

# LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH



KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY. Local youth participants and staff of HOPE pose next to a project banner.

## ACTIVITY: Hope for a Better Future: Building Collaborative Resilience for Youth in Liberia (HOPE)

Liberia has experienced prolonged social trauma for more than a generation. Peace is difficult, even more so when mass trauma compromises trust, stability, and development daily. As in other post-conflict countries, the path to recovery through one-on-one psychotherapy is unavailable or infeasible. Community trauma healing presents an effective alternative.

HOPE introduces mindfulness, empathy, emotional control and moral and collaborative reasoning as skills to strengthen the capacity of individuals suffering from prolonged social trauma to collaboratively find local solutions to local problems and conflicts and, together, they create better futures for themselves and their communities.

## LOCALLY LED HEALING

By creating community group healing processes through diverse approaches, HOPE accommodates local preferences and long-term conflict resolution and trauma recovery practices. At the systems-level, community, national, and international partners are creating an inclusive enabling environment where local solutions can be supported and sustained.

## KEY LEARNING QUESTIONS

HOPE is implementing approaches intended to strengthen community-led trauma recovery and resilience processes and skill-building. HOPE engages youth and key local stakeholders as partners for sustainable, trauma-informed development in Liberia. Learning questions guiding HOPE include:

- ✦ **To what extent and under what conditions can participants increase their:**  
(a) feelings of safety in social interaction; (b) self-reliance and trauma recovery capacity; (c) trust in interpersonal and social interactions; and (d) capacity to collaborate with others?
- ✦ **Do participants experience a decrease in violence related attitudes?**
- ✦ **Are they more hopeful for their own future and the future of their community?**

## GOALS OF RESILIENCE

By introducing psychosocial skills that strengthen individual and collective capacity to find local solutions to local problems, HOPE's trauma-informed design seeks to strengthen individual, community, and societal resilience. HOPE focuses on youth, but its impact is also on their communities through five distinct approaches that prioritize peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and psychosocial health.

### FIVE DISTINCT APPROACHES

- ✦ **Conduct Community Baseline Assessments** in each HOPE location at the beginning of the program to understand local hopes, fears, needs, interests, and attitudes.
- ✦ **Hold Safe Spaces**, micro-level interventions focusing on rebuilding psychosocial skills weakened by years of violence, in designated protected locations with groups of youth to foster trauma recovery.
- ✦ **Facilitate Youth Dialogues** to engage youth in a 6-step process to build a shared vision for their future and to create "dream projects" to improve the well-being of their communities.
- ✦ **Engage entire communities through Tents** to address conflict-related mental and emotional triggers, habits and beliefs.
- ✦ **Run Solution Accelerators** that, focusing on the systems level, create an enabling environment of inclusion, common understanding and trust that can support the natural emergence of local collaborative conflict resolution processes and practices.

### FIVE PARTNERS

**Kennesaw State University** (KSU) coordinates, implements, and monitors HOPE in close collaboration with other partners and USAID. KSU strengthens local partner capacity in research design, data collection and analysis, and program evaluation, and works closely with others to adapt approaches to the Liberian context, test impact, and advance their utility for scale-up and use in other post-conflict settings.

The **Liberia National Commission of Justice, Peace, and Caritas** (NCJPC) is a non-profit promoting peace, charity, social justice, and development. NCJPC coordinates and implements all five approaches below, including providing training for NCJPC staff and faith leaders and conducting community outreach.

The **Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation** (KAICT) at the University of Liberia serves as HOPE's academic liaison, collecting field-level data and supporting community-level intervention and gender analysis design.

**Sovereignty First** is an organization focusing on understanding trauma dynamics and partnering with local organizations to craft and implement trauma-informed interventions and adapt the diverse approaches and trainings in different communities and contexts.

**TRENDS Global**, a non-profit conducting adaptive, community-focused peacebuilding research and capacity building programs, leads monitoring, evaluation, and learning efforts.

## CONTACT THE LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

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NEWSLETTER



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