



YOUTH-LED RESEARCH | TOOLKIT

# LISTENING AND LEARNING TOOLKIT

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 **Search for  
Common Ground**

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
& THE INSTITUTIONAL  
LEARNING TEAM**



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# KEY TERMS

<b>Analysis</b>	The process of the group reviewing and organizing the information gathered from the project, and identifying emerging themes.
<b>Conversation</b>	A mutual exchange of information, opinions, questions, and learning.
<b>Debrief</b>	A debrief is where you review the information collected and identify themes. Daily debrief takes place in the evening after the group has finished their Listening and Learning (L&L) conversations for that day.
<b>Formal Youth Structures</b>	Registered organizations with an institutional structure (i.e. sports teams or school clubs).
<b>Field Notes</b>	These are the notes each researcher and facilitator takes while conducting Listening and Learning (L&L) conversations in the field or during interviews with key stakeholders.
<b>Informal Youth Structures</b>	Non-registered youth groups with less structure (i.e. gangs or social movements)
<b>Listening &amp; Learning (L&amp;L)</b>	L&L is a methodology whereby a researcher holds a conversation with others in the field, listening to what they say and sharing his/her perspective.
<b>Mapping</b>	In the context of youth-led initiatives, mapping provides understanding of existing youth structures and can be used to identify youth leaders and youth-focused civil society and government initiatives.
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>Project Partners</b>	Implementing partners or local entities you work with during the course of the project. They can include Civil Society Organizations (CSO), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOS), government agencies, youth groups, donor Agencies and others.
<b>Researchers</b>	Individuals conducting the research, Listening and Learning exercises, and subsequent analysis. They include facilitators, team leaders, and youth researchers. Youth researchers are generally local youth while facilitators might be a mix of local experts and foreign researchers or project implementers.
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>Youth</b>	This definition may depend on the country you are working in – Search for Common Ground defines youth from ages 15 to 34, encompassing “adolescence” for ages 15-19, “early youth” for ages 20-24, “middle youth” for 25-29, and “late youth” for 30-34.

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# INTRODUCTION

# WHAT IS LISTENING AND LEARNING?

The “Listening and Learning” (L&L) method is an innovative youth-led, adult supported and technically-advised approach that is based on conversations to capture individual perspectives and experiences.

Grounded in principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR)<sup>1</sup>, ***L&L shifts the act of gathering information from a one-sided interview where only subjects share intimate and private information, to an exchange of experiences where the researchers themselves participate in the sharing of personal views, experiences, and emotions in a non-adversarial manner.***

By allowing vulnerability to be mutual, this two-sided participatory dialogue alters power dynamics and induces a more sincere and fruitful conversation. The basis of this approach is something everyone does on a daily basis— have conversations.

The L&L method equips youth researchers with the skills to transform conversations into an inquiry process that is easily adaptable to local contexts, especially in cultures with a deep oral tradition. The L&L method also empowers young people to lead a process, develop ownership of it, and adapt it to other projects and contexts.

This toolkit introduces the user to the L&L methodology, identifies the key considerations for a successful process, and includes guidance on best practice for implementing this research method.

## How to Define L&L

L&L can be understood as a guided conversation.

While there are guiding questions based upon the scope of the study or assessment, the inquirer and the subject engage in an open conversation and touch upon an unpredictable range of issues. L&L inquirers do not ask probing or leading questions, rather they allow the conversation to flow based upon the response and interest of the person with whom they are talking. Under the L&L method, inquirers are asked to share their perspective in order to not only facilitate listening but also learning.

The honest exchange of information enables researchers to be transparent about the purpose of the conversation, and lays the groundwork for an open and organic conversation.

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1 “Participatory Action Research is a process through which people investigate meaningful social topics, participate in research to understand the root causes of problems that directly impact, and then take action to influence policies through the dissemination of their findings to policy makers and stakeholders” (Powers and Allaman 2012)

## Why Use L&L

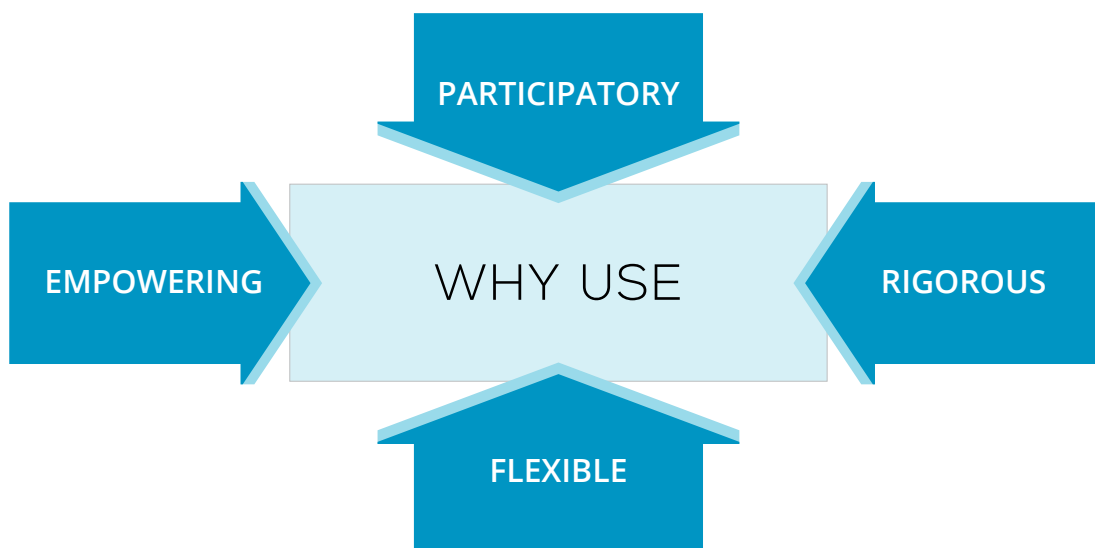
### Why youth-led L&L?

Local youth have a lot more knowledge... of the local situation as well as the ...challenges and successes for youth. Their participation allowed us to encourage them to bring out their natural leadership abilities” American University student researcher

Researchers have gained a reputation of coming into communities, gathering information from locals to inform their own work, and then leaving. Youth, who are often excluded from the process, begin to then internalize their role as beneficiaries and see themselves as dependent on those in power. This often results in disappointment when expected benefits are not seen. As one girl asserted during a cumulative impact study on foreign assistance in Liberia:

*“[most] people come, take information from us, and do not come back...they will not do anything about it.”*

The Liberia study<sup>2</sup> argued that youth-led participatory inquiry processes increase local ownership, and empower youth to become agents of change. The execution of the L&L methodology in the Liberia study provided an opportunity for Liberian youth researchers to gain skills, confidence, and the opportunity to create tools through which they can have intelligent conversations and attempt to create a more accountable system of learning.



2 Youth to Youth: Measuring Youth Engagement, 2012 ([http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/liberia/pdf/Youth\\_Engagement\\_Report\\_Full.pdf](http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/liberia/pdf/Youth_Engagement_Report_Full.pdf))



## What is the value of L&L?

In addition to being participatory and empowering, L&L as a research methodology is also rigorous and comprehensive.

Honest and thoughtful conversations coupled with multiple layers of debrief and analysis allows inquirers to capture and analyze information frequently missed by traditional methods. It provides inquirers with insights into the feelings and emotions of participants, and the issues that trigger them. High-quality youth-led research requires adult support and guidance throughout the process. This should not diminish or infringe upon young people's leadership throughout the project, but should instead support the quality of research efforts.

The L&L methodology can be adapted for assessments, mapping, data collection, and program monitoring and impact evaluations. The evidence gathered from L&L lends itself to both qualitative and quantitative analysis. If the study requires extensive quantitative data however, it is recommended that the L&L conversations are paired with surveys and polls. L&L is adaptable to multiple needs, but L&L must always be used with a dual intention for data collection and as a youth engagement strategy. L&L is not appropriate for advanced research needs such as baselines, in-depth conflict assessments, or evaluations.

Since the L&L inquiry process is embedded in principles of empathy, equality, and inclusivity **it may be utilized in projects or research studies that may evoke painful memories among participants.** The L&L methodology requires the research teams to establish a relationship of trust and equality with the participants, and engage a two-sided and honest conversations. This helps the L&L process be more sensitive to and respectful of participants' experiences than more traditional inquiry methods. However, such research must pay special attention to the emotional and physical well-being of youth researchers as they are put in contact with participants' difficult stories and experiences.

## The Phases of L&L

There are four phases in the Listening & Learning methodology, outlined below.



The activities within each phase are described in detail in the following sections.

## CONFLICT SENSITIVITY AND DO NO HARM

Conflict sensitivity and “do no harm” are integral to both the design and implementation of any intervention, including research. Conflict sensitivity is a process that helps us understand the interaction between an intervention and the context in which it operates in terms of conflict or peace dynamics. It is critical to ensure that youth-led research “do no harm” to the communities or youth researchers involved. To this end, all youth researchers and supporting adults should be trained in conflict sensitivity and should engage in a conflict analysis before the research begins.

For the youth researchers and research participants, it is important to consider the harm that can occur as a result of the youth researchers’ relative inexperience. For example, harm can occur if youth researchers receive sensitive or traumatic information from interviewees without first becoming prepared to handle such information. In addition to becoming exposed to trauma themselves, youth researchers risk mishandling data or trying to report safety concerns improperly. Training on ethical research, on the Common

Ground Principles,<sup>3</sup> and a clear procedure for handling sensitive information or safety concerns help minimize these risks.

## Trauma Exposure

Youth researchers working in contexts that are experiencing or recovering from violent conflict will likely encounter people who have experienced significant trauma. This exposure may lead to changes in their own wellbeing, known as “vicarious trauma”, “second-hand trauma,” or “trauma exposure response”. These changes are manageable with robust team and social supports but require additional preparation and planning in the project design.

Youth researchers’ training should include education on the responses they may experience from exposure to trauma, and ways to cope with these responses. Trauma specialists and/or child protection specialists should be involved in this training and be available for support throughout the life of the project.

It is also important to establish a clear procedure for the youth researchers on how to respond when their interviewees ask for help or report violent crimes or safety concerns during interviews.

## Respecting Participants

Being conflict sensitive requires that we also acknowledge our own limitations in understanding a context. If a participant does not wish to answer a question or continue with an interview, researchers must respect their wishes no matter the reason, though making note of the reason may provide new insight for future interviews and analysis. The quality of the data collected and the protection and welfare of the respondents must take precedence over quantity.

Respecting the confidentiality of information shared by participants is necessary to deserve the trust of participants and to be conflict sensitive. Beyond not sharing sensitive or identifying information about participants, protection of the data itself is an increasingly important concern in our digital world, and projects must consider the pressing issues of safety, security, privacy, flexibility, and accessibility in the fragile and complex contexts where we work<sup>4</sup>.

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3 Common Ground Principles encourage the shift of interactions between different parties away from adversarial approaches that pitch one side against the “other,” to cooperative approaches. Cooperative approaches allow the parties to focus on the issue rather than each other, and work together to resolve the issue.

4 For more guidance on digital security and data privacy, Search recommends the following resources: Steets, J. & Rupert, L. (2016). Monitoring and Evaluation in Insecure Contexts: Back to Basics? (Briefing Note from the Secure Access in Volatile Environments (SAVE) research programme: SAVEResearch.net); Corlazzoli, Vanessa. ICTs for Monitoring & Evaluation of Peacebuilding Programmes. DFID: Department for International Development, 2014; Responsible Data Forum <<https://responsibledata.io/>>.

## ENSURING A YOUTH-LED PROCESS

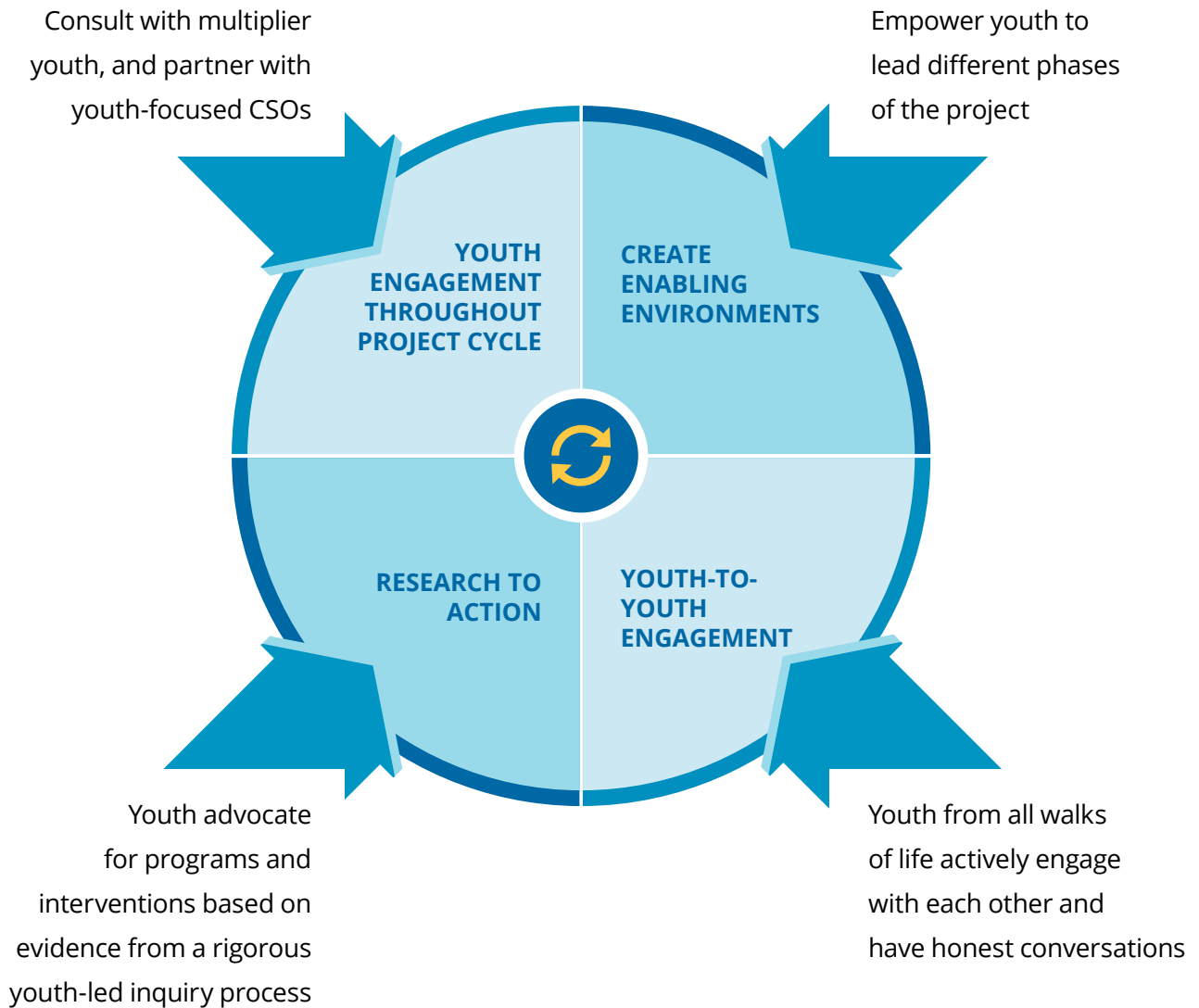
For L&L to be a legitimate youth-led methodology, it is critical to engage youth at all levels and ensure that youth have ownership of the entire inquiry process. Therefore, these projects are ideally **youth-led, adult supported and technically advised**. Note, “adult” is meant as someone who is experienced in research and in working with youth on issues relevant to the research topic. An adult then may be someone in the same age bracket as the youth researchers, but with a different set of skills. Adult support and technical advice is most active during the orientation & training and analysis phases. The adults must make themselves available throughout the project for regular check-ins and any questions the youth researchers may have. When youth researchers are in the field technical advice and regular debriefing should be available via phone. Depending on the nature of the research, adult support should include child protection and psychosocial experts; such support is a necessity when youth researchers are put in situations and environments that potentially expose them to trauma.

A youth-led process means engaging youth as leaders throughout the project, from design to implementation and management to analysis. It involves consulting with “multiplier youth” (identifiable leaders in the region) and engaging and partnering with youth-focused civil society organizations (CSOs). Partnerships with these youth-focused CSOs will enable you to find additional entry points – helping you identify who you should talk to, and to mobilize youth to support your project.

In addition, one should aim to create enabling environments for youth and facilitate youth-to-youth engagement at every step of the process. This is done through encouraging them to lead presentations during the orientation and training, to be the primary communicators during the conversation, and to contribute their own determinations during the analysis phase.

It is critical for the youth researchers to independently engage with the local youth by conversing with them and getting their perspective on the set issue. Youth-to-youth engagement during the conversation phase allows the researchers to relate to respondents on the basis of similar age, experience, and status, and increases the willingness of respondents to speak honestly. In this way, tensions that often arise from power asymmetries between youth and adults, and between international and local actors, may be mitigated. Guidance on how to create youth enabling environments is given throughout the toolkit.





# PHASE 1

# LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

## Pre-Project Preparation

### Setting your Goals and Objectives

Since L&L is a comprehensive, rigorous, and time-intensive methodology, it is critical for the project team to have a clear idea of what it hopes to gain from the exercise in order to provide appropriate guidance to the youth researchers. Before embarking on the project, the team should identify a core set of goals and objectives. However, since the L&L methodology is designed to find out what the issues are in the first place, there needs to be a balance between keeping these broad and flexible while maintaining a realistic and defined scope of work.

### Local Partnership Building

Working with local partners is key. To gain an understanding of key actors, refer to the youth mapping toolkit<sup>5</sup>.

Under the local partnership building phase, you will select local government agencies, CSOs, experts, youth organizations, and universities that you would like to partner with. Before finalizing the partnerships, remember to view them individually and as a group through the lens of conflict sensitivity.

Once you have selected local partners, you will initiate the process of identifying youth researchers and project participants for your study through community level consultations with local CSOS and youth groups.

Note that you will probably need to prepare and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the local partners, and Terms of Reference (ToR) with the candidates.

### Team Selection

Selecting a diverse and capable group of youth is an important component of executing the project successfully.

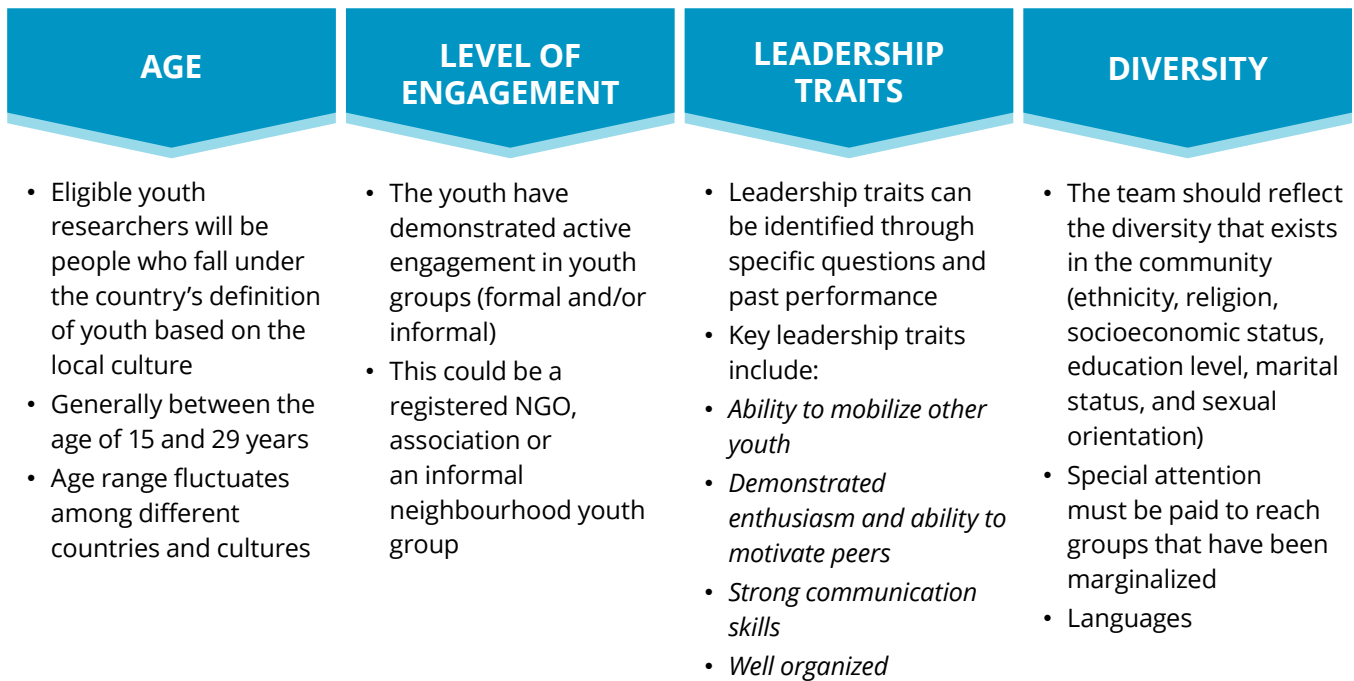
You must ensure a gender balance, and actively work to recruit young women into the application pool, seeking out potential female participants through community level consultations conducted during the partnership building process. Details to consider when recruiting young women are the meeting times,

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5 "Mapping Youth Leaders for Peacebuilding" <https://www.sfcg.org/tag/children-youth-toolkits>

meeting locations, and successfully engaging relevant parties (parents, husbands, etc. depending on context) to create buy-in for their participation. If working with youth under 18, keep in mind restrictions and protection policies<sup>6</sup>.

When selecting the final team of youth researchers, in addition to looking at gender balance, consider the following:



Ideally, candidates should also demonstrate potential to scale the L&L methodology to their own organization, university or personal endeavors.

During the selection process candidates need to be reminded that they must be available full-time without any other responsibilities during the project days. They must be able to travel and be proven listeners with leadership skills.

The size of the team should be determined by the objectives of the research (geographic coverage, numbers of conversations targeted) but be sure to have a team size that is proportional to the amount of resources and adult and technical support available. .

6 For example, in some countries youth under 18 are considered children/minors. Furthermore, the International Review Board requires permission from a parent or guardian (this will only be applicable if seeking IRB approval) when involving anyone under 18 years of age.



## Desk Research

After the youth researchers have been selected, approximately one week should be set aside for desk research.

This is when they will identify key themes and issues and develop broad lines of inquiry (informed by the original goals of the project) that will inform the direction of their L&L project. It is important to involve all the researchers in this phase because it is their opportunity to become more knowledgeable on the research issues.

While the exact scope of the desk research will depend on the project itself, it should incorporate the following elements:

- **Literature review and definition of key concepts**
- **Analysis of the current state of youth in country:** Using available data, a comparison of relevant pre, during, and post conflict indicators that impact youth. The indicators will be related to the goals and objectives of the study.
- **Conflict Analysis:** The researchers will build upon the conflict analysis already conducted. Conflict analysis is the systematic study of the profile, causes, actors, and dynamics of conflict. The focus and level of the conflict analysis will depend on the scope of the study<sup>7</sup>.
- **Mapping & Analysis of relevant stakeholders and implementing partners<sup>8</sup>** (if applicable): This involves identification of key actors, and understanding how they are organized and structured, and how they influence their communities.
- **Identification of Key Issues:** Based on the information collected above, and the project's goals and objectives, the youth researchers should identify key issues and themes and develop broad lines of inquiry around them.

During this pre-project preparation phase, it is also important to determine how many conversations the research teams will need to have to get a representative sample of the target areas. The exact target for conversations will depend on each team's preference and comfort level. This is also the time when your larger team will decide if it's interested in organizing larger regional and nation-wide consultations that span beyond the targeted localities.

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7 SaferWorld, "Conflict Analysis" [http://dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/Safeworld\\_Conflict%20Analysis.pdf](http://dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/Safeworld_Conflict%20Analysis.pdf)

# PHASE 2

# LISTENING AND LEARNING (L&L) ORIENTATION

## Preparing for the L&L Orientation: things to think about

- What are the cultural and religious norms we should keep in mind when planning activities?
- Are there any logistical challenges we need to plan for in advance?
- Who is participating and what is their level of involvement?
- Are we taking into account the needs and constraints of all participants (women, participants with disabilities, religious minorities, students, etc)?

The purpose of the L&L Orientation is to properly train and prepare the youth researchers to be successful in conducting the inquiry process individually and as a team. This orientation will also provide an opportunity for youth to get to know one another better, enabling them to be successful team players during the inquiry process.

## Team Building

The orientation is crucial to the team's dynamism and the success of the L&L conversations.

It is recommended that at least five days be set aside for orientation, so that the group can get to know each other, learn and practice the L&L methodology, and plan logistics for project implementation.

It is important to upset the typical power balance from the beginning and make the orientation an inclusive youth led process.

- **Best practices include:**
- **Rotating orientation leaders:** It is useful for different facilitators to conduct various sessions, instead of just one point person.
- **Engaging youth:** Have local youth researchers lead some of the orientation sessions.
- **Strategically including CSOs:** It is important that local partners be included in the process. However, also consider whether their presence may affect youth researchers behavior or participation. Find an inclusive balance where they are part of the project but don't dictate the process. Ideally CSO presentations can be at the beginning and/or at the end of the orientation.
- **Ensuring positive group dynamics:** Maintain awareness around the inter-personal relations of the team members, mitigate conflict, and facilitate a good team dynamic
- **Including opportunities to test skills:** Throughout the trainings use group activities to help youth researchers practice their new skills in a safe space, and build relationships with each other.

## L&L Training

During the orientation, it is important to engage youth as leaders in all levels of the process, and when possible, use the L&L methodology during the training. Below is an example of what your five-day orientation should cover.

### SAMPLE ORIENTATION AGENDA

#### **DAY 1: Launch:**

A big event that will include all key stakeholders. The event should be an open space where participants can get to know each other in a relaxed environment. Use the opportunity to encourage participants to share their expectations, and discuss broad concepts.

#### **DAY 2: Team-building:**

Conduct exercises and group activities (appendix 4a-4b), to establish a positive group dynamic. Explain the L&L methodology and the thinking behind it.

#### **DAY 3: L&L Training:**

Use day 3 to train participants on how to apply L&L methodology. Do some role playing exercises (appendix 4c-4e), help youth researchers with their conversation skills, and instruct them on data entry through computer training (Assume not everyone will be computer savvy).

A field test for at least half a day will help the researchers to understand the methodology before going in the field. It is also an occasion for them to claim ownership on the research tools. And to be sure that everyone have the same understanding before going in the field

#### **DAY 4: Analyzing data**

Analyzing the data is not an easy process. You can use the data you have collected during the field test in order to simulate daily analysis. It is also an occasion to discuss the hardships you have experienced during the field test and develop collective strategies that can be used during the field work. This day can also use to be sure that all researchers understand the forms and the research questions and improve the quality of the form based on your first experience.

#### **DAY 5: Context:**

Go over the context of where you will be conducting research, discuss cultural issues and raise contextual awareness of participants. This is a good opportunity to familiarize the researchers with Do No Harm, Conflict and Gender Sensitivity principles. Also use day 4 to determine inter-personal dynamics, identify researchers who speak the local languages, and form sub-teams accordingly. Make sure sub-teams are diverse. This is a day participants can test out the L&L methodology in a local community so as to gain some experience and feedback from their peers.

Sample Orientation Agenda



## Logistical Planning

During the logistical planning phase, you will work out various details of the project:

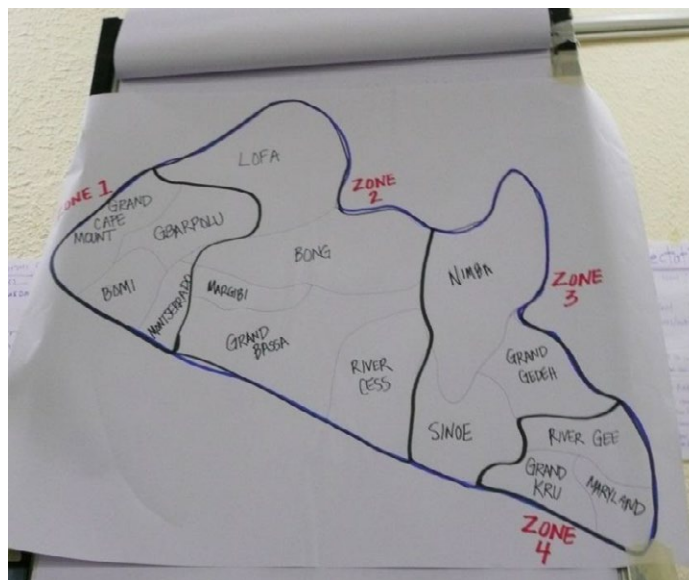
- The creation of sub-teams:** This is an important step of the logistical planning phase. When creating sub-teams, keep in mind the group dynamic, maintaining a gender balance, and ensuring that all relevant languages are represented for translation purposes. Team members should also be briefed on various culturally appropriate and taboo terms to be used/not used during conversations.
- Plan the number of conversation per sub teams per week:** Allow the teams some flexibility in how they schedule achieving those goals.
- Room and board, and travel logistics:** Where are you staying? How will you be getting there? How is each meal being arranged for/provided? Make sure you have addressed these questions, and are being sensitive to the needs of the various groups represented.
- Security:** It should be stressed to the entire group during orientation that health and security are serious priorities, and that Do No Harm principles should be followed throughout the duration of the project. Discuss procedures for reporting issues and raising concerns throughout the project days. Make sure you debrief the security situation on a regular basis, and ensure that each facilitator or team leader has a phone, and are easily accessible so that everyone can communicate security concerns fluidly.

This is also the time when you will determine which sub-team will go to which locality. Budgeting time is a critical skill to have when facilitating an L&L project. Refer to the target number of conversations that were recommended during the desk research phase and plan accordingly; emphasize again that the quality of the data collected and the protection and welfare of the respondents must take precedence over quantity. Everything will take longer than expected, so do not try to do too much and risk the quality of your process.



### HELPFUL TIP:

*Don't forget to budget time for food and rest!*



Regional Zone Mapping and Travel Planning in Liberia

# PHASE 3

# CONDUCTING LISTENING AND LEARNING

This phase of L&L is critical. It is where understanding of the methodology and the idea behind L&L really matters. In order to conduct L&L conversations in a meaningful way, researchers must adhere to the guiding principles below:

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Approach the interaction as a conversation and not a formal interview
- Guiding questions may be used, but avoid probing or leading statements
- Let the participant responses guide the conversation, just like a normal conversation
- Researchers must contribute to the conversation - it should be an equal exchange
- Don't use the conversation to answer a hypothesis, use it to gain insight into what is important to the community or the individual
- Don't let the conversation become an exercise in people saying what they think you want to hear
- Find ways to build off of the conversations from the previous days
- "Do No Harm" for the duration of the process

By conversing with people from many different backgrounds, you gain a comprehensive understanding of the situation. With the L&L approach you get at the local community's reality, how they perceive the issue you are studying, what their role is, recommendations they may have, and whether they can identify change makers or positive players in the community that you can speak to.

## Applying the Methodology

### Who should you talk to?

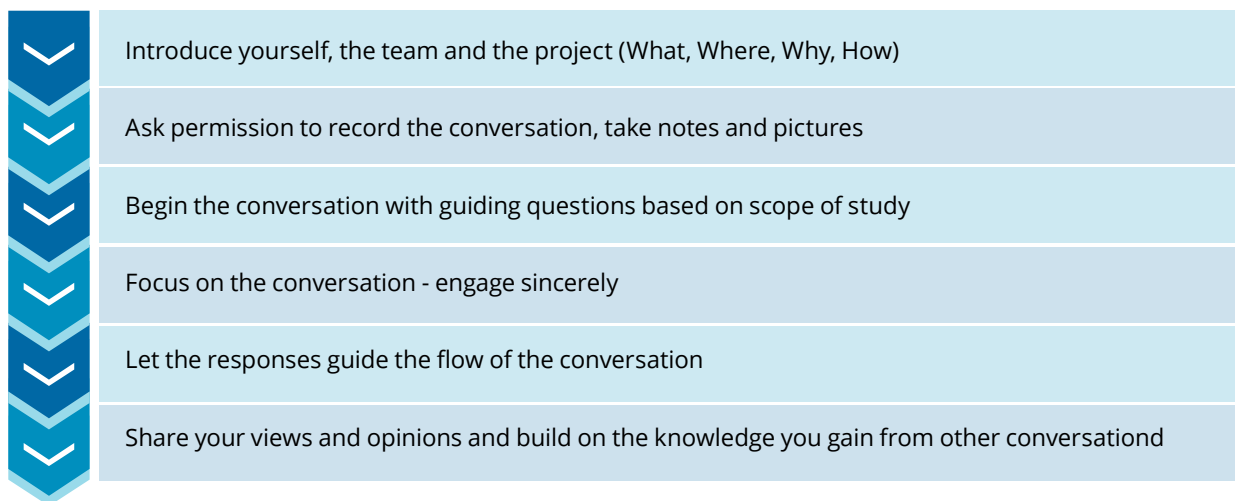
The goal is to speak as many people as possible: key informants, randomly selected community members, established leaders, key actors, etc. However, keep in mind the following:

- The number of conversations to target in order to get a representative sample
- Time constraints
- Cultural sensitivities
- The individuals and groups engaged with should represent the diversity that exists in the community
  - Voices of young and older women should be well-represented
  - Marginalized groups should be engaged (former combatants, disabled youth, gangs, and youth from underrepresented socioeconomic, ethnic, or other groups)

Once a youth researcher is in the field, a good approach is to tour the community and introduce oneself to the elders, village chief, mayor (whoever the community leader is) in order to ensure researchers are not creating any friction by touring the community as an outsider and talking to people.

Youth researchers should use their own judgment to decide whether these community figures should introduce the researchers to people they think are relevant (who they consider key stakeholders) or whether the youth researchers want to approach individuals independently. A mix of both is a good way to reach a diverse group of people, including those who are otherwise not solicited during research (i.e. marginalized and minority groups, and individuals who do not express an active interest in participating but are willing to engage informally).

### Once you approach an individual for a conversation, you can follow this procedure loosely:



When you start talking, do your best to introduce yourself and the project without creating a biased conversation. Suggestions on how to do this are given in the next section. Be flexible during the conversation but in order to be mindful of time, refer to the guiding questions if the conversation goes significantly off track and it's time to shift it to a new direction. In order to empower youth researchers and facilitate youth-to-youth engagement, work to ensure that they are the primary communicators during the conversation.



**HELPFUL TIP:**

*If the conversation goes significantly off track, refer to the guiding questions developed during the Orientation phase*

## Being Culturally Aware

Cultural awareness cannot be underestimated. By being conflict-sensitive, empathetic, partnering with the right local organizations, and conducting comprehensive desk research, the team should be well-prepared for the local context, customs, and cultural norms. When initiating the conversations:

**Be careful not to create friction in the community, or put your participants at risk.**

**Be aware of people's perspectives of outsiders.** Take the time to be genuine, engage sincerely, and communicate to locals that what they are saying is important.

**Be careful to avoid people using these conversations as an opportunity to “say what they think you want to hear”**, as participants may have expectations of what results this research will bring (for example, bring aid to the region).

**Make it clear that what you are doing is about connecting on an interpersonal level**, and listening and learning, rather than an NGO surveying locals with pre-fixed interview questions.

### Language and Translation

Nuanced understanding of the local language and translation are required for meaningful data collection and analysis. Although L&L is reliant on hearing the person you are talking with, much of the understanding comes from unspoken messages and cues. In terms of linguistic and culturally appropriate words and phrases, be sure that at least one member on each team knows the original language (or is multilingual) and can take notes in that language while English speakers take notes in English. This way translation is more accurate.

It is best to translate during the day of the conversation so that non-spoken interaction is freshly remembered and can be expressed in the write up. During the daily debrief, translators should also bring up any challenges they had during translation e.g. if there were some words in the local language that did not have

any suitable English equivalents, or recognizing and addressing biases that may occur during the translation process.

**Waiting to translate everything until the final preparation of the written report is not advised.**

Further, if many conversations are in the local language, it is likely that not all will be able to be translated. The research team will need to budget time and prioritize conversations that are considered either more insightful or more relevant to the study. The daily debrief can be used to gather all the data and to translate it in order to have it ready to use for the report writing.

**What does a good L&L team look like when engaging in conversations?**

The ideal team to engage in authentic conversations is two people. One person should be responsible for taking notes, while the other focuses on engaging in the conversation. As this picture highlights, one person focuses on capturing the conversation in notes while the listener engages in authentic conversation. The person engaging in conversation can take minor notes but should primarily focus on the conversation. It is recommended that team members switch roles so that everyone gets to experience taking notes vs. engaging in conversation. The person taking notes is also welcome to ask questions or clarify what s/he heard. For youth researchers who are not experienced in taking detailed notes, the supporting staff should create a recording strategy to capture data.

As you may note, this conversation is not taking place in an office but in an open environment. **Location** is also a critical aspect in conversations. It is recommended that L&L teams engage people in conversations in the spaces where they already are.



Conversation in Guinea

## Collecting Data

For analysis and report writing purposes, it is recommended to have all teams use the same form to record conversations.

Challenges in data collection will be many. For example, defining how livelihood is understood or determining a participant's age. Such terms vary greatly, which creates difficulty in cleaning and analyzing data.

It is therefore, recommended that **during the desk research stage, the team creates consensus around the definition and understanding of key themes and issues that are likely to arise.** The youth researchers should also be given guidance on how to tackle these problems both during the orientation, as well as during the data entry process itself.

Writing out the conversations separately during analysis is very worthwhile; but when using this method it is especially important for the adult support team to explain transcriptions and expectations for the end product to the youth research team. Remember that the notes taken from the conversations are the research material. Notes need to be taken during the entirety of each conversation.



## FIELD NOTES

**Conversation Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Recorder Code:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who am I talking with?**

Age:

Livelihood/Profession:

Gender: Ethnicity/Religion:

**Key point(s) made:**

**Important issues raised:**

**Issues that triggered strong feelings and emotion  
(indicate whether it was positive or negative)**

**Your favorite quote:**

**What did you learn from this person?**

**Key Terms Used:**

- Sample Term 1                      • Sample Term 2
- Sample Term 3                     • Sample Term 4

**Key Themes/Issues Identified:**

- Sample Issue 1                    • Sample Issue 2
- Sample Issue 3                   • Sample Issue 4

Conversation Notes:

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# ANALYZING RESULTS

This section describes three sets of analysis that builds from one to the next. The first level of analysis is the daily debriefs that are done as sub teams in the field. The second is regional analysis and preliminary findings presentation back to the community, which teams should do before leaving each regional district. The third is the national level debrief and analysis that is done when all the sub teams come back together from the field.

## Daily Debrief

A nightly debrief session is necessary during each of the project days. These debrief sessions provide a space for learning and a time to strengthen the practice of L&L as a group. These sessions can be divided into three components:

1. **Sharing overall experiences:** Talk about good and bad experiences of the day, ways to address the negative experiences, and any logistical issues that may have occurred.
2. **Data entry and analysis:**
  - a. Start this component by quantifying the conversations completed that day using the field notes form. See below a template you can use. The template can be as detailed or as simple as your project needs.

District Name	# of Conversations	# of Males Vs. Females	Average Age of participants	Average Profession/ Education level of participants	Ethnicity	# of times <Sample> Term 1 was highlighted	# of times <Sample> Theme/ Issue 1 was highlighted

Data entry form

- b. Compare key findings, and the number of times key terms and issues were recorded in the Field Note Template (Figure 6), and begin recording emerging themes, relevant anecdotes, and trends relevant to the lines of inquiry.
- c. Identify personal anecdotes and stories that were particularly powerful

### 3. Providing guidance for following day:

Discuss:

- a. What key questions need further clarification?
- b. What key themes need further clarification?
- c. What new topics should be weaved into the conversations the next day?

Sample guiding questions to discuss during this section:

#### GUIDING QUESTIONS

Compared to yesterday's experience, what changed today?

What did we learn? How can we apply this learning tomorrow?

Did anything surprise you from the conversations (what you thought you knew versus what people said)?

What themes and issues do you see emerging from the conversations?

If there are specific issues that are coming up during conversations, what can we do to address them?

In order to facilitate a positive enabling environment for youth researchers, the facilitators should guide the researchers in the analysis of the conversation, but also empower them to identify the themes and make their own determinations.

To ensure accuracy in data collection and check for biases, it is recommended that the notes and spreadsheet is shared with the group following the daily debrief for review.

## Data Analysis by Region

Before leaving each regional district, youth researchers should review and analyze the data collected in the region, notes from the daily debrief session and summarize key findings.

While analyzing the data and drafting the key findings document, they should ask:

- What are most common recurring themes and issues?
- What are the most common recurring terms?
- What are some of the interesting linkages we have found between the issues raised, the terms and language used, and the region?
- What are some of the most commonly proposed solutions, both by the team members as well as the participants?

- Which localities and issues were outliers? Why?

The summary of key findings per region will assist in the final stage of the theme finding session.

## Preliminary Findings Presentation by Region

Project teams should prioritize closing the loop by sharing the findings of their research with the community they visited. Participants who are interviewed and never contacted again feel exploited. Following the regional data analysis phase, the project teams have a valuable opportunity to allow themselves to be held accountable by the community.

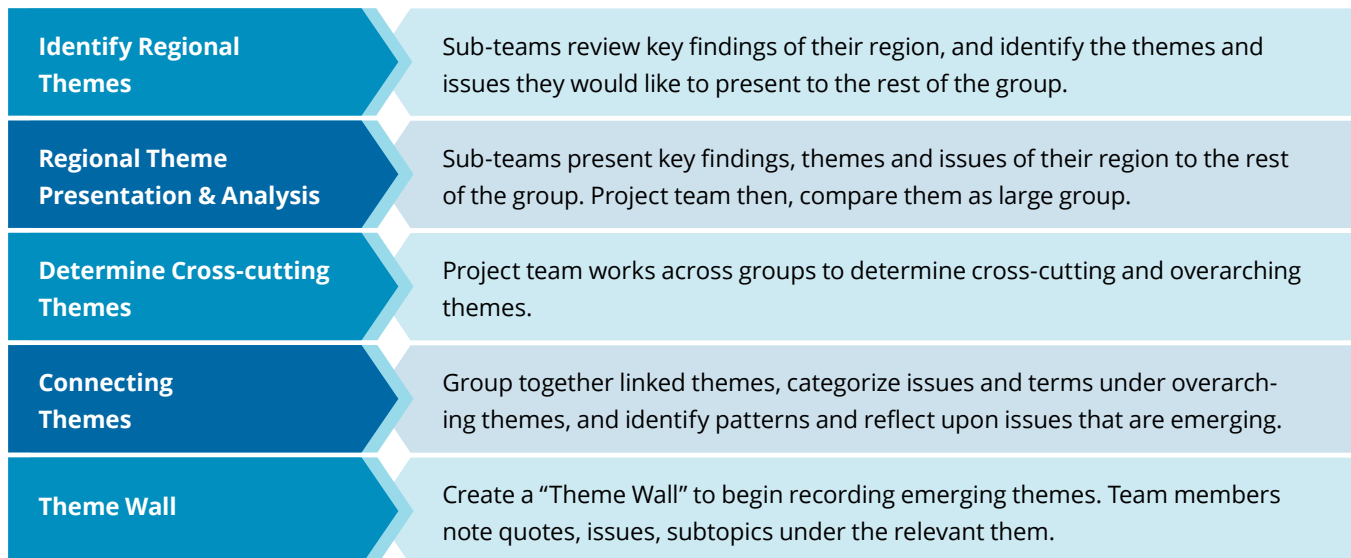
**It is recommended that they share the results of their initial data analysis via a preliminary findings presentation at a community level to:**

- Share results from the data analysis
- Share conversations “highlights”
- Confirm the (in)accuracy of their findings
- Ask what they may have missed

Following the presentation, the team should incorporate the comments they received from community members into the summary of regional key findings drafted earlier to assist them in the final stage of analysis discussed in the next section.

## Determining Themes and Key Findings at the National Level

The theme finding mission kicks off when all the project teams convene at headquarters, and share key findings. It is recommended that at least five days be set aside for this analysis. The theme finding mission is a complex analytical process with multiple steps and stages:



Be sure to capture quotes and stories on the “Theme Wall”. Small stories can help create mini case studies while writing the report

## Reflection

Once the themes have been identified, the group should analyze the results theme by theme. Allow time to reflect and react to the key findings, and make sure a facilitator takes notes on these analysis and reflection sessions. Questions to consider during the reflection phase:

- Why is theme X recurring instead of theme Y? How does this compare to expectations?
- How do themes interact and relate to one another? Where are the links?
- Are these themes reflective of a certain group with a specific social standing or background?
- Why was a particular area of conversation a trigger for certain people over others?
- How do you address important themes that came up but do not apply across board?
- How are we interpreting what people said? Is this valid and how do we know?
- Are we giving more weight to our conversations with certain people and groups over others?  
Why?
- Does what we heard imply any action to be taken?

The analysis is also a moment for sorting your data. After completing the field work you will probably have a large amount of data from conversations. Be sure when analyzing the research themes that you put all the data concerning a specific theme together, including significant stories and powerful quotes related to each specific theme. Do not forget to always reference your quotes and stories by who shared them, referencing their age, gender, etc. (not their name) and where the conversation took place. This will be very helpful when you write your report.

## Recommendation Process

Researchers should go through a recommendation process during analysis wherein they think through the issues and come up with ideas on what to do about them. This will often start very broadly and it will be up to the facilitator to narrow the recommendations through discussion and targeted questions. The value of this process is that it offers specific, youth-focused solutions.

## Preliminary Presentation of Overall Findings

Building on the preliminary findings presentations that took place at the regional level, it is highly recommended that a national presentation is organized at the conclusion of the analysis phase. Those who can be invited to such a presentation include INGOs, youth-focused or youth-led organizations, donors, and UN agencies.

The purpose is to:

- Share results from the data analysis
- Share conversations “highlights”
- Confirm the (in)accuracy of their findings
- Ask what they may have missed

Following the presentation, the team should incorporate the comments they received from audience members into the summary of key findings to assist them in the final report.

# PHASE 4



# WRAPPING UP

## Writing the Report

After the completion of the analysis phase, you will proceed to the report writing phase. Next steps will include:

- 1. Setting a timeline for writing the final report:** Allow time for drafting, getting feedback and responding to comments, finalizing and translating the report.
- 2. Ensuring youth research involvement:** Ensure youth researchers get a chance to include relevant anecdotes from their L&L conversations in the report, and that they contribute to the report writing.
- 3. Gathering relevant multimedia:** A written report is nicely supplemented by a series of short videos (featuring L&L conversations, interviews with local partners about the benefits of the project, and youth researchers experiences applying the methodology). When gathering media, remember to take participants' permissions and abide by the Do No Harm principles.
- 4. Getting partner feedback:** If possible and appropriate, share drafts with local partners to check accuracy and ensure a true representation of what was said and meant. These additional steps ensure an honest and inclusive youth-led process, and add to the rigor of the analysis.
- 5. Communicating the learning:** Going back to the Participatory Action Research model, think about who should be reading the report. Identify individuals, CSOs, government agencies, and international bodies that can utilize the information in the report, and act upon its recommendations. Return information to the participant communities through public presentations and publications as appropriate in each context.



Debriefing during the Liberia study

Keep in mind your strategy in communicating results. For instance, how would you describe and summarize what you heard from people during L&L conversations to someone who was not involved with the project or is not familiar with the L&L methodology?

## Outputs

What's next? Now that you completed L&L, you have the data, and all findings have been captured and appropriately expressed in a report, video or other format, *what is done with that knowledge? How can what you have learned make an impact?*

As mentioned earlier, L&L is grounded in principles of Participatory Action Research. It is important to be proactive after the completion of the project. Work to fill in identified gaps, respond to cross-cutting issues and make the changes that the research suggests or clearly points to.

This can be done by either:

- Supporting youth researchers to take action;
- Taking action as an organization (if appropriate);
- By placing the information in the hands of others (policy makers, donors, community leaders, CSOs, INGOs, youth organizations, academic institutions etc.) and enabling them to act in a meaningful way given their context and relation to the research themes.

An example of how to do the latter is by conducting a Findings Presentation to key stakeholders or the target audience of your given youth-led initiative or project. Any project implementing the L&L approach should include a follow-up strategy to ensure the findings are shared and used. Furthermore, ongoing and future programming should continue to include the identified youth leaders and youth researchers as focal points and participants. This helps compound the capacity built during the application of L&L training and research implementation.

### Findings Presentation

The reasons for holding a Findings Presentation are many. It will provide you and your team with the opportunity to:

- Communicate the importance and rigor of L&L as a methodology;
- Present critical findings, key themes, and research outputs to the target audience;
- Create a space for key stakeholders to understand the issues and learn how to respond;
- Identify gaps and begin collaborating on how to fill them in.

Consider this an opportunity for more listening and learning to take place and utilize the presentation as a space for further reflection. Continue to include youth researchers as presenters or story tellers, and field questions as a team. Also, take into consideration the perspective of attending participants.

We went out and we talked to the real people. [We] talked to the Liberian youth. We talked to the people who were suffering. We talked to people who are supposed to benefit from this international aid.” Liberian Youth Researcher (1)

## Final Thoughts



There is an urgent need to tap into the potential of today's over 1.8 billion youth, and create an opportunity for transformation and positive social change. The use of youth-led and technically advised inquiry processes such as the Listening and Learning (L&L) methodology have the unique ability to mainstream youth perspectives into program design and implementation, while developing their soft and technical skills. It creates space for adults to observe youth capacity and leadership in their communities, and fosters valuable relationships between youth and CSOS, government agencies, etc. in their communities. Most importantly, however, is the fact that the L&L inquiry process is informed by empathy, inclusivity and trust and therefore, pays appropriate homage to the insights and experiences of the communities it aims to learn from, and serve.