselves; those who are directly impacted by violence and who can play a pivotal role in driving positive change (UNDP, 2021). This understanding will help to identify the root causes of violence, as well as to uncover opportunities for meaningful action that can promote safety, inclusivity, and sustainable development.

The purpose of this research is to explore the views and lived experiences of youth aged 15 to 35 from diverse backgrounds throughout Sierra Leone, including those from urban and rural settings, with varying levels of education, and with different employment statuses. By providing a platform for open dialogue, this discussion seeks to explore the underlying causes and dynamics of youth violence, identify contributing factors, and gather practical ideas for effective interventions that can reduce violence and support sustainable development (International Alert, 2018).

Moreover, the research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of youth violence in Sierra Leone and will inform the development of targeted strategies by policymakers, NGOs, community leaders, and other stakeholders committed to building safer, more equitable communities. Respondents were encouraged to speak freely and honestly in a confidential and respectful environment, allowing for a collaborative dialogue that captures the challenges and opportunities for addressing youth violence in Sierra Leone.

## 1.2 Aim and Objectives

The main aim of this action research is to understand the underlying causes and dynamics of youth violence in Sierra Leone and to provide evidence-based recommendations for interventions aimed at reducing youth violence and promoting sustainable development

Specific objectives are as follows.

- To identify and Analyze Root Causes of youth violence in Sierra Leone
- To Engage and Gather Perspectives from Youth on experiences with violence
- To Develop Evidence-Based Recommendations

## 1.3 Significance of Research

This research was purposely designed to capture the underlying causes of youth violence, its implications and to inform strategies to ameliorate youth violence in Sierra Leone. In addition, this research informs evidence-based policy decision making for tackling youth violence in Sierra Leone. Given its action focused, this research informs relevant and impactful interventions across Sierra Leone to curb youth violence.

Finally, the participatory approach in the entire data gathering builds the capacity of data collectors and the respondents across the research communities.

## 1.2 Limitation and Delimitation

Generally, this action research targeted the entire Sierra Leone focusing on the population between the age range of 15 to 35 years, who are referred to as youth in Sierra Leone<sup>2</sup>. However, 68% of the sixteen districts were reached with both the quantitative and qualitative interviews. These districts were critically selected to represent each of the geographical regions across the country. Specifically, youth were targeted in their natural environment to ensure that the researcher understands the real time dynamics of youth violence and their lifestyles. The mixed-methods approach provided a comprehensive understanding of youth violence in Sierra Leone; however, some limitations were noted. The reliance on self-reported data in both the survey and qualitative phases may have introduced social desirability bias. Additionally, logistical constraints, such as limited access to certain remote areas, may have affected the representativeness of the sample. The study's cross-sectional design also limits the ability to establish causality between variables.

Finally, the research was conducted from 11<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. This means that a few of the respondents required were not available to be interviewed due to the cross-sectional nature of the field work.

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<sup>2</sup> National Youth Policy of Sierra Leone, 2020



## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Youth violence in Sierra Leone remains a pervasive issue, affecting the social, economic, and political fabric of the country. It manifests in various forms, such as gang violence, armed robbery, sexual violence, and political violence, and is often exacerbated by the country's fragile post-conflict environment. Despite progress in peacebuilding and development since the end of the civil war in 2002, underlying socio-economic and political challenges continue to contribute to the dynamics of youth violence (World Bank, 2023; UNDP, 2022). This context has been categorized into socio-economic, political, cultural and technological for detailed analysis.

***Socio-Economic Drivers:*** A key driver of youth violence in Sierra Leone is socio-economic marginalization. The country has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa, with nearly 70% of its youth population either unemployed or underemployed (World Bank, 2023). Limited access to quality education and sustainable vocational training exacerbates the problem, leaving many young people without the necessary skills or opportunities to secure stable employment (UNESCO, 2023). This situation is further compounded by widespread poverty, with 56.8% of the population living below the national poverty line, making young people particularly vulnerable to engaging in criminal activities or violence as a means of survival (World Bank, 2023).

***Political and Social drivers:*** Political manipulation and weak governance structures also play significant roles in fueling youth violence. Politicians and local power brokers have historically exploited young people in Sierra Leone, using them as instruments of violence during elections and other politically charged events (International Crisis Group, 2022). This exploitation not only perpetuates cycles of violence but also erodes trust in state institutions, creating a sense of disillusionment among young people. Social factors, such as family breakdown, lack of community support, and peer pressure, further contribute to the normalization of violence among youth (UNICEF, 2023).

***Cultural and Community Dynamics:*** Cultural and community dynamics significantly influence youth behavior and attitudes towards violence. In many communities in Sierra Leone, traditional norms and practices sometimes condone or even encourage violent behavior, especially among young men, as a demonstration of strength or resilience (International Alert, 2023). Moreover, the stigma associated with being a victim of violence often deters young people from seeking help, creating an environment where violence can escalate unchecked (Plan International, 2023).

***Impact of Technology and social media:*** The rapid proliferation of digital technology and social media has added another dimension to the issue of youth violence in Sierra Leone. Social media platforms have become spaces where violence is both perpetuated and normalized, with young people often exposed to violent content or involved in cyberbullying, hate speech, and online

radicalization (UNESCO, 2023). While technology can be a tool for positive engagement, in many cases, it has amplified tensions and facilitated the organization of violent activities among youth<sup>3</sup>.

***Existing Interventions and Gaps:*** Despite various efforts by the government of Sierra Leone, NGOs, and international organizations to address youth violence, significant gaps remain. Existing programs often lack a comprehensive approach that integrates socio-economic, cultural, and political dimensions of violence, especially meaningfully involving the youth themselves in identifying their felt needs. Moreover, many interventions do not adequately engage young people as active partners in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs meant to address their needs (UNDP, 2022). There is growing recognition that sustainable solutions require youth-centered approaches that empower young people to be agents of change in their communities<sup>4</sup>.

***Emerging Challenges and Opportunities:*** Emerging challenges, such as the ongoing economic impacts of global crises, climate change, and the aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic, have exacerbated vulnerabilities among youth, potentially increasing their involvement in violence (World Bank, 2023). However, there are also opportunities to build on the resilience and innovation of young people. The increasing engagement of youth in community development, peacebuilding, and entrepreneurship initiatives presents a promising avenue for addressing the root causes of violence and promoting sustainable development in Sierra Leone (UNDP, 2022). Finally, a comprehensive approach to addressing youth violence in Sierra Leone must consider the complex interplay of socio-economic, political, social, and cultural factors. By understanding these dynamics and engaging young people directly in the development of interventions, it is possible to create more effective strategies to reduce violence and promote a safer and more inclusive society.

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<sup>3</sup> Youth, Technology, and Violence in Sierra Leone" – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023

<sup>4</sup> African Youth Charter: A Roadmap to Peacebuilding" – African Union, 2023

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Scope

This action research was designed with the goal of encompassing all sixteen (16) districts of Sierra Leone to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics across the country. However,

Region	District
Eastern	Kailahun
	Kenema
	Kono
Northern	Bombali
	Kambia
	Koinadugu
North-Western	Port Loko
Southern	Bo
	Pujehun
Western	W/Rural
	W/Urban

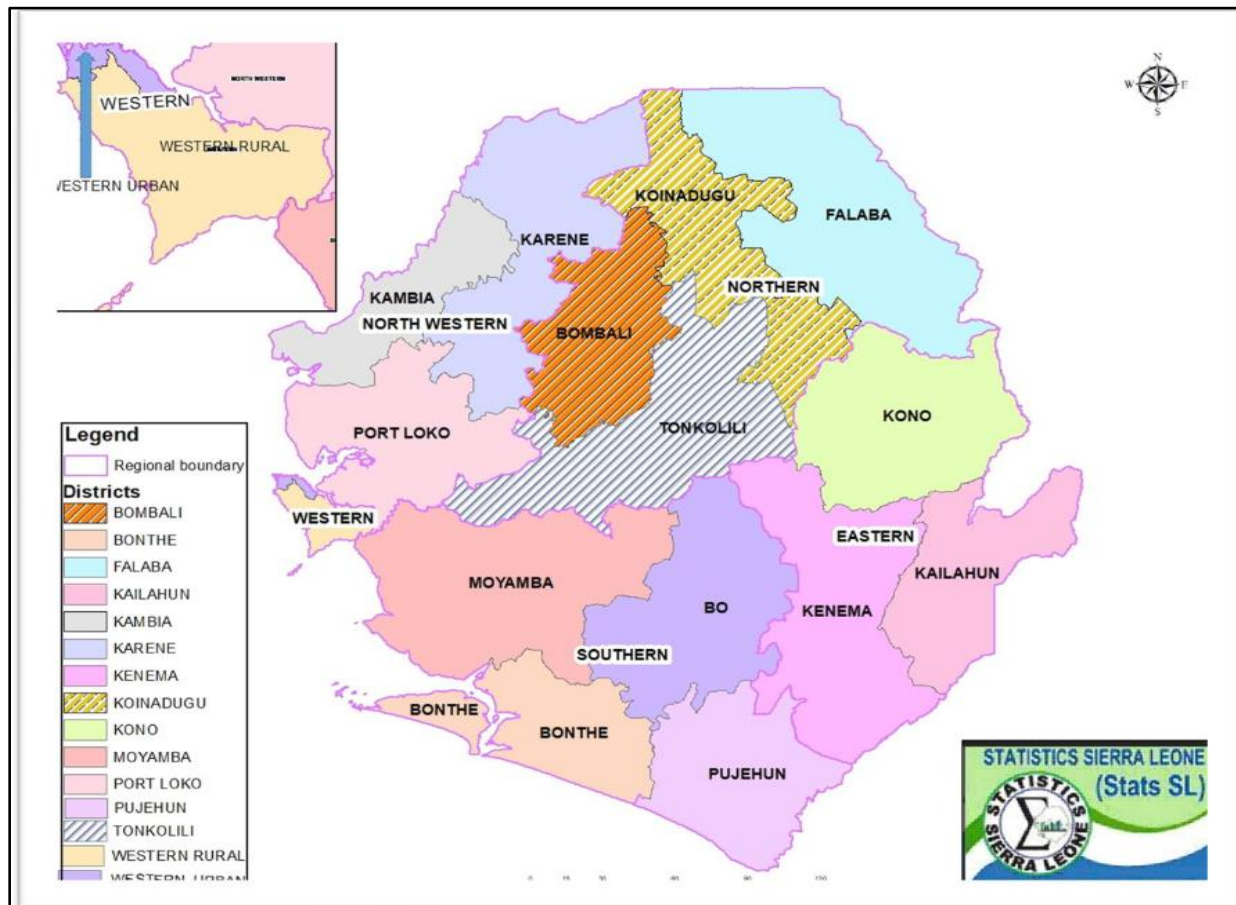
due to logistical and practical constraints, the research was conducted in 11 of these districts, which constitute 68% of the total districts. These districts were selected from across the five key geographic regions of Sierra Leone: Western Area, Northern Region, Southern Region, Eastern Region, and North-Western Region, ensuring representation from each major area.

The selection process for these districts was carefully considered, prioritizing those with strong inter-connectedness in terms of infrastructure, economic activity, and social cohesion. Additionally, the districts were chosen based on their socioeconomic similarities to the remaining districts, which allowed for a broader generalization of the findings. By focusing

on districts that share common economic and social characteristics, the research was able to extrapolate results that are likely relevant to the entire country, despite not covering all districts<sup>5</sup>. This approach ensures that the conclusions drawn are reflective of national trends while maintaining regional diversity in the sample.

<sup>5</sup> Patton, M.Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Figure 1: Map of Sierra Leone Showing the 16 districts



Source: Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015

### 3.2 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods to explore the perspectives, experiences, and suggestions of youth regarding the underlying causes and dynamics of youth violence in Sierra Leone. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data enabled a comprehensive understanding of the issue, capturing both the depth of individual experiences and the broader trends and patterns across different communities.

The study used convergent research design, where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously. This design was chosen to avoid the influence of either result on each other and to provide a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to youth violence and the potential interventions independently.

### 3.3 Sample Size

Given that the total population of the youth is found in the 2015 Census report, the sample size was determined using Slovin's formular. Slovin's formula is widely used in research to calculate the required sample size when the total population is known. The Slovin's formular is written as;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where:

n = the sample size

N= the total population size

e= the margin of error or the level of precision

While Slovin's formula provided an ideal sample size of 4,386 participants, adjustments were made to fit the available resources for this research. These adjustments included factors such as the available budget, time constraints, and logistical considerations, such as the difficulty of reaching remote areas and the availability of participants. After considering these practical limitations, the sample size was reduced to ensure that the research is both manageable and still representative of the population.

Table 1: Sample size determination

Sample size determination					
Districts covered	Number of Youth (15-35 yrs)- 2015 Census	Margin of error (e)	Confidence Interval	Representative Sample size (based on $n=N/(1+Ne^2)$ )	Adjusted Sample size based on available Resources
Western Area Urban	468,183	0.05	95%	399.7	75
Western Area Rural	137,547	0.05	95%	398.8	75
Bo	219,684	0.05	95%	399.3	75
Bombali	159,371	0.05	95%	399.0	75
Kailahun	114,316	0.05	95%	398.6	75
Kambia	85,820	0.05	95%	398.1	75
Kenema	187,293	0.05	95%	399.1	75
Koinadugu	83,016	0.05	95%	398.1	75

Sample size determination					
Districts covered	Number of Youth (15-35 yrs)- 2015 Census	Margin of error (e)	Confidence Interval	Representative Sample size (based on $n=N/(1+Ne^2)$ )	Adjusted Sample size based on available Resources
Kono	130,873	0.05	95%	398.8	75
Port Loko	158,937	0.05	95%	399.0	75
Pujehun	71,466	0.05	95%	397.8	75
<b>Total</b>	<b>1816506</b>	0.05	95%	<b>4,386.3</b>	<b>825</b>
<b>33 Institutional Interviews (KII)</b> <b>33 Interviews with stakeholders – Government officials, NGO, Private (KII)</b> <b>Focus group discussion (FGD)</b>					<b>33</b>

From the sample size determination above, specifically, the following categories of respondents were reached by the study:

**Personal interviews:** This included youth aged 15 to 35 years randomly selected across the targeted districts

**Institutional interviews:** Key informants included heads of institutions that provide support to you through youth livelihoods, formal education, youth counseling and transformation.

**Government officials, Non-Governmental Organizations and private sector:** This included key officials responsible for policymaking or law enforcement related to youth or violence. In each of the districts, these categories of respondents were critically identified and interviewed based on the sample size.

**Focus Group Discussion (FGD):** This involved youth that were not selected for the personal interviews. They were strategically selected at their usual places of daily life. E.g Ghettos, Okada (commercial motorbike riders) ground.

### 3.4 Data collection procedure

A cross-sectional survey was conducted to gather quantitative data from a sample of youth aged 15-35 across the targeted districts of Sierra Leone. A semi-structured questionnaire was developed in a Kobotoolbox account and deployed in KoboCollect application. The questionnaire comprises both closed-ended questions (to capture demographic information, types of violence experienced or witnessed, and perceived causes) and Likert-scale items (to assess attitudes toward violence and interventions) and open-ended questions for deeper understanding of the responses by the youth.

The survey was administered to a sample of 825 youth, selected using both purposive and simple random sampling techniques to ensure representation from both urban and rural areas, different



educational backgrounds, and varying employment statuses. Youth were selected from strategic youth locations, such as the ghettos, commercial moto-bike riders' parks, ataya bases (a famous youth gathering point to drink a coffee-like product). Data collection was conducted over a three-week period following a training of team leads of data collectors that was conducted for two days 4th & 5th September 2024 at the Pastoral Centre in Kenema, targeting the capacity-building of participants to effectively collect data and train other enumerators at the district level. A total of eleven (11) participants were trained in action research methodologies, ethical considerations, and the use of both digital and paper-based data collection tools, specifically Kobocollect. These trained enumerators facilitated survey administration, ensuring consistent and reliable data collection. Below shows the photos of the training session;



In addition to quantitative data collection, qualitative data were collected to gain a deeper understanding of the quantitative findings and explore the nuanced perspectives of youth on the causes, dynamics, and solutions to youth violence. This aspect involved conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs). A total of thirty-three (33) FGDs were held with youth participants selected in their natural environment, ensuring representation from diverse backgrounds (urban/rural, different levels of education, employment status, etc.). Each group consisted of 8-15 participants and the discussions were facilitated using a semi-structured guide that focused on key themes aligned with the quantitative questionnaire. The FGDs lasted approximately 1.5 to 2 hours and were conducted in locations comfortable and familiar for the participants.

Additionally, 66 KIIs were conducted with community leaders, youth activists, representatives from NGOs, institutions, local government officials, and law enforcement personnel selected based on their involvement in youth management at various levels. These interviews were designed

to provide insights into the broader context of youth violence, community-level responses, and the effectiveness of existing interventions.

### 3.5 Action Research Model/Framework

*This research adopted a **Participatory Action Research (PAR) model** as the most appropriate model for understanding the causes and dynamics of youth violence in Sierra Leone and developing evidence-based interventions. Key reasons for using this model are as follows:*

**Collaboration with Communities:** *PAR emphasizes active participation and collaboration with the youth and affected communities. Involving them directly helps ensure that the solutions and interventions developed are grounded in their lived experiences, making them more relevant and sustainable.*

**Addressing Complex Social Issues:** *Youth violence is often influenced by a range of social, economic, and cultural factors. PAR's iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection allow for adapting strategies as new insights emerge, crucial for tackling complex issues like violence.*

**Empowerment and Ownership of results:** *PAR empowers participants by involving them in the research process, which can be an important part of the solution itself. It helps youth, decision makers and community members take ownership of the interventions, increasing the likelihood of a long-term positive impact.*

**Evidence-Based Interventions:** *PAR's focus on ongoing observation and reflection helps build evidence-based insights, which align with the aim of this research to provide recommendations that are informed by data and real-world engagement.*

### 3.6 Quality assurance

The members of the consultancy team remained in close contact with each other and with CPS partners, especially the YMCA-SL throughout the research. The lead consultant, SLYMCA lead, and the Civil Peace Service (CPS) coordinators regularly interacted with the field team to ensure appropriate data collection all stages of the research process and, where needed, meetings were held to discuss progress or issues. Quantitative data collection was further checked using the electronic data collection tool that allowed real-time tracking of data collection processes and GIS positioning tracking to enhance effective sampling distribution. Data were synchronized in the central server hosted by the lead consultant and fully supervised for consistency and accuracy of data. Feedback were provided to all the data collectors on the status of the data received on a daily basis. Thorough cleaning and validation of the data were done prior to analysis in closed collaboration with all the data collection leads.



### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to ethical guidelines to ensure the safety, confidentiality, and voluntary participation of all respondents. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Most of the data were anonymized to protect the identity of participants, and only the research team had access to the raw data, which were securely stored in password-protected files by the led consultant.

### **3.8 Data Analysis and interpretation**

#### ***3.8.1 Quantitative Data Analysis***

The quantitative data were participatorily analyzed involving the youth who collected the data using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants, the types and prevalence of youth violence, and the perceived causes. Inferential statistics, including chi-square tests and logistic regression, were applied to examine the associations between demographic variables and experiences of youth violence, as well as to identify significant predictors of youth involvement in violence. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS software.

#### ***3.8.2 Qualitative data analysis***

The qualitative data from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant's Interviews (KIIs) were directly written or audio-recorded (with consent), transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis involved content analysis of transcripts to identify key themes and patterns related to youth violence, its causes, and possible interventions. The qualitative data helped to explain and contextualize the quantitative findings, providing a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

#### ***3.8.3 Data presentation***

The quantitative and qualitative data were integrated during the interpretation phase of the study. The findings from the quantitative survey were used to identify key areas for deeper explanation in the qualitative results, such as specific causes of youth violence or attitudes toward different interventions and trend of violence over the last ten years. The qualitative data provided context and depth to the statistical results, helping to explain why certain patterns or associations were observed in the quantitative data. Qualitative data captured from each of the districts were analyzed separately and further comparative analysis conducted across all the districts to clearly present the similarities and differences across the districts. A triangulation approach was used to validate the findings, ensuring that the conclusions drawn were robust and reflective of the diverse experiences and perspectives of youth in Sierra Leone.

A separate section has been provided for the summarized FGDs and KIIs to further deepen the results generated across the districts. The quantitative analyses have been presented using crosstabulation, simple bar and pie charts depicting the number and percentages of respondents based on specific responses.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 RESULTS AND CRITICAL DISCUSSIONS

This section presents an analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the sampled districts. It is organized around the specific objectives of the study, providing analyses and corresponding descriptions for each. Additionally, summaries of responses from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) are integrated into the descriptions, with a separate section dedicated to a more detailed presentation of these findings.

### 4.1 SOCIOECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE YOUTH

This section provides an analysis of the age, gender, education, and employment status of the youth interviewed across districts. These sociodemographic and economic factors were examined to gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics of the youth population. The findings were further utilized to explore the relationship between these characteristics and the youth's knowledge of youth violence.

#### 4.1.1 Age distribution of the youth

The age categories of the youth were captured to understand the age bracket of the respondents with respect to their understanding and involvement in violence in their various communities.

Table 2: Age Disaggregation of the respondents

Age disaggregation by district						
	Age of the respondent					Total
		15-20yrs	21-25 yrs	26-31 yrs	32-35 yrs	
Bo	Count	28	23	9	15	75
	%	37.3%	30.7%	12.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Bombali	Count	10	23	33	9	75
	%	13.3%	30.7%	44.0%	12.0%	100.0%
Kailahun	Count	20	31	14	10	75
	%	26.7%	41.3%	18.7%	13.3%	100.0%
Kambia	Count	10	22	20	23	75
	%	13.3%	29.3%	26.7%	30.7%	100.0%
Kenema	Count	10	35	21	9	75
	%	13.3%	46.7%	28.0%	12.0%	100.0%
Koinadugu	Count	5	22	31	17	75
	%	6.7%	29.3%	41.3%	22.7%	100.0%
Kono	Count	15	38	13	9	75
	%	20.0%	50.7%	17.3%	12.0%	100.0%
Port Loko	Count	12	33	16	14	75
	%	16.0%	44.0%	21.3%	18.7%	100.0%
Pujehun	Count	13	28	16	18	75
	%	17.3%	37.3%	21.3%	24.0%	100.0%
W/Rural	Count	12	27	19	17	75
	%	16.0%	36.0%	25.3%	22.7%	100.0%
W/Urban	Count	12	29	19	15	75
	%	16.0%	38.7%	25.3%	20.0%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>825</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>17.8%</b>	<b>37.7%</b>	<b>25.6%</b>	<b>18.9%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Action Research Sept 2024

This analysis presents an age disaggregation of respondents across various districts. Among the 825 total respondents, 37.7% fell within the 21-25 years age group, making it the largest segment, followed by 25.6% in the 26-31 years bracket. The 15-20 years group constitutes 17.8%, and the 32-35 years group is the smallest at 18.9%.

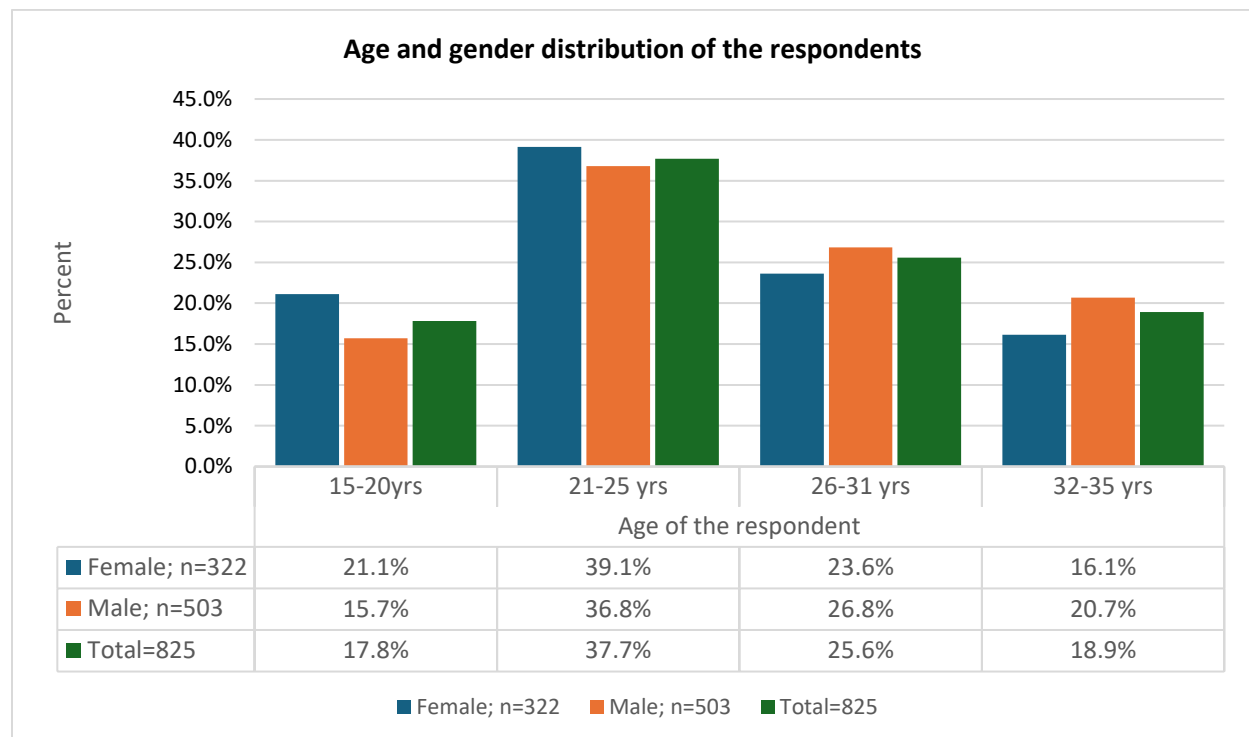
District-wise, Bo shows a relatively even distribution, with the highest proportion in the 15-20 years group (37.3%). Bombali has a notable concentration in the 26-31 years group (44%), while Kailahun's largest segment is 21-25 years (41.3%). Kambia and Kenema also have higher

representation in the 21-25 years bracket (29.3% and 46.7%, respectively). Koinadugu and Kono show a stronger presence in the 26-31 years category, with Kono's 50.7% in the 21-25 group being the highest percentage across all districts. Other districts like Port Loko, Pujehun, and Western areas exhibit varying distributions, with the majority of respondents aged between 21 and 31 years.

#### 4.1.2 Age and gender distribution

Further analysis in figure 2 shows the age and gender distribution of the youth interviewed.

**Figure 2: Age and gender distribution**



**Source: Action Research data, CPS 2024**

Figure 2 shows the age distribution of 825 respondents, divided by gender. Among 322 females, the largest group (39.1%) is aged 21-25 years, followed by 23.6% in the 26-31 age group. Among 503 males, 36.8% are in the 21-25 years range, with 26.8% in the 26-31 group. Overall, 37.7% of respondents are aged 21-25, making it the most represented group, followed by 25.6% in the 26-31 age range. The youngest (15-20) and oldest (32-35) age groups have lower percentages, with males more represented in older age groups compared to females. In addition, Of the total youth interviewed, 97% of are abled and very few (3%) were differently abled/disabled

### 4.1.3 Educational level by district

Table 3: Educational level by district

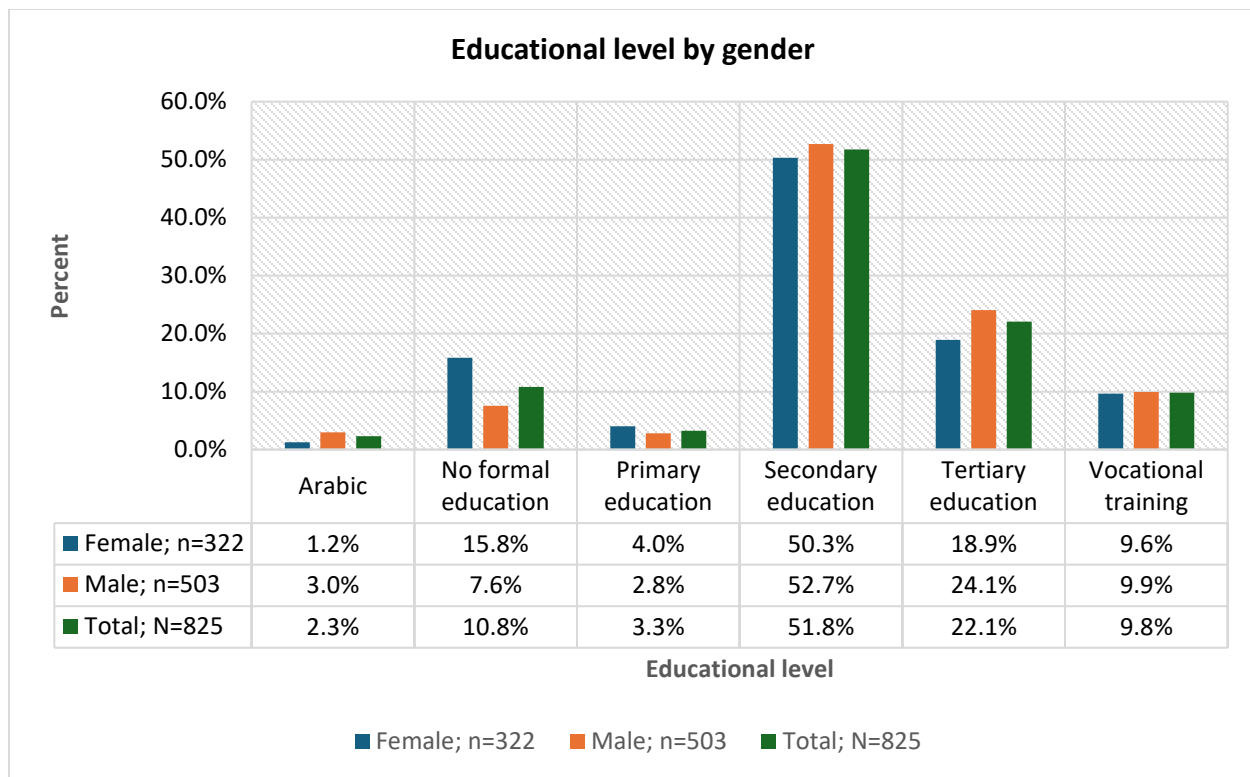
Educational level of the youth disaggregated by District								
District	Educational Background							Total
		Arabic	No formal education	Primary education	Secondary education	Tertiary education	Vocational training	
Bo	Count	1	7	1	46	11	9	75
	%	1.3%	9.3%	1.3%	61.3%	14.7%	12.0%	100.0%
Bombali	Count	3	8	2	25	27	10	75
	%	4.0%	10.7%	2.7%	33.3%	36.0%	13.3%	100.0%
Kailahun	Count	0	6	5	51	10	3	75
	%	0.0%	8.0%	6.7%	68.0%	13.3%	4.0%	100.0%
Kambia	Count	3	13	6	31	12	10	75
	%	4.0%	17.3%	8.0%	41.3%	16.0%	13.3%	100.0%
Kenema	Count	1	8	0	38	27	1	75
	%	1.3%	10.7%	0.0%	50.7%	36.0%	1.3%	100.0%
Koinadugu	Count	1	17	6	38	9	4	75
	%	1.3%	22.7%	8.0%	50.7%	12.0%	5.3%	100.0%
Kono	Count	0	6	2	48	14	5	75
	%	0.0%	8.0%	2.7%	64.0%	18.7%	6.7%	100.0%
Port Loko	Count	1	2	1	53	11	7	75
	%	1.3%	2.7%	1.3%	70.7%	14.7%	9.3%	100.0%
Pujehun	Count	5	11	2	34	17	6	75
	%	6.7%	14.7%	2.7%	45.3%	22.7%	8.0%	100.0%
W/Rural	Count	2	9	1	35	7	21	75
	%	2.7%	12.0%	1.3%	46.7%	9.3%	28.0%	100.0%
W/Urban	Count	2	2	1	28	37	5	75
	%	2.7%	2.7%	1.3%	37.3%	49.3%	6.7%	100.0%
Total	Count	19	89	27	427	182	81	825
	%	2.3%	10.8%	3.3%	51.8%	22.1%	9.8%	100.0%

Source: Action Research data, CPS 2024

The analysis in table 3 reveals that secondary education is the most common (51.8%), followed by tertiary education (22.1%) and vocational training (9.8%). Notably, districts like Bo and Port Loko have the highest percentages of youth with secondary education, while Western Urban leads in tertiary education (49.3%). However, some districts, such as Koinadugu and Kambia, show concerning levels of youth with no formal education (22.7% and 17.3%, respectively), highlighting disparities in educational access across the regions.

#### 4.1.4 Educational level by gender

Figure 3: Educational level by gender



**Source: Action Research data, CPS 2024**

The analysis of educational background by gender in figure 3 shows that the majority of both females (50.3%) and males (52.7%) have completed secondary education. Males are slightly more likely to have tertiary education (24.1%) compared to females (18.9%), while a higher percentage of females (15.8%) have no formal education compared to males (7.6%). The percentage of individuals with Arabic education is higher among males (3.0%) than females (1.2%). Overall, secondary education is the most common level attained, followed by tertiary education, with a smaller percentage of the population involved in vocational training (9.8%).

### 4.1.5 Employment status

Table 4: Employment status analysis

Employment status by district							
District		Employment Status					Total
		Casual labour	In-paid employed	Self-employed	Student	Unemployed	
Bo	Count	0	3	20	40	12	75
	%	0.0%	4.0%	26.7%	53.3%	16.0%	100.0%
Bombali	Count	4	7	17	38	9	75
	%	5.3%	9.3%	22.7%	50.7%	12.0%	100.0%
Kailahun	Count	1	6	36	26	6	75
	%	1.3%	8.0%	48.0%	34.7%	8.0%	100.0%
Kambia	Count	0	8	40	9	18	75
	%	0.0%	10.7%	53.3%	12.0%	24.0%	100.0%
Kenema	Count	1	6	21	40	7	75
	%	1.3%	8.0%	28.0%	53.3%	9.3%	100.0%
Koinadugu	Count	3	2	33	13	24	75
	%	4.0%	2.7%	44.0%	17.3%	32.0%	100.0%
Kono	Count	2	4	31	27	11	75
	%	2.7%	5.3%	41.3%	36.0%	14.7%	100.0%
Port Loko	Count	8	6	24	8	29	75
	%	10.7%	8.0%	32.0%	10.7%	38.7%	100.0%
Pujehun	Count	7	9	22	25	12	75
	%	9.3%	12.0%	29.3%	33.3%	16.0%	100.0%
W/Rural	Count	10	4	31	23	7	75
	%	13.3%	5.3%	41.3%	30.7%	9.3%	100.0%
W/Urban	Count	3	5	15	42	10	75
	%	4.0%	6.7%	20.0%	56.0%	13.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	39	60	290	291	145	825
	%	4.7%	7.3%	35.2%	35.3%	17.6%	100.0%

Source: Action Research data, CPS 2024

The analysis of employment status by district in table 4 indicates that the largest groups are self-employed (35.2%) and students (35.3%), indicating a significant focus on entrepreneurship and education across districts. The highest rates of self-employment are seen in Kambia (53.3%) and Kailahun (48.0%), while Bo and Kenema have the largest proportions of students (53.3% each). Casual labor is least common overall (4.7%) but is most prevalent in Port Loko (10.7%) and Western Rural (13.3%). Unemployment is highest in Port Loko (38.7%) and Koinadugu (32.0%), highlighting employment challenges in these areas.



## 4.2 ROOT CAUSES OF YOUTH VIOLENCE IN SIERRA LEONE

The root causes of violence were traced back from the types of violence witnessed by the youth in their communities, ranking of the violence witnessed and deducing the actual causes based on the violence revealed.

### 4.2.1 Types of violence witnessed in the community

Youth were asked to state the violence that they have witnessed in their communities in the last five years. Multiple responses were captured and analyzed as indicated in table 5;

*Table 5: Types of violence witnessed by youth*

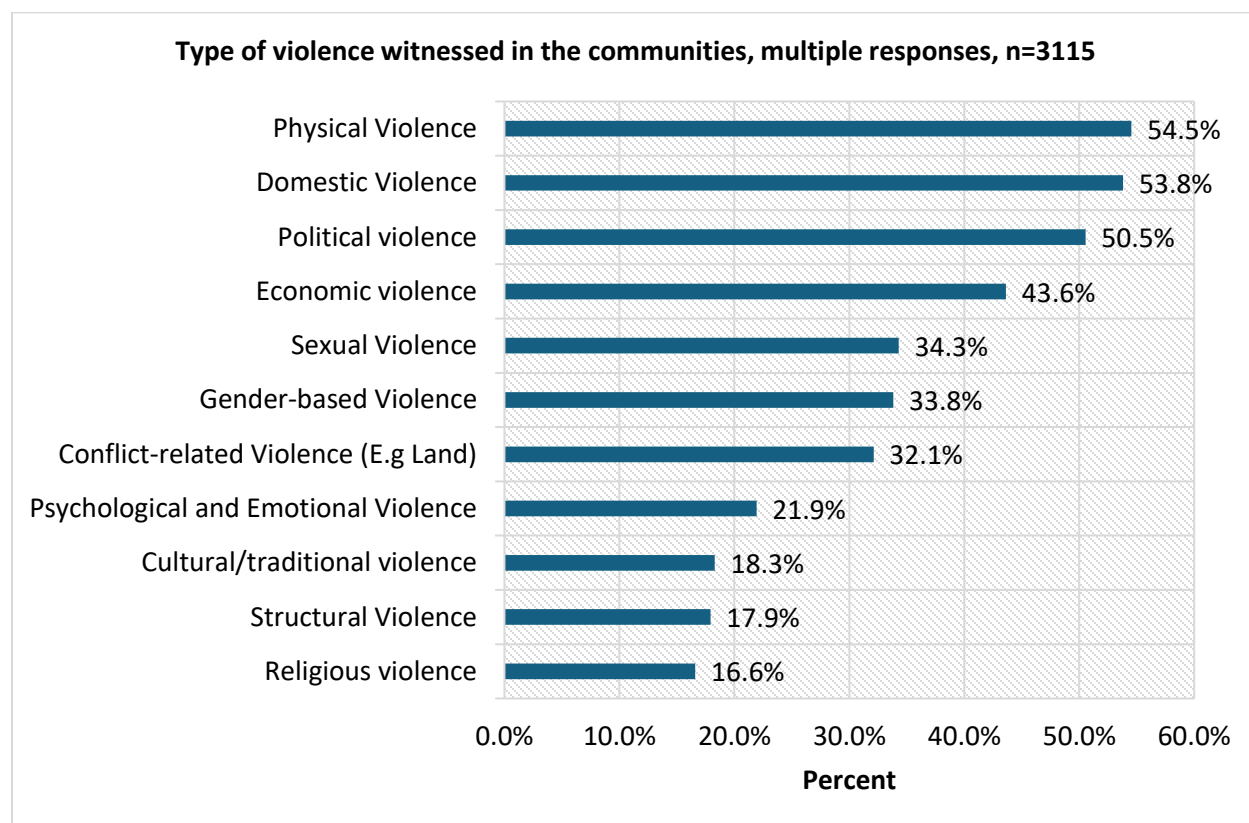
Which type of violence that you have witnessed or are aware of in your community												
District		Political violence	Economic violence	Sexual Violence	Cultural/traditional violence	Religious violence	Physical Violence	Gender-based Violence	Structural Violence	Conflict-related Violence (E.g Land)	Psychological and Emotional Violence	Domestic Violence
Bo; n=75	Count	40	42	37	24	21	46	48	47	42	36	51
	%	53.3%	56.0%	49.3%	32.0%	28.0%	61.3%	64.0%	62.7%	56.0%	48.0%	68.0%
Bombali; n=75	Count	35	41	23	12	11	38	13	7	8	4	29
	%	46.7%	54.7%	30.7%	16.0%	14.7%	50.7%	17.3%	9.3%	10.7%	5.3%	38.7%
Kailahun; n=75	Count	34	43	10	17	3	33	7	7	28	8	48
	%	45.3%	57.3%	13.3%	22.7%	4.0%	44.0%	9.3%	9.3%	37.3%	10.7%	64.0%
Kambia; n=75	Count	35	37	19	10	7	52	24	5	21	27	42
	%	46.7%	49.3%	25.3%	13.3%	9.3%	69.3%	32.0%	6.7%	28.0%	36.0%	56.0%
Kenema; n=75	Count	22	12	11	3	1	29	13	2	9	11	23
	%	29.3%	16.0%	14.7%	4.0%	1.3%	38.7%	17.3%	2.7%	12.0%	14.7%	30.7%
Koinadugu; n=75	Count	73	67	63	47	48	74	65	51	71	58	73
	%	97.3%	89.3%	84.0%	62.7%	64.0%	98.7%	86.7%	68.0%	94.7%	77.3%	97.3%
Kono; n=75	Count	51	40	36	14	8	21	12	3	12	11	9
	%	68.0%	53.3%	48.0%	18.7%	10.7%	28.0%	16.0%	4.0%	16.0%	14.7%	12.0%
Port Loko; n=75	Count	21	3	4	2	2	48	18	0	17	0	46
	%	28.0%	4.0%	5.3%	2.7%	2.7%	64.0%	24.0%	0.0%	22.7%	0.0%	61.3%
Pujehun; n=75	Count	60	29	45	13	23	39	48	15	34	18	61
	%	80.0%	38.7%	60.0%	17.3%	30.7%	52.0%	64.0%	20.0%	45.3%	24.0%	81.3%
W/Rural; n=75	Count	10	36	12	2	7	29	8	7	13	3	24
	%	13.3%	48.0%	16.0%	2.7%	9.3%	38.7%	10.7%	9.3%	17.3%	4.0%	32.0%
W/Urban; n=75	Count	36	10	23	7	6	41	23	4	10	5	38
	%	48.0%	13.3%	30.7%	9.3%	8.0%	54.7%	30.7%	5.3%	13.3%	6.7%	50.7%
Total	Count	417	360	283	151	137	450	279	148	265	181	444
	%	50.5%	43.6%	34.3%	18.3%	16.6%	54.5%	33.8%	17.9%	32.1%	21.9%	53.8%

**Source: Action Research data, CPS 2024**

The analysis of different types of violence witnessed across the districts in Sierra Leone highlights that political violence (50.5%), economic violence (43.6%), and physical violence (54.5%) are the most frequently reported forms of violence. Districts like Koinadugu and Pujehun report particularly high instances of violence across various categories, with Koinadugu reporting the

highest rates of political (97.3%) and physical violence (98.7%), and Pujehun showing significant levels of domestic violence (81.3%) and conflict-related violence (45.3%). Gender-based violence and domestic violence are prevalent across districts, with rates of 33.8% and 53.8%, respectively. These findings suggest that youth are exposed to multiple forms of violence in their communities, indicating serious social challenges that may affect their well-being and participation in society. Addressing the root causes of such widespread violence is critical for promoting peace and development among Sierra Leone's youth. Further analysis shows that

*Figure 4: Type of violence witnessed in the communities*



**Source: Action Research data, CPS 2024**

The analysis in figure 4 shows that the most three prevalent types of violence reported by respondents are physical violence (54.5%), followed closely by domestic violence (53.8%) and political violence (50.5%). Economic violence is also significant, affecting 43.6% of the population. Other notable types include sexual violence (34.3%), gender-based violence (33.8%), and conflict-related violence (32.1%). Less frequently reported are psychological and emotional violence (21.9%), cultural/traditional violence (18.3%), structural violence (17.9%), and religious violence (16.6%), which were witnessed by a smaller proportion of respondents. Physical and domestic violence stand out as the most commonly witnessed forms of violence.

Moreover, the youth further provided examples of the violences witnessed in their communities including workplace harassment where a young woman was fired after rejecting the director's advances, domestic violence leading to death and injury, and drug-related violence among youths. Family disputes are prevalent, with incidents involving physical abuse, fights over property, and altercations between spouses and siblings. Political violence following elections caused widespread damage and deaths, while gang violence and fights over relationships or money also feature prominently across all the districts. The violence is often rooted in deeper social issues such as drug abuse, structural inequalities, and personal grievances within communities.

#### **4.2.2 Raking of the violence that frequently occurs in communities**

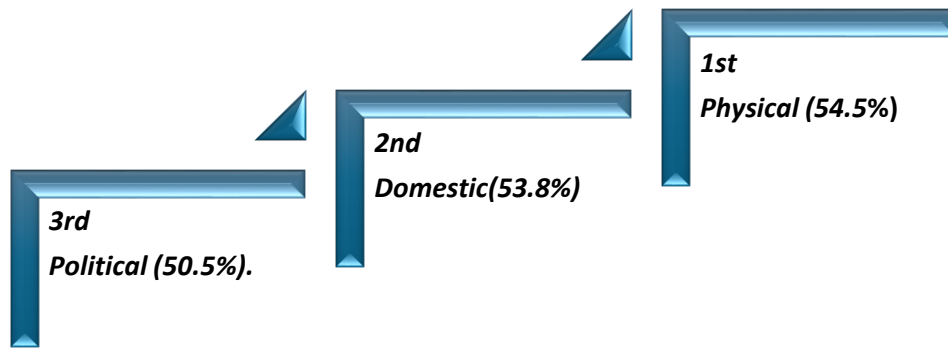
The discussions on youth violence rankings with the respondents revealed three main types of violence that frequently occur across the targeted districts: Physical violence, Domestic violence and political violence. Each form of violence was explained as follows:

**1. Physical Violence (54.5%):** This was defined by the youth as the intentional use of physical force against another person or group that results in injury, harm, or physical suffering. It can include acts such as hitting, beating, or using weapons. Physical violence is often the most visible and immediate form of violence, causing both short-term and long-term physical and psychological impacts in Sierra Leone.

**2. Domestic Violence (53.8%):** According to the youth, domestic violence occurs within the home or family and typically involves abuse between partners, spouses, or other family members. It can manifest as physical, emotional, or psychological abuse and is often rooted in power dynamics where one individual seeks control over another. The high rate of domestic violence suggests that family and intimate partner violence is a significant issue in the communities studied.

**3. Political Violence (50.5%):** The youth associated this type of violence with political processes, conflicts, or struggles for power. It can include acts such as protests turning violent, suppression of political dissent, election-related violence, and targeted attacks on political figures or supporters. Political violence often stems from struggles for control over resources, governance, or ideological differences and can disrupt the social and political fabric of communities.

These forms of violence are widespread and have profound impacts on the communities.

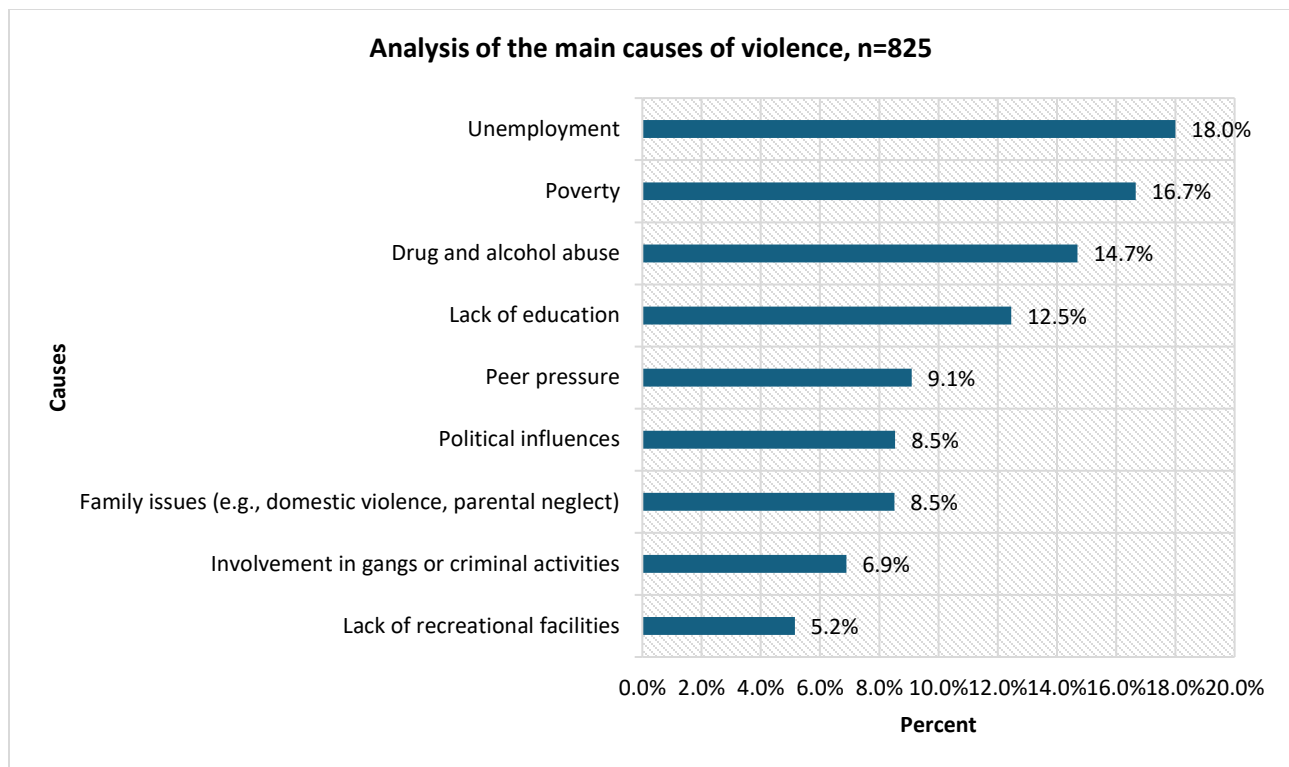


The analysis reveals that physical violence is the most prevalent form of violence across the districts, with 54.5% of the multiple-choice responses ranking it first, followed by domestic violence with 53.8% ranking it second and political violence with 50.5%, ranked the third most frequently occurring violence across the districts.

Gender-based and sexual violence are also notable, with regional significance in the North and East, reflecting diverse social issues.

### 4.2.3 The root cause of violence in your communities.

Figure 5: Overall summary of the root causes of violence



**Source: Action Research data, CPS 2024**

From the overall analysis of the personal interviews in figure 5, unemployment among the youth was mostly mentioned by 18% of the respondents as the major cause of youth violence across Sierra Leone, followed by poverty (16.7%) and the least mentioned was the lack of recreational facilities (5.2%). Focus Group Discussions across the regions are revealed as follows:

The Eastern Region also identified root causes such as unemployment, drug abuse, and political influence. A critical point raised was about land grabbing, which some saw as a significant issue: “Land disputes lead to youth unrest in our communities.” The Northern Region similarly highlighted unemployment and peer influence, adding that political affiliations can trigger violence, particularly during elections. A participant remarked, “Wearing party colors can easily lead to violent confrontations.”

In the Southern Region, lack of parental care and peer pressure were prominent, with discussions revealing that women’s roles could incite violence, as one participant noted, “Sometimes, unnecessary argument about political party relevance and contributions to Sierra Leone’s economic growth led to violence.” The Western Area also cited unemployment and poverty but placed significant emphasis on gang membership and negative role models as critical contributors.

A common sentiment expressed was, “Without job opportunities, our youth turn to gangs for belonging.” While the regions shared overlapping causes, the emphasis on specific factors varied, reflecting localized concerns.

Moreover, the Key Informants’ interviews revealed as follows: The root causes of youth violence across the districts are strongly linked to socio-economic conditions such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education, and drug abuse. In addition, key informants highlight frustration, political manipulation, family breakdown, and peer pressure as contributing factors to youth violence. The Blind School and the Prison note the role of drugs and political influences in perpetuating violence. The influence of secret societies, media exposure, and the rising availability of violent content as exacerbating factors of youth violence.

The causes of youth violence are largely consistent across the targeted districts, with poverty, unemployment, and political manipulation being common themes.

### 4.3 PERSPECTIVES FROM YOUTH ON EXPERIENCES WITH VIOLENCE

The youth were asked to state their experience with youth violence or involvement in youth violence. Results were critically analyzed as indicated in table 9:

#### 4.3.1 Involvement of youth in Violence

*Table 6: Youth experience or involvement in violence in their communities disaggregated by district*

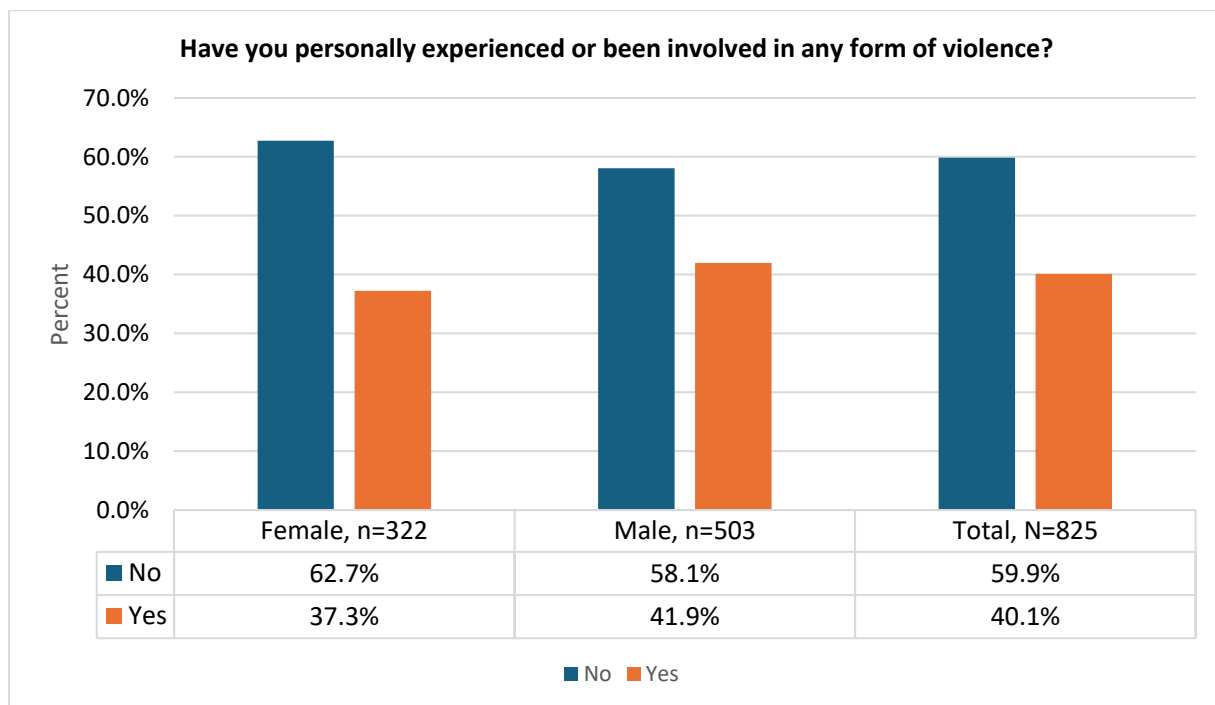
Have you personally experienced or been involved in any form of violence?				
District		Have you personally experienced or been involved in any form of violence?		Total
		No	Yes	
Bo	Count	53	22	75
	%	70.7%	29.3%	100.0%
Bombali	Count	52	23	75
	%	69.3%	30.7%	100.0%
Kailahun	Count	44	31	75
	%	58.7%	41.3%	100.0%
Kambia	Count	63	12	75
	%	84.0%	16.0%	100.0%
Kenema	Count	63	12	75
	%	84.0%	16.0%	100.0%
Koinadugu	Count	9	66	75
	%	12.0%	88.0%	100.0%
Kono	Count	44	31	75
	%	58.7%	41.3%	100.0%
Port Loko	Count	54	21	75
	%	72.0%	28.0%	100.0%

Have you personally experienced or been involved in any form of violence?				
District		Have you personally experienced or been involved in any form of violence?		Total
		No	Yes	
Pujehun	Count	16	59	75
	%	21.3%	78.7%	100.0%
W/Rural	Count	35	40	75
	%	46.7%	53.3%	100.0%
W/Urban	Count	61	14	75
	%	81.3%	18.7%	100.0%
Total	Count	494	331	825
	%	59.9%	40.1%	100.0%

Source: Action Research data, CPS 2024

The analysis shows varying levels of involvement in violence across different districts. Overall, 40.1% of the respondents reported experiencing or being involved in violence. Koinadugu and Pujehun have the highest percentages of violence involvement at 88.0% and 78.7%, respectively. In contrast, districts like Kenema and Kambia reported the lowest involvement, with only 16.0% of respondents experiencing violence. Western Rural is the only district where the majority (53.3%) reported involvement in violence, while most other districts, including Bo, Bombali, and W/Urban, had the majority of respondents not involved in violence, ranging from 69.3% to 84.0%.

Figure 6: Youth experience or involvement in violence in their communities disaggregated by gender



## Source: Action Research data, CPS 2024

The figure above shows that overall, 40.1% of respondents have experienced or been involved in some form of violence, with a slightly higher percentage of males (41.9%) reporting this compared to females (37.3%). Conversely, more females (62.7%) reported not being involved in violence compared to males (58.1%). Despite these differences, the majority of both genders have not experienced violence, with 59.9% of the total respondents indicating no involvement.

*In order to test the relationship and association between the involvement in violence and gender of the respondents, the Chi-Square test results suggest that there is no statistically significant association between the variables being tested. The Pearson Chi-Square value is 1.791 with a p-value (Asymptotic Significance) of 0.181, which is greater than the typical threshold of 0.05, indicating that the observed differences between the groups could be due to chance. Similarly, the Continuity Correction and Likelihood Ratio tests show p-values of 0.206 and 0.180, respectively, which also suggest no significant relationship between the gender or the respondents and their involvement in violence. Fisher's Exact Test, used for smaller samples, shows a two-sided significance of 0.190 and a one-sided significance of 0.103, both of which reinforce the conclusion that the results are not statistically significant.*

Moreover, the Focus Group Discussion and Key Informants' interviews revealed that in the Eastern Region, youth often act as peace ambassadors, helping to diffuse tensions, although a minority succumb to peer pressure, leading to involvement in violence. One participant highlighted, "Many of us want peace, but some just can't resist the pull of violence." In the Northern Region, personal experiences included theft and political intimidation, revealing a 50-50 split in community responses, with individuals either engaging with or avoiding violence. An important observation was, "Parents feel ashamed when violence erupts, but often they are powerless."

The Southern Region pointed out harassment by drug-influenced youth and systemic issues such as sexual harassment from teachers. A participant stated, "Schools should be safe spaces, yet we see harassment happening instead." In the Western Area, fear and distrust toward perpetrators were prevalent, with communities feeling helpless. A respondent captured this sentiment: "We want to help, but there's a fear of those who commit violence." The shared experiences across regions underscored a common fear of violence but differed in how communities perceive and respond to it.



### 4.3.2 Feeling of youth about violence

Youth were asked to state their feelings about the level of youth violence in their communities. Responses were critically analyzed and summarized in table 10 below;

*Table 7: Feeling of youth about the level of violence in their communities*

How do you feel about the level of youth violence in your community?							
District		How do you feel about the level of youth violence in your community?					Total
		Neutral	Not concerned at all	Not very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Very concerned	
Bo	Count	6	4	1	8	56	75
	%	8.0%	5.3%	1.3%	10.7%	74.7%	100.0%
Bombali	Count	0	0	2	9	64	75
	%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	12.0%	85.3%	100.0%
Kailahun	Count	9	0	4	29	33	75
	%	12.0%	0.0%	5.3%	38.7%	44.0%	100.0%
Kambia	Count	5	6	2	2	60	75
	%	6.7%	8.0%	2.7%	2.7%	80.0%	100.0%
Kenema	Count	2	5	1	8	59	75
	%	2.7%	6.7%	1.3%	10.7%	78.7%	100.0%
Koinadugu	Count	0	0	0	2	73	75
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	97.3%	100.0%
Kono	Count	0	1	2	6	66	75
	%	0.0%	1.3%	2.7%	8.0%	88.0%	100.0%
Port Loko	Count	2	0	2	1	70	75
	%	2.7%	0.0%	2.7%	1.3%	93.3%	100.0%
Pujehun	Count	6	0	4	27	38	75
	%	8.0%	0.0%	5.3%	36.0%	50.7%	100.0%
W/Rural	Count	0	0	0	8	67	75
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.7%	89.3%	100.0%
W/Urban	Count	11	3	5	24	32	75
	%	14.7%	4.0%	6.7%	32.0%	42.7%	100.0%
Total	Count	41	19	23	124	618	825
	%	5.0%	2.3%	2.8%	15.0%	74.9%	100.0%

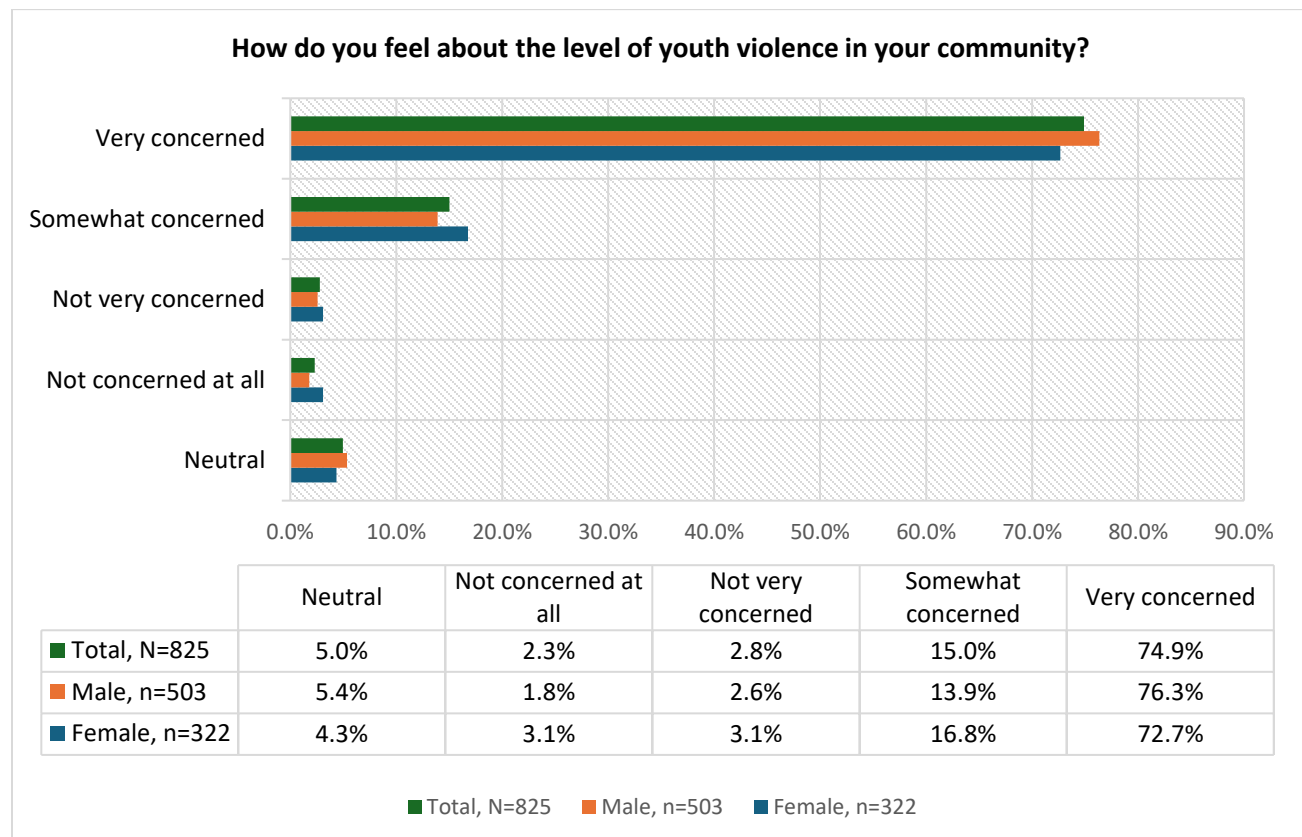
**Source: Action Research data, CPS 2024**

The analysis reveals that the majority of respondents across districts are very concerned about the level of youth violence in their communities, with 74.9% expressing this concern. The highest levels of concern were revealed in districts like Koinadugu (97.3%), Port Loko (93.3%), and Kono (88.0%), while Kailahun and W/Urban show more mixed feelings, with 44.0% and 42.7% being

very concerned, respectively. Only a small percentage of respondents (2.3%) are not concerned at all, and the remaining respondents fall into categories of being somewhat, not very, or neutral about youth violence, with districts like Kailahun and Pujehun having relatively higher neutral or moderate responses. Overall, the data reflects a widespread concern about youth violence in most districts.

### 4.3.3 Overall analysis of the level of feelings about youth violence

Figure 7: Overall analysis of the level of feelings about youth violence



Source: Action Research data, CPS 2024

The analysis in figure 7, shows that the majority of both males and females are very concerned about youth violence in their communities, with 76.3% of males and 72.7% of females expressing this concern. A smaller percentage are somewhat concerned, with 16.8% of females and 13.9% of males falling into this category. Only a small proportion of respondents are neutral or not concerned, with 5.0% feeling neutral overall and 2.3% not concerned at all. Across both genders, the concern about youth violence is overwhelmingly high (74.9%), with minimal variation between males and females.

#### 4.3.4 Trusted stakeholders to address youth violence

Table 8: Trusted stakeholders to address youth violence

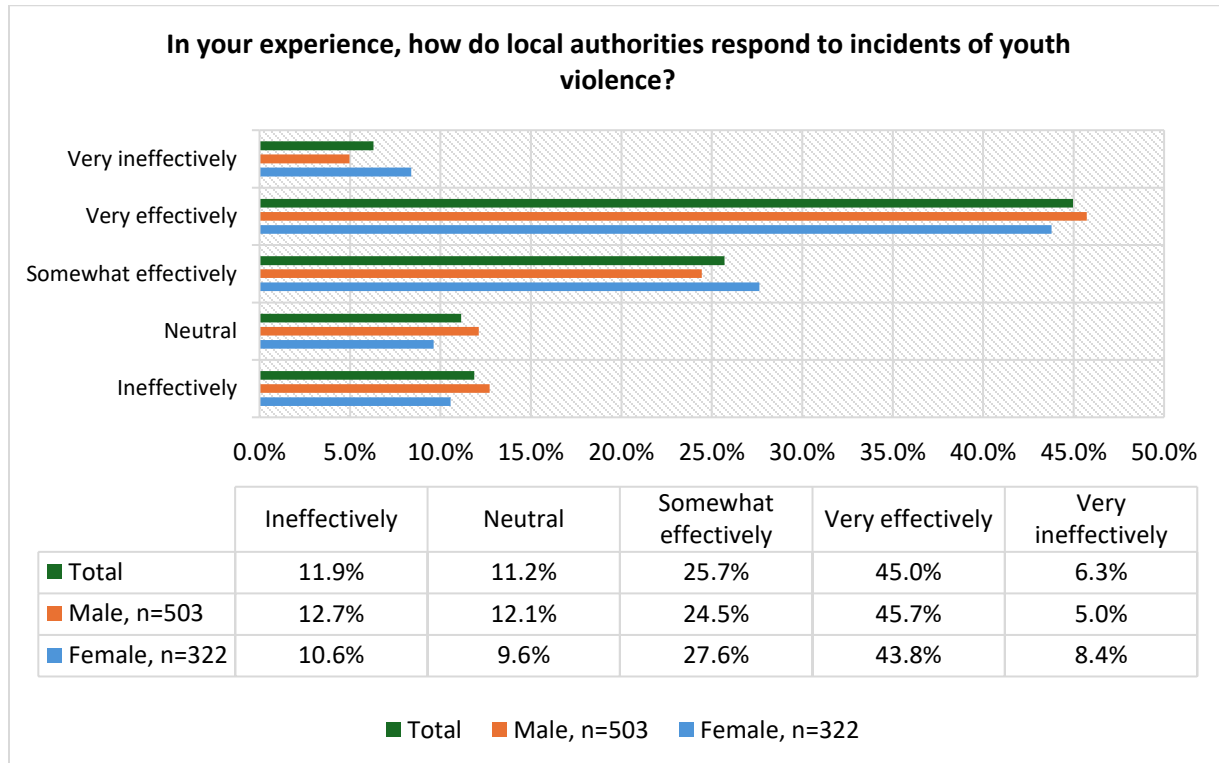
Which stakeholder do you believe should be most involved in reducing youth violence in your community?									
District		Which stakeholder do you believe should be most involved in reducing youth violence in your community?							Total
		Community leaders	Educational institutions	Families and parents	Government authorities	NGOs and civil society organizations	Religious institutions	Youth themselves	
Bo	Count	7	2	0	54	0	2	10	75
	%	9.3%	2.7%	0.0%	72.0%	0.0%	2.7%	13.3%	100.0%
Bombali	Count	15	0	0	54	3	2	1	75
	%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	72.0%	4.0%	2.7%	1.3%	100.0%
Kailahun	Count	19	0	1	38	7	0	10	75
	%	25.3%	0.0%	1.3%	50.7%	9.3%	0.0%	13.3%	100.0%
Kambia	Count	19	0	1	27	19	0	9	75
	%	25.3%	0.0%	1.3%	36.0%	25.3%	0.0%	12.0%	100.0%
Kenema	Count	23	0	1	25	0	3	23	75
	%	30.7%	0.0%	1.3%	33.3%	0.0%	4.0%	30.7%	100.0%
Koinadugu	Count	14	0	1	51	2	0	7	75
	%	18.7%	0.0%	1.3%	68.0%	2.7%	0.0%	9.3%	100.0%
Kono	Count	17	4	1	42	3	1	7	75
	%	22.7%	5.3%	1.3%	56.0%	4.0%	1.3%	9.3%	100.0%
Port Loko	Count	33	0	3	33	0	2	4	75
	%	44.0%	0.0%	4.0%	44.0%	0.0%	2.7%	5.3%	100.0%
Pujehun	Count	16	0	3	47	0	0	9	75
	%	21.3%	0.0%	4.0%	62.7%	0.0%	0.0%	12.0%	100.0%
W/Rural	Count	41	6	2	18	6	0	2	75
	%	54.7%	8.0%	2.7%	24.0%	8.0%	0.0%	2.7%	100.0%
W/Urban	Count	6	5	4	46	3	1	10	75
	%	8.0%	6.7%	5.3%	61.3%	4.0%	1.3%	13.3%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>825</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>25.5%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>52.7%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Action Research data, CPS 2024

The analysis shows that the majority of the youth believe government authorities should be most involved in reducing youth violence, with 52.7% across all districts expressing this view. Community leaders are the second most favored, with 25.5% of respondents selecting them, especially in districts like W/Rural (54.7%) and Port Loko (44.0%). Other stakeholders, such as youth themselves (11.2%) and NGOs/civil society organizations (5.2%), were less frequently identified, with educational institutions, families, and religious institutions receiving minimal support (all below 3%). The data highlights a clear preference for government and community involvement in addressing youth violence, with some variation across districts.

### 4.3.5 Attitudes of local authorities to youth violence

Figure 8: Attitudes of local authorities to youth violence



Source: Action Research data, CPS 2024

The analysis shows that the majority of respondents, both male and female, believe that efforts to address youth violence in their communities are either "very effective" (45.0%) or "somewhat effective" (25.7%). A smaller percentage feel these efforts are ineffective, with 11.9% rating them as "ineffective" and 6.3% as "very ineffective." Neutral responses account for 11.2%. Males are slightly more likely than females to view efforts as either "very effective" or "neutral," while females are slightly more likely to consider them "very ineffective." Overall, most respondents perceive the efforts as effective to some degree.

## 4.4 EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.4.1 Interventions mentioned by the youth to address youth violence

The analysis of youth responses on interventions to prevent youth violence revealed several key strategies. The most frequently mentioned intervention was job creation and economic empowerment initiatives, which received 21.6% of responses, indicating that many youth believe economic opportunities can reduce violence. Education or vocational training programs followed closely with 20.3%, suggesting that enhancing skills and education could help youth avoid violent behavior. Youth counseling services and community engagement and awareness campaigns were also significant, with 16.5% and 16.8% of responses respectively, emphasizing the importance of mental health support and raising awareness about the impacts of violence. Sports and recreational activities garnered 9.5% of responses, highlighting the role of structured activities in providing positive outlets for energy. Strengthening law enforcement and justice systems was mentioned by 12.7% of respondents, indicating a need for better protection and accountability. Lastly, other interventions accounted for 2.7% of the responses, suggesting additional, less common strategies.

Based on the responses across all the interviews the following recommendations could be considered to address or prevent youth violence in Sierra Leone;

The most relevant recommendations to address youth violence in Sierra Leone based on the analysis of responses include:

**1. Job Creation and Economic Empowerment:** Focus on creating economic opportunities for youth, such as through job creation programs and initiatives that empower them financially, as this was the most cited intervention (21.6% of responses).

**2. Education and Vocational Training:** Implement educational programs and vocational training to equip youth with valuable skills, offering them alternative pathways to employment and reducing the likelihood of engaging in violent behaviors (20.3%).

**3. Youth Counseling and Mental Health Services:** Establish counseling services to support youth in managing stress, trauma, and emotional issues, addressing the mental health aspects that often underlie violent behavior (16.5%).

**4. Community Engagement and Awareness Campaigns:** Increase efforts in raising awareness about the impacts of violence and fostering community involvement, ensuring that youth are educated on peaceful conflict resolution and nonviolent behavior (16.8%).

**5. Sports and Recreational Activities:** Develop more sports and recreational programs to provide youth with constructive outlets for their energy and encourage teamwork, discipline, and positive social interaction (9.5%).

**6. Strengthening Law Enforcement and Justice Systems:** Improve the capacity of law enforcement and the justice system to effectively address violence and ensure accountability, building trust in the rule of law (12.7%).

From the FGDs, The Eastern Region proposed solutions like skills training centers and job creation, with a focus on mentorship programs. A key quote was, “Without jobs and skills, our youth will remain vulnerable.” The Northern Region emphasized education as a crucial intervention, advocating for community engagement and self-discipline among youth. Participants expressed, “Education will empower us to make better choices.”

In the Southern Region, recommendations included restrictions on harmful drugs and the establishment of recreational centers. One participant articulated, “We need places for our youth to engage positively, away from violence.” The Western Area similarly called for multifaceted approaches, advocating for community-based prevention programs and safe spaces. A statement that resonated was, “We must create environments where our youth can thrive without resorting to violence.” Also “We need to invest in free skills education and vocational training for all young people. While all regions recognized the need for systemic changes, specific interventions highlighted varied based on local needs and contexts.

## 4.5 LESSONS LEARNED

Throughout action research across the districts, key lessons learned are as follows:

### **1. The issues of youth violence are multifaceted and require concerted efforts by all relevant players to address it.**

Youth violence in Sierra Leone, as in many other regions, is driven by a complex mix of factors, including poverty, lack of education, unemployment, substance abuse, and weak social structures. These interrelated issues cannot be tackled in isolation. A comprehensive approach is necessary, involving not only youth-focused programs but also broader social reforms. Stakeholders such as government agencies, NGOs, community leaders, law enforcement, schools, and the private sector must collaborate to address the root causes and provide sustainable solutions. This means developing cross-sectoral strategies that integrate education, mental health services, job creation, law enforcement, and community-building efforts to create an environment where youth are empowered to make positive life choices.

### **2. Youth themselves understand the causes of youth violence but have limited knowledge to address the causes of youth violence.**

Young people often have a deep understanding of the challenges they face and the factors that contribute to violence in their communities, such as economic hardship, substance abuse, peer pressure, and family breakdown. However, they may lack the knowledge, skills, or resources to effectively address these issues themselves. This highlights the importance of equipping youth with the tools and knowledge needed to tackle violence, through education, training programs, and community-driven initiatives. By empowering youth to be part of the solution, not only are they more likely to engage in peaceful behaviors, but they also become advocates for change within their own communities

### **3. Most of the interventions geared towards addressing youth violence excluding youth in the design.**

Historically, interventions to combat youth violence have often been designed and implemented by adults or organizations without involving the youth themselves in the decision-making process. This exclusion can lead to programs that do not align with the actual needs or preferences of young people, reducing their effectiveness. To create more relevant and impactful interventions, it is critical to include youth voices in the design and implementation stages. This ensures that programs are tailored to address the issues most important to youth and encourages greater buy-in and participation. Youth should be seen as active partners in finding solutions, rather than passive recipients of interventions.

### **4. Youth are responsive to assessments geared towards understanding their issues.**

Youth are often more willing to engage in discussions about their challenges and offer input when they feel their perspectives are valued and taken seriously. Assessments, surveys, and focus groups that are designed to understand the specific issues faced by youth such as violence, mental health concerns, and access to opportunities have proven to be effective in gathering valuable insights. When young people are given the platform to express their concerns and suggest solutions, they become more invested in the outcomes. This also provides stakeholders with crucial data that can inform the development of more targeted, youth-centered programs.

### **5. Stakeholders have the answers to addressing youth violence in Sierra Leone.**

Stakeholders, including community leaders, government officials, educators, parents, and law enforcement, possess valuable knowledge and experience that can contribute to solving the problem of youth violence. These individuals and groups are often closest to the issues and can provide practical insights into the underlying causes and potential solutions. They also play a critical role in supporting and reinforcing the initiatives that are implemented. To be effective, there must be greater collaboration between all stakeholders, with clear roles and responsibilities. By leveraging the collective knowledge, resources, and expertise of various groups, a holistic and unified approach to tackling youth violence can be developed, leading to sustainable change.



## 4.6 SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND KEY INFORMANTS' INTERVIEWS

### 4.6.1 Summary of Focus Group Discussions

The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) responses were analyzed by region to clearly present the understanding of youth violence, causes and key recommendations based on regional context. In each of the regions, specific districts were reached and their responses summarized.

Table 9: Allocation of districts by region

Eastern Region	Southern Region	Northern Region (including North-West)	Western Area
1. Kenema 2. Kailahun 3. Kono	4. Bo 5. Pujehun	6. Bombali 7. Port Loko 8. Kambia 9. Koinadugu	10. Western Urban Area 11. Western Rural Area

The FGDs were interactive, and discussants demonstrated high interest in responding to express their opinions about youth violence across their communities. Below shows a few photos of the FGDs of the youth in their natural environment:



### Understanding Youth Violence

In the Eastern Region, youth violence is primarily characterized as "unrest," encompassing various forms such as physical, psychological, political, and economic violence. Participants noted that



although domestic violence is less frequently observed, it remains significant. A quote from one of the participants reflecting this sentiment is, “Youth exploitation and community injustice often go hand in hand.” In contrast, the Northern Region identified violence as harmful to both the community and the individuals involved, emphasizing misunderstandings, envy, and domestic violence as key triggers. A notable observation from this region was that violence is perceived to be increasing, attributed to drug abuse and poverty, as expressed in the quote, “Violence is a reality that is spiraling out of control due to our circumstances.”

The Southern Region described youth violence in terms of confusion and unlawful actions, with child trafficking and political intolerance being prevalent forms. A participant stated, “Violence takes many forms, often stemming from political and gender-related issues.” Meanwhile, in the Western Area, youth violence was similarly defined by physical altercations, robbery, and gang-related activities. The shared concern was reflected in the observation, “Violence seems to escalate, particularly among our young men.” Overall, while all regions acknowledged the multifaceted nature of youth violence, the terminology and specific manifestations varied.

### **Root Causes of Youth Violence**

The Eastern Region identified root causes such as unemployment, drug abuse, and political influence. A critical point raised was about land grabbing, which some saw as a significant issue: “Land disputes lead to youth unrest in our communities.” The Northern Region similarly highlighted unemployment and peer influence, adding that political affiliations can trigger violence, particularly during elections. A participant remarked, “Wearing party colors can easily lead to violent confrontations.”

In the Southern Region, lack of parental care and peer pressure were prominent, with discussions revealing that women’s roles could incite violence, as one participant noted, “Sometimes, it’s the men influenced by women that lead to violence.” The Western Area also cited unemployment and poverty but placed significant emphasis on gang membership and negative role models as critical contributors. A common sentiment expressed was, “Without opportunities, our youth turn to gangs for belonging.” While the regions shared overlapping causes, the emphasis on specific factors varied, reflecting localized concerns.

### **Personal and Community Experiences**

In the Eastern Region, youth often act as peace ambassadors, helping to diffuse tensions, although a minority succumb to peer pressure, leading to involvement in violence. One participant highlighted, “Many of us want peace, but some just can’t resist the pull of violence.” In the Northern Region, personal experiences included theft and political intimidation, revealing a 50-50 split in community responses, with individuals either engaging with or avoiding violence. An important observation was, “Parents feel ashamed when violence erupts, but often they are powerless.”

The Southern Region pointed out harassment by drug-influenced youth and systemic issues such as sexual harassment from teachers. A participant stated, “Schools should be safe spaces, yet we see harassment happening instead.” In the Western Area, fear and distrust toward perpetrators were

prevalent, with communities feeling helpless. A respondent captured this sentiment: “We want to help, but there’s a fear of those who commit violence.” The shared experiences across regions underscored a common fear of violence but differed in how communities perceive and respond to it.

## **Solutions and Interventions**

The Eastern Region proposed solutions like skills training centers and job creation, with a focus on mentorship programs. A key quote was, “Without jobs and skills, our youth will remain vulnerable.” The Northern Region emphasized education as a crucial intervention, advocating for community engagement and self-discipline among youth. Participants expressed, “Education will empower us to make better choices.”

In the Southern Region, recommendations included restrictions on harmful drugs and the establishment of recreational centers. One participant articulated, “We need places for our youth to engage positively, away from violence.” The Western Area similarly called for multifaceted approaches, advocating for community-based prevention programs and safe spaces. A statement that resonated was, “We must create environments where our youth can thrive without resorting to violence.” While all regions recognized the need for systemic changes, specific interventions highlighted varied based on local needs and contexts.

### **4.6.2 Summary of Key informants’ interviews**

The Key Informant's Interviews involved a diverse group of participants from across the regions in Sierra Leone and included high-ranking officials and long-serving community leaders, such as the Local Unit Commanders, the community Chiefs, local and central government officials dealing with youth issues and heads of institutions dealing with youth. These individuals brought over two decades of experience in governance, security, and youth development. This mix of high-level and community-based leaders provided valuable ideas about the challenges of youth violence and community development from both policy and community perspectives.

### ***Understanding Youth Violence***

Participants shared varied perspectives on the causes and trends of youth violence in their respective across the districts. Most of them linked the rise in violence to drug use, particularly referencing the prevalence of "kush" among the youth. The Chiefs attributed violence to financial disputes and political conflicts, while the city authorities noted a decrease in violence, citing the positive impact of youth empowerment programs, especially in the Southern Region. In addition, youth violence was described as fluctuating, especially during politically charged periods. One participant warned that unresolved issues could lead to broader civil unrest, while another emphasized the role of political manipulation in exacerbating youth violence. The influence of political instability and manipulation was a recurrent theme across the respondents, highlighting its impact on youth behavior and social conflicts.

## ***Root Causes of Youth Violence***

Across the districts several overlapping root causes of youth violence were stated. In the Southern Region, the major drivers included drug use, disrespect for elders, and political manipulation. The city authorities specifically pointed to socio-economic factors, particularly poverty and unemployment, as central to the challenges facing the youth. In addition, participants cited poverty, unemployment, and political exploitation as primary causes. One respondent further highlighted land disputes and peer pressure as significant factors contributing to youth instability. These root causes underscore the need for comprehensive approaches to address both the immediate and systemic issues contributing to youth violence in the Sierra Leone.

## ***Recommendations for Interventions***

There was a clear consensus among respondents regarding the need for multifaceted interventions to tackle youth violence. Across the regions, recommendations focused on enhancing vocational training and creating more job opportunities for the youth. The city authorities emphasized the importance of investing in youth through education and employment as key strategies for reducing violence. Moreover, respondents suggested increasing civic education and establishing youth resource centers to engage young people in positive activities. One participant proposed the idea of training youth as peace ambassadors, highlighting the importance of involving young people directly in peacebuilding efforts. These recommendations reflect the desire for both structural and community-based solutions to address the underlying causes of youth violence.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the detailed conclusions and key recommendations derived from the research conducted across various respondent categories. The conclusions and recommendations are focused on driving impactful programs aimed at youth transformation and reducing violence across Sierra Leone.

### 5.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The report on youth violence in Sierra Leone presents a comprehensive analysis of the underlying causes, current dynamics, and potential interventions to address this critical issue. The research adopted an action research model to capture the real-time situation of the youth, where they were fully involved in the interviews and interviewees met at their comfort zones with no fear of open sharing of opinion. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection approaches were adopted using digital data collection tools and direct engagement of the respondents. Analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) for quantitative data and content analysis for qualitative data. Key conclusions drawn from the findings are as follows:

#### *Perspective of youth violence in Sierra Leone*

The research revealed that youth and other stakeholders have verse knowledge about the youth violence and expressed their consciousness of the effects on the general wellbeing of the youth in Sierra Leone. The research further revealed the importance of engaging youth in discussions about their challenges in their communities. It concludes that when young people feel their voices are valued, they are more likely to participate actively in identifying solutions to their issues. This engagement not only empowers youth but also provides stakeholders with essential understanding that can inform the development of targeted, youth-centered programs across Sierra Leone. Across the targeted districts, physical violence was considered as the most occurring violence, which affects the wellbeing of communities, including the youth. Political violence was mentioned but largely associated with the electioneering period, which occur intermittently.

Overall, the FGDs and KIIs across all the regions underscored youth violence as a pressing issue impacting community safety and well-being. Respondents expressed a shared concern about neglect and limited opportunities for youth, with a strong call for effective interventions. The Eastern Region focuses on community injustice, the Northern Region emphasis on low educational standard of youth, the Southern Region emphasized drug abuse, and the Western Area mentioned limited advocacy for safe spaces for youth. These indicate diverse yet interconnected nature of the challenges faced by youth. The overarching sentiment across all discussions was the perception of

a collective determination to foster change, encapsulated in a poignant statement: “Together, we can pave the way for a future free from violence.”

### ***Root causes of youth violence in Sierra Leone***

Diverse opinion of respondents revealed that youth violence in Sierra Leone is exacerbated by multiple social, economic and political issues emerging on a daily basis across communities. Key among the stated causes were; drug abuse, lack of decent employment, illiteracy, political manipulation and incitements, coupled with injustice in the legal system. These causes indicate that violence among youth or perpetrated by youth are as a result of factors related to self-interest and sometimes to achieve community gains. In addition, the findings indicate that the challenges faced by youth vary significantly across different regions of Sierra Leone. For instance, the Eastern Region focuses on community injustice, the Northern Region emphasizes education, the Southern Region addresses drug abuse, and the Western Area advocates safe spaces. This regional diversity necessitates tailored interventions that consider the specific contexts and needs of each area.

## **5.2 EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS:**

The research underscores the importance of implementing evidence-based interventions. The focus on participatory action research (PAR) empowers youth and community members, fostering ownership of the interventions that will emerge from the research and increasing the likelihood of long-term positive impacts across the communities. The report makes several actionable recommendations, including:

- Establishing a Youth Training Institution to provide skills training for better employment opportunities.
- Implementing youth counselling and mental health services to address emotional challenges that may lead to violence.
- Launching community engagement campaigns to promote peaceful conflict resolution and raise awareness about the consequences of violence.
- Creating sports and recreational activities to foster unity and positive social interactions among youth.
- Strengthening law enforcement and justice systems to ensure accountability and build public trust.

Finally, the report identifies gaps in current knowledge and suggests areas for further research, such as exploring socio-cultural dynamics affecting youth employment in rural communities and the role of local government in addressing unjust employment practices. This ongoing research is important for adapting strategies to the evolving landscape of youth violence in Sierra Leone.

## 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

Recommendations generated from this research are strongly based on realism, which has the potential to influence the entire well-being of the youth as follows;

- 1. Establish a Youth Training Institution:** Develop a short-course training institution that offers both formal and informal skills training to equip youth with the necessary qualifications and practical skills for securing decent employment in the short term.
- 2. Youth Counseling and Mental Health Services:** Implement counseling services aimed at addressing stress, trauma, and emotional challenges among youth, tackling mental health issues that often contribute to violent behavior.
- 3. Community Engagement and Awareness Campaigns:** Launch targeted campaigns to raise awareness about the consequences of violence and promote community participation, emphasizing peaceful conflict resolution and nonviolent behavior.
- 4. Sports and Recreational Activities:** Establish intra- and inter-community football clubs, with support for organizing annual peace matches, fostering unity and promoting positive social interaction among youth.
- 5. Strengthening Law Enforcement and Justice Systems:** Enhance the capacity of law enforcement and the justice system to address violence effectively, ensuring accountability and building public trust in the rule of law.

## 5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- 1. Exploration of Socio-Cultural Dynamics Impacting Youth Employment in Rural Communities:** Further research is needed to investigate the specific socio-cultural factors that influence youth access to employment opportunities in rural areas. Understanding these dynamics will provide detailed understanding into the barriers faced by young people and help develop targeted interventions to improve employment outcomes.
- 2. Examination of Local Government's Role in Addressing Unjust Employment Practices in Rural Communities:** Additional research should focus on the role of local government in eradicating inequitable employment practices in rural communities. This inquiry will help assess the effectiveness of local policies and strategies in promoting fair and just employment opportunities for all community members.

## 6.0 REFERENCES

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## 7.0 APPENDICES

**7.1 Personal Interview Questionnaire (Digital).** Please access the questionnaire through the link below;

<https://ee-eu.kobotoolbox.org/x/LCybinpM>

### **7.2 Key Informant Interview (KII) Questionnaire: Stakeholders and Policy Actors on Youth: Action Research on Youth Violence in Sierra Leone: Understanding Causes and Developing Interventions, September 2024- Civil Peace Service (CPS), Led by SLYMCA**

<p><b>Purpose of the KII:</b></p> <p>This Key Informant Interview (KII) is designed to gather data from key stakeholders and policy actors involved in addressing youth violence in Sierra Leone. The focus will be on understanding the underlying causes and dynamics of youth violence, evaluating the effectiveness of current policies and interventions, and collecting recommendations for future strategies to reduce youth violence and promote sustainable development.</p>	
<p><b>Participants:</b></p> <p>Stakeholders and policy actors such as government officials, policymakers, representatives from international organizations, community leaders, and other relevant entities involved in youth-related issues.</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> Approximately 1 to 1.5 hours</p>	
<p><b>Quick Guide for starting the FGD</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thank the participant for agreeing to the interview.</li> <li>Briefly explain the purpose of the interview and how the information will be used.</li> <li>Emphasize confidentiality and seek permission to record the conversation (if applicable).</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Section 1: Participant Background:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you please introduce yourself and your role within your organization?</li> <li>Please share with me your contact phone number or email.</li> <li>How long have you been involved in policymaking or stakeholder activities related to youth and violence in Sierra Leone?</li> </ol>	

<p><b>Section 2: Understanding Youth Violence</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current State of Youth Violence:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How would you describe the current situation of youth violence in Sierra Leone?</li> <li>What are the most common forms of youth violence observed in communities or regions you are familiar with?</li> </ol> </li> <li>Trends and Evolution:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you observed any significant changes in the patterns or intensity of youth violence in recent years?</li> <li>What factors do you think have influenced these changes?</li> </ol> </li> <li>Impact of Youth Violence:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does youth violence affect communities, families, and the broader society in Sierra Leone?</li> <li>What long-term impacts do you foresee if youth violence continues unchecked?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	
<p><b>Section 3: Root Causes of Youth Violence</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying Root Causes:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In your opinion, what are the primary root causes of youth violence in Sierra Leone?</li> <li>How do socio-economic factors like poverty, unemployment, and lack of education contribute to youth violence?</li> </ol> </li> <li>Political and Social Influences:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent do political dynamics, such as the involvement of youth in political activities or manipulation, contribute to violence?</li> <li>How do social factors like family breakdown, peer pressure, and community disintegration play a role in youth violence?</li> </ol> </li> <li>Cultural and Environmental Factors:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What cultural or environmental factors do you believe influence youth violence in Sierra Leone?</li> <li>How do issues such as substance abuse, urbanization, and exposure to violence in the media contribute to the problem?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	
<p><b>Section 4: Evaluation of Current Policies and Interventions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectiveness of Current Policies:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effective do you believe the current government policies and strategies have been in addressing youth violence?</li> <li>Can you highlight any specific policies or programs that have shown success?</li> </ol> </li> <li>Role of Stakeholders:</li> </ol>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How would you assess the role of different stakeholders, including government, NGOs, and community organizations, in tackling youth violence?</li> <li>b. Are there any successful collaborations or partnerships that have made a significant impact?</li> </ul> <p>4. Challenges and Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What challenges or obstacles have hindered the effectiveness of policies and interventions aimed at reducing youth violence?</li> <li>b. What gaps do you see in the current approach to addressing youth violence?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Section 5: Recommendations for Future Strategies</b></p> <p>1. Policy and Legislative Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What policy changes or new legislation do you think are necessary to more effectively address youth violence?</li> <li>b. How can existing policies be improved or better implemented?</li> </ul> <p>2. Strategic Interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What types of interventions or programs do you believe would be most effective in preventing youth violence?</li> <li>b. How important is it to integrate education, employment opportunities, and social services into these interventions?</li> </ul> <p>3. Youth Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How can youth themselves be more effectively engaged in efforts to reduce violence?</li> <li>b. What role should youth play in shaping policies and programs that affect them?</li> </ul> <p>4. Sustainability and Long-Term Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How can interventions be designed to ensure sustainability and long-term impact in reducing youth violence?</li> <li>b. What role does economic development play in creating a more peaceful environment for youth?</li> </ul>	
<p>Do you have any additional insights or recommendations that you believe are crucial for understanding and addressing youth violence in Sierra Leone?</p> <p>Thank the participants for their time and valuable insights</p>	

### 7.3 Key Informant Interview (KII) Questionnaire: Youth Support Institutions: Action Research on Youth Violence in Sierra Leone: Understanding Causes and Developing Interventions, September 2024- Civil Peace Service (CPS), Led by SLYMCA

#### Purpose of the KII for youth support institutions:

The purpose of this Key Informant Interview (KII) is to gather information from representatives of youth support institutions (e.g., NGOs, community organizations, government agencies) on the underlying causes and dynamics of youth violence in Sierra Leone. The interview also seeks to understand the effectiveness of existing interventions and gather recommendations for future strategies to reduce youth violence.

#### Participants:

Representatives from youth support institutions such as vocation training centers, secondary schools etc.

**Duration:** Approximately 1 to 1.5 hours

#### Quick Guide for starting the FGD

- d. Thank the participant for agreeing to the interview.
- e. Briefly explain the purpose of the interview and how the information will be used.
- f. Emphasize confidentiality and seek permission to record the conversation (if applicable).

#### Section 1: Participant Background:

- d. Can you please introduce yourself and your role within your organization?
- e. Please share with me your contact phone number or email.
- f. How long have you been involved in policymaking or stakeholder activities related to youth and violence in Sierra Leone?

#### Section 2: Understanding Youth Violence

##### 1. Current State of Youth Violence:

- c. How would you describe the current situation of youth violence in Sierra Leone?
- d. What types of youth violence are most prevalent in the communities where you work?

##### 2. Trends and Evolution:

- c. Have you observed any significant changes in the patterns or intensity of youth violence in recent years?
- d. What factors do you think have influenced these changes?

##### 3. Impact of Youth Violence:

- c. How does youth violence affect communities, families, and the broader society in Sierra Leone?
- d. What long-term impacts do you foresee if youth violence continues unchecked in Sierra Leone?



### Section 3: Root Causes of Youth Violence

#### 1. Identifying Root Causes:

- c. In your opinion, what are the primary root causes of youth violence in Sierra Leone?
- d. How do socio-economic factors like poverty, unemployment, and lack of education contribute to youth violence?

#### 2. Political and Social Influences:

- c. To what extent do political dynamics, such as the involvement of youth in political activities or manipulation, contribute to violence in Sierra Leone?
- d. How do social factors like family breakdown, peer pressure, and community disintegration play a role in youth violence?

#### 3. Cultural and Environmental Factors:

- c. What cultural or environmental factors do you believe influence youth violence in Sierra Leone?
- d. How do issues such as substance abuse, urbanization, and exposure to violence in the media contribute to the problem?

### Section 4: Institutional Responses and Interventions

#### 1. Current Interventions:

- a. What types of programs or interventions does your institution currently have in place to address youth violence?
- b. How effective have these interventions been in reducing youth violence?

#### 2. Collaboration and Partnerships:

- a. What roles do partnerships with other organizations or government agencies play in your efforts to reduce youth violence?
- b. How would you assess the level of collaboration between different stakeholders in addressing youth violence?

#### 3. Challenges and Barriers:

- a. What challenges or barriers has your institution faced in implementing programs aimed at reducing youth violence?
- b. How do you overcome these challenges?

### Section 5: Recommendations for Future interventions

#### 1. Effective Strategies:

- a. In your view, what strategies or interventions would be most effective in preventing youth violence in Sierra Leone?
- b. What role should education, vocational training, and employment opportunities play in these interventions?

#### 2. Youth Involvement:

- a. How can youth themselves be more effectively involved in efforts to reduce violence?
- b. What are some best practices for engaging youth in violence prevention programs?

3. Role of Government and Policy:

- a. What role should the government play in addressing youth violence? Are there specific policies or actions that could make a significant difference?
- b. How can policies be better aligned with the needs on the ground?

4. Sustainability and Long-Term Impact:

- a. How can interventions be designed to ensure they have a lasting impact on reducing youth violence?
- b. What steps can be taken to promote sustainable development alongside efforts to reduce youth violence?

**Section 5: Closing**

Do you have any additional recommendations that you believe are important for understanding and addressing youth violence in Sierra Leone?

Thank the participants for their time and valuable responses.

## 7.4 Focus Group Discussion Guide: Action Research on Youth

### Violence in Sierra Leone: Understanding Causes and Developing Interventions, September 2024- Civil Peace Service (CPS), Led by SLYMCA.

<b>Purpose of the FGD:</b> The purpose of this focus group discussion is to explore the perspectives, experiences, and suggestions of youth regarding the underlying causes and dynamics of youth violence in Sierra Leone. The discussion will also focus on gathering ideas for effective interventions to reduce youth violence and promote sustainable development.	
<b>Participants:</b> Youth aged 15-35 from various backgrounds (urban/rural, educated/uneducated, employed/unemployed, etc.)	
<b>Total Participants.....; Number of Male....., Number of Female.....</b>	
<b>Duration:</b> Approximately 1 to 1.5 hours	
<b>Quick Guide for starting the FGD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the facilitator(s) and note-taker(s).</li> <li>• Briefly explain the purpose of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD).</li> <li>• Emphasize confidentiality and encourage honest, open participation.</li> <li>• Explain the format of the discussion and how it will proceed.</li> <li>• Obtain verbal consent to participate and to record the discussion (if applicable).</li> <li>• Ask participants to introduce themselves by sharing their name, where they are from, and one word or phrase that describes how they feel about youth violence in their community.</li> </ul> <p><i>The facilitator should be mindful of group dynamics, ensuring that all participants have the opportunity to speak and that no single voice dominates the conversation. Adjust the time and flow of the discussion based on the group's engagement and the depth of the conversation.</i></p>	
<b>Discussion Topics</b>	
<b>Section 1: Understanding Youth Violence</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What does "youth violence" mean to you? How would you describe it?</li> <li>What types of violence are most common among youth in your community?</li> <li>In your experience, how does youth violence typically start or escalate?</li> <li>Are there any specific incidents or stories that come to mind when you think about youth violence?</li> <li>How do you think youth violence has changed over the past few years in your area?</li> <li>Who do you think is most affected by youth violence (e.g., specific age groups, genders, etc.)?</li> </ol>	



<p><b>Section 2. Root Causes of Youth Violence</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you think are the main reasons why some young people become involved in violence?</li> <li>How do factors like poverty, unemployment, and lack of education contribute to youth violence?</li> <li>What roles do family and community dynamics play in youth violence?</li> <li>How much influence do drugs, alcohol, and peer pressure have on violent behavior among youth?</li> <li>How do political and social factors (e.g., involvement in gangs, political manipulation) contribute to youth violence?</li> <li>Are there specific challenges in your community that make youth more vulnerable to violence?</li> <li>What role, if any, do you think social media and technology play in youth violence?</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Section 3. Personal and Community Experiences</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you share any personal experiences or stories from your community related to youth violence?</li> <li>How do youth in your community typically respond to violence? Do they engage, avoid, or intervene?</li> <li>What has been the impact of youth violence on your life or the lives of those around you?</li> <li>How do local authorities, community leaders, and families respond to incidents of youth violence?</li> <li>How do you think the community views youth violence?</li> <li>What are the attitudes of adults (parents, teachers, leaders) toward youth involved in violence?</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Section 4. Solutions and Interventions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you think could be done to reduce youth violence in your community?</li> <li>How important do you think education and employment opportunities are in reducing youth violence?</li> <li>What role should youth themselves play in addressing and preventing violence?</li> <li>How can the community be more involved in preventing youth violence?</li> <li>What challenges might arise in implementing these solutions, and how could they be overcome?</li> </ol>	

## Section 5: Conclusion

### Summary:

- Recap key points discussed during the session.
- Highlight any emerging themes or consensus among the group.

### Final Thoughts:

- Ask participants if they have any additional comments or ideas that weren't covered in the discussion.
- Thank participants for their time and valuable contributions.

### Next Steps:

- Explain how the information gathered will be used.
- Provide contact information