

Young People's Environmental Perceptions, Future Orientation and Perceived Instrumentality of
Education: A Case Study in Post Conflict Sierra Leone

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YOUNG PEOPLE'S ENVIRONMENTAL PERCEPTIONS, FUTURE ORIENTATION AND
PERCEIVED INSTRUMENTALITY OF EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY IN POST-
CONFLICT SIERRA LEONE

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Over twelve years after a devastating decade-long civil war, Sierra Leone relies on its youth to serve as major drivers in transitioning the country from reconstruction phase towards sustainable development. However, inadequacy of the education system, which is relied upon for building youth capacity to engage with complex post-conflict issues, threatens this evolution. How young people are experiencing and conceptualizing these challenges in a rapidly changing landscape and the interaction of those perceptions with educational processes lacks sufficient investigation. Given that environmental conditions are known to influence human perceptions and that the current conditions have had a significant impact on citizens' worldviews, such explorations are warranted.

Employing qualitative approaches, this study investigated young people's environmental perceptions, its relation to their future orientation, and perceived instrumentality of education for personal and community development in Koinadugu District (considered the least developed region of Sierra Leone). In addition adult stakeholders were interviewed to provide contextualized information relating to the research topic where documented data was limited.

Results demonstrated that while young people had strong positive aesthetic and affective responses to their natural environment, the built environment was viewed and experienced as incongruent with their "life paths." Findings show that person-environment misfit had a negative influence on perceived community futures. On the other hand, self-efficacy mitigated such effect

for personal futures. In general, this study found that school goers viewed the education system as inadequate for preparing young people to engage in community problem solving or attaining future career goals. Those in vocational training were more satisfied with their education than their school-going counterparts. Sense of place, in particular “place attachment” appeared as a strong variable in young people’s narratives, indicating opportunities for a reversal of youth rural-urban migration and retention of a rural workforce.

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CHAPTER I

CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

Introduction

With the youth I will do more, with the youth, we will all do more, with the youth, we will set forth a worthy journey of renewal, productivity, creativity and success... we have a mission to accomplish, a country to rebuild and a future to secure.

Ernest Bai Koroma, President of Sierra Leone, February 23, 2013

Over twelve years after a devastating decade-long civil war, Sierra Leone's youth, as noted by their President Ernest Bai Koroma, are expected to actively participate in moving the country towards sustainable peace, growth, and a thriving future. This current youth are considered a "war generation," either born during the conflict or witnessed it, and a significant number participated in violence willingly or by force. McKay and colleagues estimate that about 22,500 children between the ages of 7 and 14 years were recruited as child soldiers, abducted and trained to kill and commit other acts of atrocities (McKay & Mazurana, 2004). Acts of rape, sexual violence, forced marriages, displacement, injuries, loss of loved ones, or breakdown of family and social structures are commonplace experiences of Sierra Leonean youth post-war. While much has been written about the need to build youth capacity particularly for ex-combatants, the experiences of this demographic and non-combatants in an ever changing and evolving environment and its influence on their everyday lives and ability to envision and pursue desired futures remains understudied.

The sizeable participation of economically and politically marginalized youth during the war has accounted for general attention on their role within the reconstruction and development discourse. Education in general, and formal education in particular, serves as the country's chief

medium for skills training and strengthening of youth citizenship to engage in problem solving the myriad interconnected socio-economic, political and environmental post-conflict issues that Sierra Leone faces (GoSL, 2012; World Bank, 2007; Peeters, Cunningham, Acharya & Van Adams, 2009). While government measures have led to some success, such as increases in school attendance and the closing the gender gaps between boys and girls, young people's everyday lives have not fundamentally improved post conflict. Furthermore, the ultimate desired and expected outcome of increasing active citizenry and workforce remains marginal (Peeters et al., 2009).

Generally, the socio-economic and political landscape that led to a discontented young generation and their participation in the civil war has not significantly changed (Freeman, 2008). For instance, despite reports of Sierra Leone's economic progress in recent years, mostly through mining investments, the wealth has not trickled down to the youth or to the common person. Many continue to live in poverty, lacking skills and opportunities to meaningfully engage in the economic sphere. The recent 2012 'status of the youth' report asserts that young people who make up 60% of the population, in many ways, are still in the fringes of society (GoSL, 2012). Several factors account for this including poor quality of education, skills training and low involvement in decision making process due to lack of know-how and continued generational mistrust between young people and adults who continue to view them as volatile, idle and untrustworthy given their participation in the war. (Bedson & Fofonah, 2013).

Several education and conflict scholars have explored and underlined how Sierra Leone's failed educational system contributed to young people's recruitment into rebel fighting forces (Keen, 2005; Paulson, 2006; Richards, 1996). Post conflict, youth development has become

synonymous with educational reconstruction and reform. Although notable progress has been made (Mac-Ikemenjima, 2008; Paulson, 2006), advancement in primary and secondary school access as well as increases in tertiary institutions over the last decade has not translated to significant benefits for young people themselves and the nation in terms of civic engagement and better livelihood. This slow development is a source of anxiety for adult stakeholders as highlighted in excerpt below from the “Sierra Leone Status of the Youth Report 2012” (RESTLESS, 2012). The report undertones a sense of frustration noted by the author’s bolded sections and added exclamation mark at the end of this particular paragraph in the text:

The GoSL (Government of Sierra Leone) has made a **good start in tackling youth development issues** in the country. The challenges the country faces in other sectors and nationally is enormous. Clearly, the youth themselves must **arise and have more self-determination, work harder, become more innovative and entrepreneurial, change their mind-set** and unproductive **culture** and become **more productive and focused citizens**. To be sustainable, once the structures are established and fully established, support from Government and development partners should **complement the practical initiatives** of the youth, rather than the other way round! (*Bolded in original text*)

The call for action, self-determination, and cultural shift highlights a broader concern than can’t be addressed strictly by schooling or structured education. It underscores issues of motivation, self-efficacy and activism thus imploring the question of what conditions and skill sets are provided for young people that promote such qualities as they face local and national challenges.

Education no matter its form and structure should timely reflect the learner’s environment, providing necessary and relevant skills to operate in their place preparing for both the present and future (Hutchinson, 1999; Jickling & Wals, 2008). The work of Pan-African scholars and educators such as Edward Blyden, W. E. B. Du Bois, Jean Price-Mars, and Maria Stewart have long emphasized that training institutions be attuned with the African and youth cultures (Simeon-Jones, 2010). Decades before Sierra Leone’s war, W.E.B Du Bois’ (1944)

revealing work “The meaning of Education” forewarned of “*war*” and “*chaos*” where the human experience “*character*.” This phenomenon has not been carefully considered in the quest for development:

The civilized people of the world have got to be characterized by certain things; *they must know this world, its history and the laws of its development. They must also be able to reason carefully and accurately.* Attention must be paid to human feelings and emotions which determine and guide this knowledge, and reason and action must follow a certain pattern of taste. These things: knowledge, reason, feeling and taste make up something which we designate as character and this character it is which makes the human being for which the world of technique is to be arranged and by whom it is to be guided. *Technique without character is chaos and war. Character without technique is labor and want.* But you have human beings who know the world and can grasp it; who have feelings guided by ideals; then using technique at their hands they can get rid of the four great evils of human life.... ignorance, poverty, disease and crime. (Italics in original, Simeon-Jones, 2010, p.51-52)

As scholars of Sierra Leone’s war have expounded elsewhere (Peters, 2011), the youth experience particularly those in rural areas were hardly represented in the country’s politics. Struggling to situate themselves and exercise their citizenship within the British administrative system, they were marginalized socially, politically and morally. As Peters (2011) notes, they were “neither citizens nor subjects”. While education became a means to gain access to this exclusionary environment it would soon become a problem itself. Sierra Leone’s war was both a case of *technique without character*, and *character without technique*, which contributed to significant youth involvement in the war. The urban youth were opportune to more educational opportunities and resource than their rural counterparts, which ultimately did not serve them in the political and economic environment. Consequently, their frustration arose from not only the misalignment of the system with real world opportunities but that their adults undermined their concerns, *feelings*. Rural youth were disadvantaged in not having the resources and opportunities

to develop technique hence their *want*. War and its aftermath create layers of complexity in experiences, requiring different and varied skill sets for engagement.

This dissertation was concerned with uncovering important elements from young people's environmental perceptions, lived experiences and future visions that should have consideration in youth capacity building agenda particularly, education. Post-conflict, young people's environments are undergoing sociocultural, economic, political and biophysical transformations. These have significance on how they negotiate their daily lives, envision their future and build skills necessary to position themselves as active contributors in their communities, country and the world. This work explored young rural people's perceptions of their environment as influenced by environmental experiences, views of the future, and role of education in personal and community development. Exploring these experiences with and from young people is important, given their voices are often historically underrepresented both in literature and public sphere (Peters 2011; Bedson & Fofanah, 2013). Investigating young people's environmental perceptions in a transitioning rural post-conflict developing place is important to expand scholarly work on their geographies which enables localized understanding vis-a-vis regional, national and global processes that affect their livelihood. Furthermore, explorations of their everyday experiences, desires, hopes and fears of the future can provide valuable contributions in creating both better programs and providing better environments in which young people can be most productive and express their citizenship in constructive ways that benefit themselves, their communities and the country.

Statement of Research Problem

Sierra Leone's need for a generation of well-equipped and engaged youth generation ready to handle 21st century challenges has been affirmed by multiple incidences in distant and recent times including the ten year civil war, 2012 cholera outbreak and 2014 Ebola outbreak (occurred post study data collection) which claimed thousands of lives. Until the outbreaks, Sierra Leone boasts of post-conflict progress, largely in the economic sector with some advancement in education and health (Maconachie & Binns, 2007; Freeman, 2008). However, the country's inability to effectively respond to both epidemics due to lack of human resource and infrastructure uncovered the state's fragility. Young people who are supposed to constitute a great portion of the workforce largely remain untrained and under prepared to respond to both local and national issues.

Fundamental limitations to young people's ability to engage and exercise their citizenship are historical, technical, cultural and environmental. As Bedson and Fofanah (2013) delineate, high unemployment rate among young people who make up 60% of the population have both been a result of poor quality education that does not adequately prepare learners for the job market as well as intensified historical age hierarchical systems that have become even more hostile to young people post-conflict. Those in rural areas continue to be at even higher disadvantage, lacking much of the resources available to their counterparts in the city. This has led to large rural youth migration to the capital city in hopes for opportunities and a better life. However urban livelihood presents several challenges for rural youth who often arrive with inadequate resources and skills.

Post-conflict transitional environments present both opportunities and challenge that influence young people's every day interactions and their future. Young Sierra Leoneans are growing up in an ever-global environment; hence their local experiences are influenced and affected by global transactions. This interface prompt different hopes, challenges, and ways of thinking, seeing and doing that should be reflected in human capacity development. Empirical work and understanding of the post-conflict youth experience has been limited while the majority of existing works have focused on ex-combatants (Peeters, 2009; Peters, 2011). Although, the urgency and attention on the plight of ex-combatants was necessary after the war, experiences of non-combatants who form the majority of youth require more investigation. This is even for significant for those in rural environment, who are often more disadvantaged than their urban counterparts. Research show young people have varied and complex experiences, worldviews, expectations, and motivations; hence, any attempt to bring about transformational change must be based on understandings their experiences and perspectives to the process (Erkesley, 2002: Osler & Starkey, 2003). Biesta et al. (2009) assert that young people's citizenship learning is influenced by context, relationships and individual dispositions. Hence many have argued for reconceptualization of education for citizenship to reflect local, national and global environments as well as experiences learners bring to the learning process in an ever-globalizing world as these can have transformational influences on behavior and action (Osler & Starkey, 2003).

Research Goal and Questions

The purpose of the study was to examine rural young people's perceptions of their environment, their future orientation and views of education. The primary goal was to

understand and explain their environmental perceptions and what experiences influenced said perceptions, how and if those perceptions in turn influenced their views and aspirations for the future and their views of education with regards to personal and community development. The research question of this dissertation can be phrased as, how do young people perceive their environment and how do reported environmental perceptions and experiences influence their views of the future and the role of education for self and community development?

Specific Aims and Objectives

Specific Aims 1- Understanding young people’s experience and perception of and within their environment: The human-environment interactions are known to influence each other, shaping our perceptions, values, and behaviors. As described earlier, Sierra Leone is one of the least developed countries in the world whose structures and institutions were severely damaged by ten years of war. Long after the war, daily life continues to be characterized by various challenges that affect the human quality of life. For instance, acts of rape, sexual violence, forced marriages, displacement, injuries, loss of loved ones, breakdown of family and social structures form the traumatic experiences of youth during the Sierra Leone’s ten-year war. Given these experiences, youth’s perception and sense of community may likely have been greatly impacted. Here I sought to specifically define and understand the Koinadugu District (Study Site) environment that forms the experience of youths in this research work. A description of the physical and human cultural space in Koinadugu District environment has been provided above. Here, I sought to explore this aim through the following objectives:

- **Objective 1: How do young people in Koinadugu District, Sierra Leone conceptualize their current environment?** Here I sought to understand young

Koinadugans' thoughts, and views of their local community. This question intentionally focused on positive, then negative experiences, first to understand what they like about their community and also to bring a balanced perspective alongside explorations of critical issues. This provided firsthand perspective of youth experiences as against adult perspectives that dominate current literature. Young people's representation of their life-world was analyzed alongside established narratives of and from the region.

- **Objective 2: From young people's perceptions, what are some critical issues that affect livelihood in Koinadugu District?** This question explored young people's perceptions of conditions that affect their individual livelihood in particular and that of the community in general. A sample of previously documented issues explored from youth's perspectives includes; water availability and quality; road/transport network, food security, deforestation and health care systems.

Specific Aims 2: How young Koinadugans' environmental experiences and perceptions influence their views of the future? The physical and socio-cultural environment where people live and work shapes social and personal values. Social norms and personal expectations are linked to how people perceive the future and their loci of control. Whether people are more optimistic or pessimistic, the degree of either outlook can inherently influence productivity and progress within a given society. Koinadugu is often described as the least developed district in one of the poorest countries in the world, hence, one may invariably expect that young people's views of the future are more grim than optimistic. However, there are no empirical studies that have sought to understand these issues or perspectives. This question explored the interactions between youth environmental perceptions and their future orientation. Targeted questions that

formed the spring off for this exploration included: their short-term and longterm career goals, likelihood of being able to achieve their goals, likelihood of staying in their community, and views of the community's future.

Specific Aim 3: How effective is the current educational system (formal & informal) in meeting the needs of young people in Koinadugu District? Rhetoric, particularly from the government highlights high priority in developing the education sector. Given the significant needs and challenges the country faces, building youth capacity is critical for stability and growth. It is generally considered that education provides learners necessary knowledge and skills to better manage their environment and the resources within it. Here the researcher seeks to understand young Koinadugans views of the current education system in light of their environmental experiences and future goals. This question sought to:

- **Objectives 1:** Define and characterize the educational system (Formal and Informal) system in Koinadugu District and Sierra Leone at large. This exploration provided broad historical perspectives on the educational systems, successes and limitations. Completing this objective relied heavily on document reviews and interviews from Koinadugu stakeholders who provided contextualized information unavailable in text.
- **Objective 2:** Understand the Koinadugans experience within the education system and views of its appropriateness vis-a-vis personal and community development.

Study Area: Koinadugu District

This study focuses on Koinadugu; a remote district in the northern province of Sierra Leone located 180 miles north of Freetown, the country's economic and political center. Its name is derived from two Kuranko words, one of the local languages found in the district: "Koina"

meaning “groundhog and “dugu” meaning, “land”. Geographically it is the largest district with a total land area of 12,370 km², though the least populated. In the northeast Koinadugu is bordered by the Republic of Guinea, Bombali district on the west, Tonkolili to the southwest and Kono in the south. It has 11 chiefdoms, 93 sections and 24 wards. Available statistics from the 2004 National census show the district’s population stands at 265,758 and growing at 1.9% per annum (Koinadugu District Development Plan, 2010). Its capital, one of the largest cities in northern Sierra Leone is Kabala. The main ethnic groups are Limba, Kuranko and Yalunka while Madingo, Fullah, Temne and Susu are a growing number. Religion-wise, 95% of the population practices Islam with a growing number of Christian given long term influence of missionaries who have set up most of the district’s primary and secondary schools.

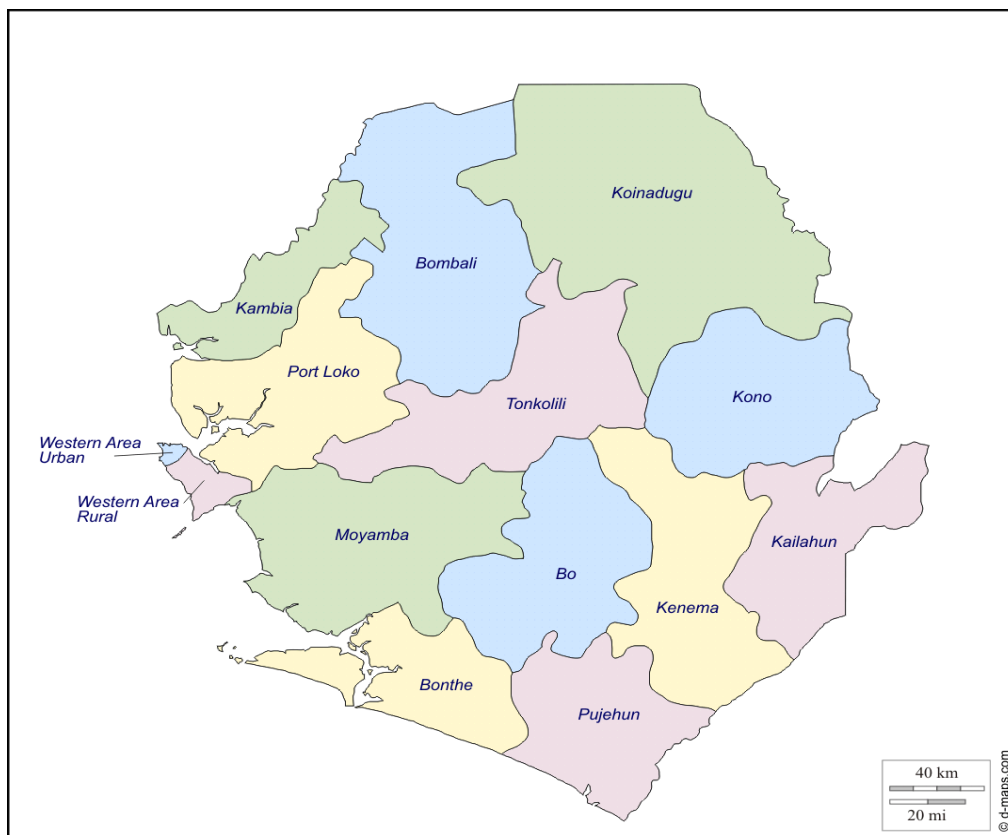


Figure 1: Map of Sierra Leone (Koinadugu District Development Plan, 2010)

Physical Landscape and Environmental Characteristics

Koinadugu though considered the most deprived district possess several favorable environmental forces including rich agricultural landscape, minerals, rivers and inland valley systems, beautiful mountains, a conducive climate for human settlement, and grasslands for pastoral systems. Hence, the predominant economic activities are agriculture, market gardening, mining, and livestock rearing. Because of the quality and quantity of produce such as vegetables, rice, corn, and meat, produced from Koinadugu and sold around the country, the district is often called the “Bread basket of Sierra Leone.”

Extremely high altitudes characterize much of Koinadugu’s physical landscape (average 3,000 ft above sea level), with the Bintumani Mountains being the highest in the country. This offers scenic beauty and potential for tourism. In fact thousands of natives, diasporas and tourist visit the district every year during Christmas-New Year’s period to climb the Wara Wara Mountains in Kabala town. The current president, Ernest Bai Koroma has made it a tradition for the last four years to spend the 1st of January in the district with his family. Conversely the district’s mountainous landscape makes much of the district inaccessible, which greatly impacts movement, economic activity, schooling, health care delivery, and quality of life improvements. This has historically put limits on development efforts, making it the least developed and one of the most neglected regions in the country. As a result of these challenges, the district has been unable to achieve desired growth that allows for effective operation in the global market and effective utilization of its rich natural resources for sustainable livelihood.

Koinadugu has a tropical climate with a dry and rainy season. The dry season runs from November to April and the rainy from May to October. Temperatures range between 22.8°C to

25.2°C in January and July respectively (KDC). The monsoon sets in during July and August when the rains peak with average rainfalls between 2000 to 2500mm. The generally low rainfalls affect vegetation and soil condition, which is considered to be woodland savannah. The dry season is characterized by strong dust-laden winds known as the Harmattan. The dusty winds blowing from the Sahara is associated with several health problems in both people and animal particularly between late November and early February.

Climatic condition affects the soil and vegetation, which influences agrarian economic activities. Koinadugu's soil is laterite while vegetation is largely grassland. Given its mountainous landscape rice and vegetable production takes place in the valley lands during seasonal floods. 85% of Koinadugans engage in subsistent farming with women being the highest vegetable producers. Major food crops cultivated include rice, cassava, sweet potato, vegetables, and groundnuts. The district is facing several challenges as over-grazing, seasonal bush fires, illegal logging and indiscriminate mining greatly affects arable land (Koinadugu District Development Plan, 2010).

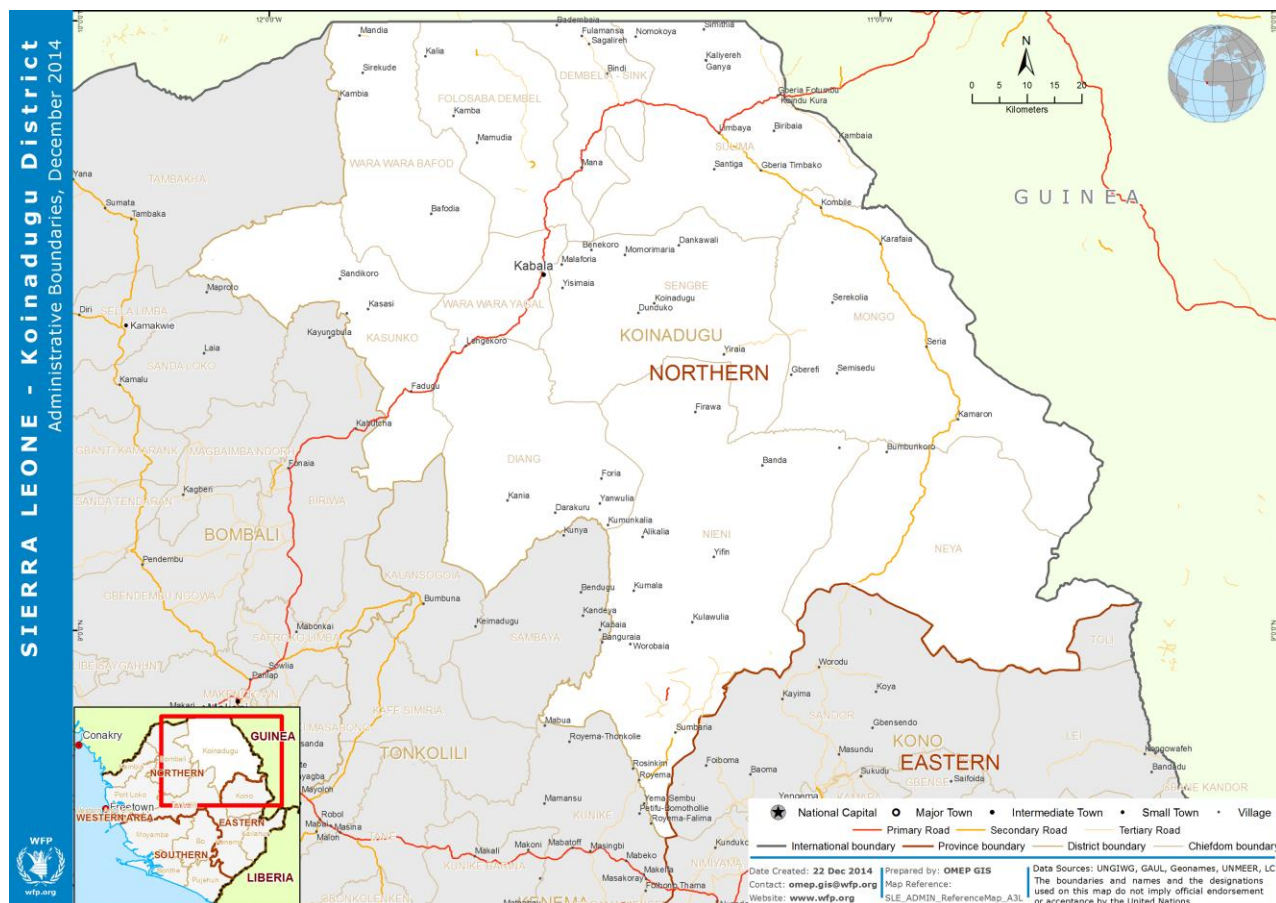


Figure 2: Map of Koinadugu District (wfp.org, December 2014)

Socio-Cultural Environment

Though quite far from Freetown and Lungi where the country's only operating airport is located, Koinadugu sees a fair number of visitors, increasingly after the war and with new discoveries of valuable minerals. Hence, the district's socio-cultural environment continues to evolve given inflow of new economic activities, which influences and shapes the culture. Koinadugans are quite hospitable towards strangers and pride themselves as "*the land of power mixtures*" given the district's ethnic and natural diversity. However, the 10-year war and its aftermath has negatively impacted indigenous social structures, family units and community systems symptomized by the alarming increase in teenage pregnancies and massive rural to

urban flight by the district's young people. The conflict further exacerbated living conditions, resulting in additional layers of challenges (psycho-social, behavioral, traumatic events and infrastructural damage) for the environment.

The British-based education system has had mixed impact in the district. Little comprehensive data exist on the impacts and benefits of education in the district. Currently success is largely drawn from the public exams pass rates in which Koinadugu continues to have one of the poorest results nationally. Employment another indicator is very low particularly among young people of working age which is 18 years and above. On the other hand, Koinadugans who have successfully gone through the education system have become part of an elite class, many living in Freetown or out of the country. The exclusion of a generation of young people who cannot make it through the system has led to the Okada (motorbike riders) generation of youths (mostly young men). These young people are unable to effectively integrate as productive citizens in the state systems; at the same time, they are detached from their cultural systems and unable to effectively adopt the traditional systems that constitute an ancestral knowledge base on which community livelihoods have depended for generations.

ASSUMPTION/ THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work explored young people's environmental perceptions as influenced by contextual experiences in rural, post conflict Sierra Leone; influences on their views of the future and implications for education as a tool achieving desired futures are also explored. Perceptions have been found to have intimate relation to adaptive functioning (McArthur & Baron, 1983; Maschi, Perez & Tyson, 2010). It not only helps humans make sense of the world but can promotes agency which is important for setting life goals and pursuing means to achieve them

(Bandura, 1993). As an interdisciplinary study, multiple schools of thought that portray the relationship between environmental perceptions, future orientations and learning guided this work. The human-nature relationship has been studied in variety of fields including but not limited to human geography, cultural anthropology, and environmental psychology. The current research drew on elements from these fields as well as sociology and education, which highlight young people as operating in and influenced by the social structures in which they find themselves.

Ecological Systems Theory Model

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory (EST) offer lenses through which to view and understand a young person's environmental experiences and implications for various individual and community outcomes. This model is model recognizes the interrelation of person and environment as well as the notion of time as an important factor that affects development outcomes, experiences and perceptions (Reyes, 2008). This aspect of time is relevant in examinations of young development in most settings but particularly so for transitory environments.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) conceptualization of human development within an environmental context, stressing that people's lives are influenced by immediate and distant structures is particularly relevant to this work. A person is understood as part of a "set of nested structures, each inside the next," from micro-, meso-, exo- macro to Chrono system. The microsystem refers to face-to-face relationships and interactions the young people has with others in their immediate environment such as home, school and neighborhood. The Mesosystem refers to transactions and relationships between two or more microsystems in which the youth is

an active participant engaging in *ecological transition* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The exo-system consist of one or more settings in which the young person is not an active participant but is nonetheless affected by happenings in that setting. Following is the macro system emphasizes the overarching context of relationships among systems within the social context, culture or subculture that influences possibilities of life choices. Finally, the chrono-system considers the role of time, when events occur, timeliness and duration.

The ecological systems theory is relevant to the current study and the transitional post-conflict context as it attends to young people's experiences and perceptions within their holistic environment which includes both the physical and socio-cultural aspects influenced by other settings, occurrences and "foreign land or the world of someone else's fantasy as expressed in a story, play or film" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 10). This work also employs Bronfenbrenner's (1979) discussion on objective conditions and subjective perceptions and their role in human development within an environmental context. Building on Lewin and Jean Piaget's work, Bronfenbrenner (1979) advances that at first children confuse, "subjective and objective features of the environment and as a result can experience frustration." But they later adapt their imagination to the "constrains of the objective reality", remolding reality to their abilities, needs and desires. This understanding has relevance in the exploration of how young people, situated in a historically disadvantaged post-conflict rural environment, envision and adjust their future in light of their perceptions of environmental constrains.

Constructivist Learning Theory

Fundamentally, this research work was driven by the assumption that young people will benefit from youth-oriented learner-centered education and capacity building programs.

Critically so for Sierra Leone where education-base capacity building programming pre and post-conflict, continues to fall short of both youth and adult expectations. Ideally, young people would be active participants in the learning process; their views and perceptions of issues that affect their lives and community are sought and incorporated in programs. Constructivist learning theory framework forms the basis of such understanding, which underpins major school of thought on teaching and learning that recognizes:

both individuals and groups of individuals construct ideas about how the world works. It is also recognized that individuals vary widely in how they make sense out of the world and that both individual and collective views about the world undergo change over time. (Novak in Lougland et al., 2002)

This study examined how young people in rural Sierra Leone are making sense of their post-conflict environment. Much has been written about conditions that led to youth involvement in the war. Studies show that lack or poor quality of education led to a generation of poorly skilled and ill-prepared youth who were marginalized from the social, economic and political processes.

However their post-war experience and its implication for teaching and learning has only been limitedly studied.

The social constructivist paradigm pioneered by Lev Vygotsky suggests understanding the context and social environment in which individuals construct knowledge as vital to authentically stimulating active learning, critical and innovative thinking (McMahon 1997). Duffy and Janassen (1992) support this notion of having contextualized knowledge that provides learners with appropriate skills needed for tasks within its complex, and interconnected environment. Derrey (1996) reflect, *“in order to fully engage and challenge the learner, the task and the learning environment should reflect the complexity of the environment that the learner should be able to function in at the end of learning.”*

Beyond prior knowledge learners bring to educational settings, their expectations of how such systems serve their goals and ambitions should be taken into account (Erkseley, 2002; Palmer, 1995; Stapp, 2001). Just as existing knowledge frameworks influence new presenting information, how people envision the future (Gidley & Inayatullah, 2002) is vital for a real engaged and collaborative learning process. In their study on the links between self-determination and Future Time Perspective (FTP) theory de Bilde and colleagues (2011), found that students who were future-oriented as oppose to fatalistic present oriented, seemed more determined in their study behaviors, were more focused and cognitively processed learning materials more deeply. Husman and Lens (1999) also assert that, “perceived instrumentality does enhance student motivation but only for those students who have a positive attitude towards their individual future.” The interaction between futures and learning has been document across various fields including education, futures studies and psychology.

Creswell (2003) stresses that people constantly seek understanding and meaning of the world in which they live and work. Such meanings are formed through interaction with others and within the local environment. Drawing on highlighted theoretical perspectives, this work sought to understand young people’s awareness and feelings regarding elements of their multifaceted socio-cultural and biophysical environment, perceived implications for livelihood and quality of life. Furthermore, I explored interactions of environmental perceptions with future outlooks and perceived function of formal and non-formal education for attaining personal and communal development. Utilizing a holistic approach allowed for flexibility when working in complex locales where experiences and perceptions are equally influenced by physical space, culture and history.

Definition of Key Terms

Young People and Youth

The term young people are used interchangeably in this work. Young people when used carry a broad age range including children, adolescents and youth. Youth in the Sierra Leone context refers to individuals within the ages of 15-35 years of age. Study participant's fell within the ages of 15-25 years although stakeholders and community members above the age of 35 years were consulted and interviewed when deemed necessary.

Education

Prior to the ten-year war, formal education received much attention and many young people hoped to attend some of the country's prestigious institutions. With the decade long and disruption of schooling, the government has been forced to pay more attention to non-formal education as an alternative ways of providing beyond school-age youth and adults with skills for reconstruction and rebuilding the nation. Formal schooling is still a main focus of attention in both national education discourse and at the societal level where it is viewed as a route to move up the social and economic ladder. However, school dropout rates are quite high as both students and families become disappointed with lack of returns (employment gained) after years of schooling. This suggests the importance of considering and exploring notions beyond formal education and it is this meaning that the current research adopts.

Environment

The term "environment" carries various meanings across different fields and areas of research. A prevailing understanding is environment as largely the natural and biophysical. Scholars with such views are concerned with the biological, physical and chemical aspects. With

growing concerns about environmental degradation and sustainability issues, which have been exacerbated by human actions and behaviors, there is growing discuss on environment as encompassing of the biophysical and human dimensions. This view is mindful of the interactions between biophysical and cultural aspects of the any environment. In fields such as education and psychology, the biophysical environment and its resourcefulness to humans is understood within a social context (Cassidy, 1997; Schmuck & Schultz, 2002). The current research focuses on how young people experience and perceive the biophysical within a particular socioeconomic, political and post conflict context.

Poverty

Poverty is a multidimensional construct that bears various meanings depending on the perspective and area of discourse. Poverty in the Sierra Leone-related discourse is defined by international organizations such as the World Bank (2007) and the United Nations. In this context, it is largely conceptualized in economic terms, mostly referring to income status. While I acknowledge this economic deficit, which is marked by the deprivation of basic necessities by millions in the country, Sierra Leone is also richly blessed with natural resources, which have failed to serve the people due to corruption, conflict, political instability and mismanagement (Maconachie & Binns, 2007). This work views poverty as a multidimensional vulnerability related to this population. Young people are experiencing poverty through unemployment and limited means of earning reasonable income which affects their ability to be fully functioning members of society. They face poverty through lack of relevant skills for the labor market and are inadequately involved in major decision-making processes that affect community, environment and quality of life.

Majority and Minority Worlds

These terminologies appear limitedly in this work. Researchers in similar study use it, with Majority indicating developing countries and Minority, developed states. This frame shows that most of the world's population lives in economically poor states (Panelli et. al, 2007).

Organization of the Study

This dissertation work is organized in five chapters. Chapter one, which serves as an introduction, provided a detailed background of the subject being explored as well as the study area. It presents the statement of problem, research questions, aims and objectives, as well as an overview of guiding theoretical framework and study area.

Chapter two focuses on literature review of key concepts in fields where similar questions have been posed. Literature review will focus on global, national and local dialogue on education for sustainable development, young people's environmental experiences and perceptions and future orientation.

Chapter three focuses on research methodology and procedures followed in data collection and analysis.

Chapter four presents research results. Chapter five provides data analysis, discussion and interpretations. A conclusion is also included that summaries overall research findings, recommendations from the findings and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews relevant literature and constructs as related to the proposed research study. Since this investigation focused on exploring young rural people's environmental perceptions, its relationship to their future orientation and implications on the role of education for self and community development, discussion of existing literature around the topic was important to provide context. Relevant research areas and an array of studies were explored to provide background pertaining to the proposed study. This research was informed by literature relating to young people's environmental experiences and perceptions of place, ecological understandings of future orientation and links between environmental experiences, future visions and education. The word young people and youth will be used interchangeably. In the Sierra Leonean context youth refers to persons within the ages of 15-35 years within which participants of the current study fall (UNESCO, 2003).

In particular, the research was conducted with youth in Koinadugu district, which is reported to be the country's least developed region in that it lacks many basic services and infrastructures such as education, health care, electricity, good roads and employment. Empirical youth studies in Sierra Leone are limited especially pertaining to rural youth. Combatants' experiences during and post war have received the majority of scholarly attention (Harris, 2012; Keen 2005; Molloy, 2004; Richards, 1996), while few have explored or expanded to the larger youth population. Nonetheless some lessons from studies on former combattants provided useful insight on the current youth experience and implications sustainable peace. For instance some observations and lessons from the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programs of

former combatants seem quite application to the general youth population. For example researchers note that while much emphasis was placed on disarming and demobilizing former fighters, the reintegration process received less attention. Social and economic reintegration programs which were perceived to be vital for sustaining peace and stability received limited funding, leading to disappointment (African Development Bank Group, 2011). The individual-based instead of community based support approach actually created some resentment towards ex-combatants who were seen as getting resources unavailable to many. Continuous investigations and scholarly engagement are important for policy makers, service provision and general conflict risk monitoring.

Although this dissertation focused primarily on rural young people's experiences, Sierra Leone's history (discussed below) is marked by systematic marginalization of both rural and urban youth. However because of their rurality, young people outside of urban environments often face multiple marginalization. The hope for this work is to better understand the particularity of this group, and contribute to research and intervention developments that better address their needs. The literature review situates young people in general and rural youth in particular within Sierra Leone's political and socio-economic environment through a historical synopsis. Subsequently I present an overview on the field of children and young people's geography, which has largely dominated everyday life research. This chapter delves into the human-environment interaction discourse highlighting research and theoretical developments that have established the co-influence of both on each other. It also reviews scholarly understandings of place experiences, environmental perceptions and constructs such as place attachment. Lastly I explore the future orientation construct as well as the ecological

understandings of people's future visions. I bring the chapter together by exploring the link between education, future orientation and learners' environmental experiences.

Young People's Status in Sierra Leone's Political and Socio-Economic Environment

Young people in post conflict Sierra Leone are the focus of this investigation. Their positionality as future leaders and key actors in sustaining peace and development is well acknowledged and documented within scholarly and popular discourse (Saffa, 2015, Bedson & Fofanah, 2013; Wundah, 2011). However, the status and ability of Sierra Leone's youth to actively engage, act on their citizenship and achieve their potential has been impacted by a multitude of past and present forces including colonialism, war, social inequities, economic disparities, political upheavals, and environmental degradation. The country's educational system, which remains central for citizenship training, is considered an elitist system that has not fundamentally changed since its establishment in the 1800s by British colonizers (Alie, 1990). Alie (1990) asserts the system then and now inadequately incorporated indigenous traditional, functional, practical, and culturally appropriate ways of learning. A checkered post-colonial political history marked by corruption, weakened infrastructure, and lack of sound educational policies further worsened the fragile system. Continuous alienation from their own local systems contributed to high youth unemployment and poverty rates that led to creation of a disgruntled generation forming a recruitment base for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in 1989. Formation of the RUF and ensuing state collapse from the 10-year war led to further breakdown of already crumbling structures and institutions. Although exact impacts of these factors have not been quantitatively measured for Sierra Leone, it is widely assumed that they have had profound impacts on the sociocultural, political, economic, and behavioral systems within the country

(Ferme, 2001; Keen, 2005; Richards, 1996). The below summary highlights how these factors influenced and continue to impact education and youth capacity development efforts:

Colonial Period. Young Sierra Leoneans, particularly those in rural areas operate between two worlds, indigenous pre-colonial and colonial systems, which are not always aligned. While traditional systems still influence livelihoods in most part of the country, major political and economic activities are largely based on colonial structures introduced in the 1700s when Sierra Leone became a crowned British colony (Keen, 2005). Consequently, young people and their parents have historically sought skills training and knowledge acquisition through the country's English-based educational system. Although Sierra Leone's school system has been heralded in developing the workforce for the region in earlier years, the largely theoretical classroom based approach has had two major effects then and today:

- 1) It created an elite class in the society. This system, whose foundations were to produce missionaries, teachers, and headmasters and not to meet practical community needs, was very theoretical in nature. The fortunate who went through the established education system were favored; they worked with the Whites and got office jobs instead of working in the fields. This created negative attitudes toward outdoor jobs, and distanced graduates from their traditional ways of doing and being. A group of African "bourgeoisies" grew, deepening the divide between Western literates and non-literates (Alie, 1990).
- 2) It undermined practical indigenous learning systems. The introduction of western ways of teaching and learning undermined traditional, functional, culturally appropriate, and practical education. Before Western education, indigenous learning

occurred through practical activities between adults and children, older and younger kids as well as friends. Learning was informal and largely social, as young boys and girls gained meaningful skills, values, and attitudes through imitation, participation, and observation (Alie, 1990). Learned trades and skills included agriculture, fishing, weaving, cooking, and carving. Initiation societies for boys and girls served as learning institutions within many ethnic groups. For example, in the Mende culture, boys were part of the Poro society, where they acquired skills and knowledge about medicine, politics, and government. Girls joined the Sande society and were trained in home craft, sex issues, and childcare. This form of learning was intentionally functional and relevant to the individuals and society's need and survival.

Despite glimmers of change after the civil war, the situation analysis provided thus far remains fundamentally unchanged. Descendants of returned slaves, known as Creoles, who largely reside in the Freetown area, still have more opportunities than their counterparts in rural areas (Harris, 2012). Negative perceptions and attitudes toward manual labor persist as office; shirt-tie-suit jobs are favored despite limited availability.

Post-Colonial Era. Sierra Leonean youth were eager to participate in the new country's political, economic and social processes after independence in 1961 (Leao, & Cowan, 2010); however, their role was limited with only a semblance of involvement as the two major political parties predominantly used them as "foot soldiers" for doing their "dirty work." Lack of legitimate participatory governance led to the growth of resistant activity among both lower and middle class youth. Around the mid-70s, this group of politically aware and conscious youth, largely based in the Freetown, many from the university, led demonstrations against the

government (Abdullah, 2004). Youth protest, led by Fourah Bay College (FBC) student brought minimal changes to needs and engagement in national agendas. This persistent lack of political will, particularly during Siaka Stevens' presidency from 1971 to 1985, to address youth marginalization contributed to the decade long civil war. He is often faulted for allowing the education system to crumble during his leadership (Sannoh, 2013). During his terms, student uprisings increased, which eventually fed into the war. Students protested against poor learning conditions and the inability to gain suitable employment upon graduation. One may infer that Stevens's greatest fault was not a disfavor of western education but the absence of useful alternatives.

Impact of the Civil War and Post-Conflict-Development Environment. Young people were greatly impacted by the war, and though much progress had been made up until the 2014 The decade long conflict resulted in an estimated 70,000 deaths (UNDP, 2006), widespread rape and sexual violence and displacement of half the country's population (Leoa, & Cowan 2010, Hanlon, 2005). Furthermore, over 72,490 persons, many children and youth were associated with fighting during the war. The promises of free education by rebel leaders enticed participation (Keen, 2005, Paulson, 2005), which in turn led to schools and learning institutions all over the country being targeted, with an estimated 70% destroyed (World Bank, 2007) by frustrated youth who felt the educational system failed to serve them. Hence, schooling and other forms of education were significantly disrupted during the 10-year period despite persistent efforts in some regions to keep their doors open. Certain areas are said to have gone without schools for over ten years (Paulson, 2005) and those that stayed open were overcrowded, and extremely lacking in structure and materials (UNICEF, 2011).

The war disrupted critical formative years for the current youth generation, which has had significant implications on their ability participation in civil society and the labor market. Peeters et al. (2009) address this concern stating that, “according to the government, the fact that such a large number of people under 35 are inactive in the labor market could undermine development interventions and ultimately threaten the recently established stability. Many of these young people are illiterate, equipped with few employable skills, and lack work experience, in good part as a result of the conflict, which affected their formative years.” The latest 2012 Sierra Leone status of the youth report provides no encouraging accounts. It attributes high un- or underemployment rates (>70%) to persisting gap between education, and labor market needs. Leoa et al. (2010) warns that the “challenging post-war context, the recurrent lack of recognition by society and the lack of easy access to education and employment opportunities have been stimulating the (re) formation of a substantial group of frustrated and hopeless youth, who might turn to violence and crime as a means of survival.” This analysis shows that better livelihood remains a fantasy for most young people.

These fantasies though only limitedly explored have been influenced by globalization trends including interaction with expatriates, visiting and returning diasporas, and the media. During and post-conflict, Sierra Leoneans were increasingly exposed to different socio-economic realities from the large influx of expatriates and diasporas coming from various countries with different lifestyle and value systems. Even though many of these humanitarian agencies have left, their lifestyle imprints including big NGO cars, houses and fancy gadgets, remain. As various scholars have noted while expatriates are necessary in humanitarian crisis, their presence can significantly influence and shape local environments both negatively and positively (Büscher

& Vlassenroot, 2013). Also, a consequence of the increased interaction with Sierra Leonean Diaspora and the world is enhanced exchange of ideas, and cultures. However, young people's experiences in this changing context, particularly those in rural areas are not fully understood.

Young People, Environmental Experience and Perceptions

Although little research has analyzed Sierra Leone's youth crisis, post-colonial, and post-conflict literature review (as discussed above and in chapter one) evidences a person (people)-environment mismatch in terms of both entities serving each other. The below analysis explores human-environment interaction theories and research focusing on investigations of young people's environmental experiences and related concepts of place attachment and identity.

Overview of Human-Environment Interaction Research and Theories

The human-environment, society-nature relationship has been extensively studied within various fields from different perspectives including human geography, anthropology, environmental psychology, child development, and education. Environmental determinism, the earliest theory to address this relationship postulate that natural environment determined human growth, development and activities (Lehwaite, 1966). Early academic geographers such as Ellen Churchill Semple (1911), Ellsworth Huntington (1915) and Griffith Taylor (1951) utilized inductive reasoning approach, where generalizations were made, then selective sampling applied to support claims, to explain social variations in cultural, economic and social practices as deriving from environmental influence. This thread was undoubtedly one directional and came under criticism in the 1900s (Moran & Brondizio, 2012). Franz Boas, an early determinist himself, later challenged concepts within environmental determinism, rather developing what is

called, *historical possibilism*, which emphasized that nature, does not define possibilities for humans, and rather historical and cultural factors explain what is actually chosen. American anthropologist Julian Steward academically articulated the reciprocal and more binary relationship between people and environment as known today. This new methodology called *cultural ecology* was defined as “the study of processes by which society adapts to its environment,” (Steward, 1968).

Contemporary researchers have extensively examined the interdependencies between the physical, social and economic environment and various processes that contribute to human wellbeing (Hancock, 1993), including child development (Vaden-Kiernan, D’Elio, O’Brien, Tarullo, Zill, & Hubbell-McKey 2010), learning (Hewson, 1988; Adams, 1991), academic achievement (Coon, Carey, Falker & DeFries, 1993) motivation and self-efficacy (Bandura & Woods, 1989; Crothers, Hughes, & Morine, 2008) health (illnesses) (Hancock, 1993), Food consumption and growth (Strauss, 1990; Gorton, Bullen, & Mhurchu, 2010; Brown & Funk, 2008), mental health psycho-social well-being (Miller, & Rasmussen, 2010; Patel, Flisher, Hetrick, & McGorry, 2007), mobility (Katz, 1993; Schafer, 2010) and migration (Carr, 2005; M Doevenspeck, 2011; van Blerk & Ansell, 2006), environmental attitudes and behavior (Wells & Lekies, 2006; Magnuson & Votruba-Drzal), and perceptions (Bruyere, Beh and Foster, 2011), pregnancy outcome including teenage motherhood, infant and maternal mortality (Friberg, Walker, Diaz, Aboubaker & Young, 2014), schools accessibility (Larsen, Gilliland, Hess, , Tucker, Irwin, & He, 2009), conflict (Meier, bond & bond, 2007; Koubi, V., Spilker, G., Böhmelt, T., & Bernauer, T, 2014), community satisfaction and place attachment (Lekies, 2011;

Brehm, 2007). These works indicate that the people (person) - environment relationship are both direct and indirect that leads to either positive or negative outcomes.

Ecological theorists within the human development literature have primarily concerned themselves with processes and conditions that affect people's growth and survival in the actual environment within which they live (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The early theory-building around the ecological paradigm was pioneered by Urie Bronfenbrenner. His ecological system theory offered a holistic approach to viewing and understanding a young person's environment through the identified five environmental systems with which the individual interacts at various degrees. Bronfenbrenner (1994) described the microsystem as "a pattern of activities, social roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social and symbolic features that invite, permit or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment." The meso-system refers interconnections between the child's microsystems such as interactions between family and school, peers and family. An individual's exo-system comprises of linkages between two or more settings at least one of which does not contain the developing person but influences their development. The person's larger cultural context including belief systems, ways of knowing, material resources, customs, lifestyle, opportunities, and options is referred to as the macro-system. Lastly, the chrono-system refers to changes or consistencies in the person and/or their environment within a life course.

Children and Young People's Geography and Everyday Lives

Research undertakings to understand young people's lives, experiences, and processes that affect their development have fundamentally evolved overtime. Though criticism on the

inadequate representation of children in theoretical and empirical literature increased in the 1980s, earlier studies from scholars such as Aries (1962) developed understanding of childhood through his analysis of French cultural artifacts (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). Aries (1962) argued that viewing 'children' as miniature adults during medieval times came to be dominated by modern notions of children as inherently different from adult which continue to persist to modern day (Holloway & Valentine, 2000). In addition children were thus perceived as incompetent and incomplete and expected to attain adult status through socialization (Jenks, 2005). Holloway and Valentine (2000) note that the "academic consequence of the construction of the child as less than adult and childhood as a phase of socialization, is that research on children has been less valued than that on other topics and children have in the past been far from visible even in research which concerns their everyday experiences (p. 5)." This was soon to change proceeding Ambert's 1986 report, which identified the near absence of children in North American sociological research. Ambert (1986) argued that much of research work was dominated by patriarchal values of societies, which favored 'big issues' such as class, bureaucracies and omitted children's voice even in disciplines such as education where they should be center (Jenks, 2005).

The 'cultural turn' within the field of geography saw scholars challenging notions of children as human *becoming* instead of *beings* who are presenting and contributing to their societies (James, Jenks & Prout 1998). The field began to move towards acknowledgement of reality as socially constructed in the context of everyday life (Percy-Smith, 1999). In the realm of the sociological research agenda, scholars in the *new social studies of childhood* school of thought asserted that childhood as a social construction which varied with place and time and

that children are social actors in their own right contributing to the creation of their own life-worlds (Prout & James, 1990; Holloway & Valentine, 2000). This new direction expanded knowledge of young people's active roles and agency, particularly in non-western societies, in social, economic and political processes (Honwana & De Boeck, 2005). These explorations of children's contribution to the making of their societies (Katz, 1993; Robson, 2004; Percy-smith, 1999), dismissed notions that they are just passive subjects of social structures and processes (Prout & James, 1990). Still, Holloway and colleagues caution that the acknowledgement of children's competencies in the new social studies of childhood "does not necessarily lead to a rejection of an appreciation of the ways in which their lives are shaped by forces beyond the control of individual children." James and Prout suggest that:

A more satisfactory theoretical perspective would be one that could account for childhood as a structural feature of society in the moment of its impinging upon children's experiences in daily life and the reshaping of the institution of childhood by children through their day to day activities. In essence, it would address both structure and agency in the same movement.

(James & Prout 1995, p. 81)

Geographers and social scientists responded to this call, generating an array of work that investigated children and young people's everyday lives. These studies highlighted major disadvantages, forms of exclusion and explored dimensions such as gender, age, social class and ethnicity that affected their spatial experience and livelihood (Robson 2002; Schafer, 2008).

Geographers in particular became concerned in children's spatial cognition, mapping abilities, access to, use of and attachment to place (Jenks, 2005; Hart, 1977; Katz, 1993; Percy-Smith, 1999). Culmination of these works led to the development of *children's geography*, an emerging sub discipline that informs psychological interest in development processes as well as sociological concern to give voice to children in an adultist world (Jenks, 2005). Geographers'

study of children's spatiality has contributed to knowledge of the social construction of childhood in three major interrelated ways. First, it has shown how place matter to young people as it bares their experiences and reworking of global and local processes to create meaning in their own life-worlds. Second, it exposed how children's identities and lives are made and re-made through sites of everyday lives such as schools, home, the street and more. And lastly, it highlighted that adult understandings of childhood shapes meaning and use of certain spaces and places as Valentine and Holloway expound:

Though the understandings of children as either angels or devils are in some ways contradictory, both 'stories' reproduce the same spatial ideology that children's place is in the home, and in straying outside this, they either place themselves at risk in adult controlled space, or their unruly behavior threatens adult hegemony of public space. These stories are important because responses to them- curfews in extreme circumstances, but more often attempts by parents to encourage their children into more home-based or formally organized events outside the home-reinforce adult control of 'public' space. (Jenks, 2005, p. 178)

Children's geography, amongst other fields, seeks to uncover how power relations between adults and children impact young people's lives and community at large (Philo, 1992). Punch (2002) points out that children are not used to being treated as equals but rather expect adults' power over them since most of their lives are adult dominated. Hence the challenge in conducting researching and about children is figuring "how best to enable children to express their views to an adult researcher and how to 'maximize children's ability to express themselves at the point of data gathering; enhancing their willingness to communicate" (Punch 2002, p.325).

Researchers began developing and using humanistic approaches to exploring young people's socio-spatial interactions which considers their agency in creating their life-worlds as well as giving due attention to the individual self and plurality of cultures which accounts for

different ways of seeing, behaviors and lifestyles. Some of these methods include time-use by recall (Robson, 2004), participant observation (Katz, 1991), drawing, mapping, diary keeping, photography, and video-documentary (Jorgeson & Sullivan, 2010). Notable works using these approaches in the last two decades include Robson's work in Hausa land in northern Nigeria and Katz exploration of how young people in Sudan navigated changes in their environment. Katz (1991) groundbreaking work on impacts of global economic changes on children's everyday life showed the children in her study were far from being passive and were in fact active actors in negotiating social and environmental changes in their environment. Robson (2004) described children's important role in agricultural production, domestic reproduction and trade: working independently or with adults. Additionally they played a critical role in sustaining the socio-religious practice of *Purdah* in which women were spatially secluded. Robson (2004) found that since Hausa women's mobility was limited, children were often relied on for errands outside the fenced compounds such as going to the market.

The current dissertation can be situated in the context of children's geography and the new social studies of childhood as it focuses on understanding structural disadvantages young people face from their point of view in their own voices while paying attention to their agency. The research approach utilized centered young rural Sierra Leoneans' voices, as they were viewed as experts of their everyday lives. Their environmental experiences, perceptions, hopes and views of the future formed the crux of this research. In order to better situate understanding of young people's experiences within their environment, literature review of previous studies on young people within their environment/ neighborhoods are explored below.

Young people and Environmental Conditions

Young peoples' proximal and more remote environmental conditions can have significant influences on their development and wellbeing, with potential lasting effects (Billy, Brewster, Grady W, 1994; Stephenson, 2007). This has been widely studied in western literature on neighborhoods from which some understandings are derived for this study. Shaw and McKay's (1942) publication *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas* remains one of the most prominent works in western literature which has informed understanding effects of disadvantaged neighborhoods on children and youth's development particularly in transitioning areas (Duncan & Raudenbush 1999; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Working within the Social disorganization theory framework, their work found that characteristics of a neighborhood environment such as poverty, residentially mobile, ethnical mixed with divergent value system were significant contributors to delinquent behavior than individual characteristics. Their study also revealed crime rates reduced has one moved from the populated inner city to the outskirts, signifying that social disorganization was a major contributor to delinquent behavior.

Jencks and Mayer's (1990) five model theoretical framework publications provided another conceptual pathway through which neighborhood effects on children and youth could be discussed and understood. Their taxonomy included 1) *child and family related institutions* which emphasizes the importance of community infrastructure and institutional resources such as schools, public libraries, recreational facilities and religious institutions. Such resources are important for the socialization process as well as skills development (Pebley & Sastry, 2003). 2) *Collective Socialization* model postulates that neighborhood adults play an important role in monitoring developing persons' behavior and serving as role models. The absence of positive

role models as has been shown in minority communities in the US can have an impact on young people's development (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov & Sealand, 1993; Krivo & Peterson, 1996). 3) *The contagion (epidemic) model* states that community resident's behavior can spread to peers (Leventhal & Brooks-Gun, 2000). 4) *The social competition model* suggests that residents may compete for limited environmental resources and 5) the *relative deprivation model* posits that individuals evaluate their status relative to peers in their community.

Various research works continue to identify specific deficits within communities and specific consequences they have on young people. In their meta-analysis of neighborhood effects in North America, Ellen and Turner (1997) found that neighborhood environment have influence on important social and economic outcomes such as educational attainment, employment, teen sexual activity and criminal involvement. They identified six key factors that influenced individual outcomes including 1) quality of local services, 2) socialization by adults, 3) peer influence, 4) social network, 5) exposure to crime and violence, and physical distance and isolation. Mmari et al.'s (2014) study conducted among adolescents aged 15-19 years in Baltimore, Ibadan, Johannesburg, New Delhi, and Shanghai, found that young people in Baltimore and Johannesburg perceived lack of and poor infrastructural conditions such as vacant homes and lack of recreation facilities impacted sexual and reproductive health for girls and contributed to drugs and violence among boys. In Shanghai, New Delhi and Ibadan, participants perceived garbage and trash impact infectious and chronic diseases.

While the literature is dominated by negative influences and outcome of disadvantaged neighborhood particularly in North America, some studies exist that provide some positive outcomes (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov & Sealand, 1993; Lenzi & al, 2011; Ludwig,

Duncan, Gennetian, Katz, Kessler, Kling, & Sanbonmatsu, 2012). Ludwig et al.'s randomized social experiment found that although moving from a distressed to less distress neighborhood had no significant impact on economic well-being, it did improve mental health. Lenzi and colleagues (2011) found similarly that availability of neighborhood resources and opportunities improved social and emotional well-being as well as increased place attachment. Their study which focused on the relationship between perceived neighborhood opportunities, social resources and perception of social support from friends and prosocial behavior among Italian early adolescents showed that higher levels of perceived social cohesion and stronger place attachment led to prosocial behaviors. In another cross-national study, Lenzi et.al (2012) found that family affluence; democratic school climate and neighborhood social capital played important role for skills development, participation and civic engagement among young people.

The topic of neighbourhood resources is a growing area of research in the global south (Majority world) with more focus on rural areas as oppose to the predominant urban focus in the West (Minority World). Several human geographers and anthropologists have taken on studies that explore how young people are coping and negotiating their changing environments especially those in the rural Majority world (Katz, 2004; Robson; Panelli, Punch & Robson, 2007; Bray, Gooskens, Moses, Kahn & Seekings, 2010; Ibrahim & Shepler, 2011). Most of these researchers agree that many childhood and youth experiences are being reshaped and restructured as their communities continually engages with global processes, some more so than others. Panelli, Punch and Robson reflect on this:

A further recurring issue in the Majority world involves the high levels of social change in the face of globalization processes which impact to varying degrees on young rural lives (Kaufman and Rizzini, 2002; Pen 2005). The global economy and global cultures are increasingly shaping rural childhoods and youth. Many

rural communities in the Majority world are losing or adapting some of their traditional lifestyles and are incorporating more 'modern' behaviours (e.g. Taracena, 2003). Whilst for young people this may open up new educational opportunities, it also leads to the formation of new identities, which can be contradictory and difficult to negotiate (Hollos, 2002)

Katz's (2004) work in Howa Sudan, exposed in great depth the impacts of globalization on children's daily lives and type of adulthood they have. Katz revealed through observations and conversations with her participants how introduction of the commercial driven Suki agricultural "development" project in rural Howa, impacted not only daily life but the opportunities and resources available to them as they became adults. Katz found that economic vulnerability, and environmental degradation increased overtime negatively affecting children as they travelled further in wood gathering and herding activities and their workloads increased impeding school attendance even as its importance for their future became evident. Beazley's (2007) study of impacts of out-migration on young people in remote rural hamlet of Naukek in Indonesia had some parallels to Katz's study. Beazley found that out-migration of particularly working age groups between sixteen and forty-five years old intensified children and young people's work, increasing school dropout rates especially for girls. Both works directly and indirectly address similar and different health impacts as a result of changing physical space and socio-culturally changing environment. Illnesses, malnutrition and infant mortality among Naukek's children and youth were attributed not only to the lack of health care services in Naukek due to its geographical remoteness but it was compounded by the out migration of potential income earning family members.

Another context that has garnered scholarly attention though still evolving, are conflict and post-conflict environments. Given the large number of young people engaged in and affected

by war and conflict all over the world, scholars are becoming attentive to this group; to understand root causes, gain insight on how they are affected by conflict and engage their voices and energies in the creation of sustainable peaceful post-conflict societies (Winston, 2004; Miller & Rassmussen, 2010). Although the causes of conflict vary, some identified that risk factors exist. Collier's (2006) statistical analysis of civil wars since the 1960s identified, poverty rates, geography and history of previous war, economic opportunities which is linked to education and marginalization sometimes linked to ethnic and religious compositions are some of the main contributors to conflict. The high number of young people engaged in war forcefully or otherwise is a symptom of an environment that do not meet their needs and without viable options (Brett & Specht, 2004; Keen, 2005). Understanding the post conflict experiences of not only those engaged in direct combat but also non-combatants is important for lasting peace.

Environmental Perceptions Understanding young people's environmental experiences and perception has become increasingly important to educators, scholars and policy makers as their role in civil society becomes increasingly recognized (Garbarino, Burston, Raber, Russel & Crouter, 1978). People's experience and perception of their dwelling place has importance to various aspects of human development (Parsons, 1991) such as learning and skills development, mental and physical health, self-efficacy and self-esteem and participation. While geographers forged understanding of spatial experiences, psychologists pioneered research on perception, the process through which humans identify, organize and interpret the world around them.

The bidirectional relationship between people and their surrounding environment is important because not only do people use and shape the environment according to their needs but the environment also affects the ability to meet those needs. Perception is thus the active process

of deriving information (sensory input) from the environment and then giving it meaning through organizing and interpreting (Kaymaz, 2012; Kaplan 1975). Perception is thus important to human survival as it informs operation and survival. The Gestalt perception school of thought formed by Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, and Wolfgang Köhler guided early explorations of perception in the 1930s. This theory, which is still greatly used by researchers, asserts that humans tend to perceive things as whole objects, and units (Gestalts), not parts of the object.

As opposed to indirect perception suggested by gestalt theorists, Gibson put forward the ecological perception theory in the 1960s emphasizing that important survival cues/information already exist in the environment hence requiring little cognitive processing. While Gibson's theory has been criticized for its assertion that perception is automatic, it is credited for shifting the perception discourse from laboratory created situations to human's environmental settings. The Lens model developed by Egon Brunswik and popularized by Kenneth Hammond is considered one of the few exclusively environmental psychology theories. Brunswik's theory (1947) of probabilistic functionalism highlights that experience and learning play an important part human perception development. He identified humans as being the lens that focuses on particular things in the environment by its relevant salience or usefulness, asserting that different people due to personal and cultural experiences can perceive the same stimuli differently.

Young people's experiences not only differ from adults', but also by age cohorts, in different places and cultures. Garbarino and colleagues (1978) longitudinal study of urban and suburban young people's social maps as they transition from childhood to adolescences as it occurs in the transition from elementary to high school revealed a joint effect of environmental and biological change. They found that children and adolescents in different ecological settings

at different stages of development reported different social maps. Importantly, they found that as children matured biologically there was less adult involvement in their networks. These early studies led to research about and with young people within different contexts to understand a wide range of issues that concerned them such as community involvement and participation (Manzo, & Perkins, 2006), place attachment (Johnson, Elder & Stern, 2005), health risks (Mmari et.al, 2014), environmental issues (Korhonen, & Lappalainen, 2004), worldview, future outlook and education (Eckersley, 1999; Gidley, 1998; Hutchinson, 1999).

Researchers have established a diverse range of innovative participatory research methods that provides in-depth insight to the complexities of young people's everyday experiences. Creative methods beyond traditional interviews and naturalistic observations include time use recall (Robson, 2004), walks, photography and videography (Panelli et al, 2002; Trel & van Hoven, 2010; Katz, 1991, Percy-Smith, 1999). Cele (2006) posit that children's experiences encompass 'concrete' and 'abstract' aspect of their place. The concrete aspect refers to physical characteristics of place and may include sound or smell, is often experience in terms of its usefulness (Cele, 2006). Abstract aspects which is often connected to the social dimension of place including family and friend relations refers to inner processes place evokes including feelings, dreams, memories and imagination attached to the place (Cele, 2006). Several researchers such as Percy-smith (1999) have sought to understand the intersection between young people's experiences of place with regards to more abstract processes and potential action and behavioral outcomes such as social change, action, participation and citizenship. He utilized participatory and ethnographic methods to engage English youth in evaluating their local environments and exploring values and experiences they associated with different places and

place use. His work revealed that even in place use, young people are still marginalized as they lack places of engagement and play and often conflicting with adults in certain place use. Furthermore, he uncovered that although young people are eager to participate in improving their place through involvement in decision-making and community development process they are marginalized from that process.

Sense of Place, Place Identity, Attachment and Youth Agency While environmental psychologists and geographers advanced understanding of relationship to place as critical for lived experiences through their studies of place related behaviors, attitudes and feelings, sociologists and community psychologists propagated knowledge on community development concepts such as social capital, sense of community and participation (Manzo, & Perkins, 2006). Place meaning scholars often underscore notions of ‘place identity’, ‘place attachment’ and ‘sense of place’ as it relates to community participation and planning (Gustafson, 2002; Lewicka, 2005; Manzo, 2005; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Pretty, 2002; Pretty, Chipuer & Bramston, 2003; Ellis, 2005; Trell & Van Hoven, 2010). Introduced by environmental and social psychologists, Harold M. Proshansky, Abbe K. Fabian, and Robert Kaminoff, *place identity* is considered sub culture of a person’s self-identity which consist of knowledge and feelings developed through everyday experiences within physical spaces. Proshansky (1978) defined place identity as “those dimensions of self that define the individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, feelings, values, goals, preferences, skills, and behavioral tendencies relevant to a specific environment”. *Place attachment*, a concept introduced by social psychologist Irwin Altman and anthropologist Setha Low’s (1992) defines the ways in which people connect to various places, and the effects

of such bonds in identity development, place-making, perception, and practice (Gieseeking, Mangold, Katz, Low, Saegert, 2014).’ These have formed the basis for psychological understandings of human-environment interactions.

Place theorists have similarly significantly contributed to understanding human place experience. Relph’s (1976) influential work on place and placelessness identified three core components of place; physical settings, activities and meaning. A humanistic geographer, Relph, claimed that though *meaning* was the most difficult to grasp, it was vital for architects and planners, for “in not considering the meanings that places have to individuals and groups, (they) run the risk of destroying authentic places and/or producing inauthentic ones” (Gustafson, 2001). In his model derived from psychological studies, Canter (1977), a psychologist, identified three continuants of place, which included action, conceptions and physical attributes. Canter, emphasized the importance of understanding place from the perspective of the ‘user’, as people conceptualize place differently. Canter would further develop his model into a complex ‘facet theory consisting of four components: functional differentiation, place objectives, scale of interaction, and aspect of design. While Relph and Canter’s model have some differences, the fundamental aspect of place to be understood in ‘users’ context are similar in both.

In his review of scholarly approaches to investigating the meaning of place, Agnew (1987) concludes that meaningful places emerge in social contexts, through social relations, geographically located. Hence to fully understand meaning of place *locale*, the formal or informal settings in which social relations occur, *location*, the geographical area encompassing the settings for social interaction; and *sense of place*, the local ‘structure of feeling’ should be considered (Gustafson, 2002). Massey (1994) challenged the notion of sense of place as only

local, postulating that in the face of globalization, the concept of place should be extended to the outside world as places are not isolated. Place, she argues may be the intersection of the local and global. A significant body of research, largely within community and environmental psychology exists that delve into the complexities of how people experience place at the local and global level (Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

Place attachment is considered an important aspect of place identity and experience. According to Low and Altman (1992) “place attachment may contribute to the formation, maintenance, and preservation of the identity of a person, group, or culture. And, it may also be that place attachment plays a role in fostering individual, group, and cultural self-esteem, self-worth, and self-pride”. In their study of London Docklands residents, Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) demonstrated that key principles of identity were strongly related to local place attachment. These included *self-esteem*, respondents felt proud of where they live; *self-efficacy*, ways in which residential quality facilitated everyday life, *continuity*, views of place as a continuity of self, such as history with place and *distinctiveness*, using place identification to distinguish self from others.

High youth rural-urban migration (Jones & Jamieson, 1997), rapidly changing environments in the face of globalization and environmental degradation (Pretty et al., 2003) and concerns about youth participation transformation processes (O’Toole, Lister, Marsh, Jones, & McDonagh, 2003) has driven much of place experience research in both the Majority and some Minority world (Memunatu, 1991 *unpublished*; Hart, 1992; Hart, 2013). In their study of rural Australians youth’s perception whether or not they planned to stay in their community in rural Australia, Pretty and colleagues found that place dependence and sense of community were

critically important in such decisions. Young people's preference to stay was strongly connected to environmental opportunities to achieve personal goals and community quality as compared neighboring towns. They found that girls complained more about the lack of alternative forms of recreation and entertainment. Participants also valued the ability of being able to rely on fellow residents for help. Manzo & Perkins' (2006) demonstrate in their work that place attachment and identity are important for community development and planning. Specifically researchers postulate that affective bonds to place can inspire action in that it motivates people to stay and protect places that are meaningful to them.

Although a significant number of research exist that shows links between place attachment and civic activity, some scholars have cautioned against ascribing all positives with relations to place attachment and community participation (Lewicka, 2005; Perkins and Long, 2002). In their work, Perkins and Long neighborhood ties were more correlated to social activity than place attachment particularly in communities where there were high turnover rates. Lewicka buttresses this point by stating that social capital, which is local based social network, was more of a predictor of action than affective bonds to place. Bauman (1998) addresses this point in his discourse on "globalization" and "glocalization" as it relates to power structures between lower and higher-class groups. Bauman posit that due to growing poverty and powerlessness, those of lower class have less mobility and thus place attachment can occur due to lack of opportunities.

The issue of power structures in everyday experiences is increasingly being addressed in studies around children and young people as a means to understand both how adult power structures influence their daily lives and how they develop strategies to resist and negotiate. Said differently, researchers believe young people possess agency and are increasingly recognizing

and acknowledge such in young people's place experience and everyday lives. Robson and colleagues (2007) describe agency as "an individual's own capacities, competencies and activities through which they navigate the contexts and positions of their life worlds, fulfilling many economic, social and cultural expectations, while simultaneously charting individual/collective choices and possibilities for their daily and future lives" (Panelli et al., 2007). This, they assert means viewing young people as 'doers' and thinkers'.

Young People manifest agency in different ways within different spaces. They demonstrate agency through various daily activities at home, school and work and with adults and peers (Robson et.al, 2007). Bell (2007) identifies two forms of agency, reactive and conforming, which sometimes overlap. Conforming agency occurs when action in fact align with adult expectations whereas reactive is considered a subtle resistance or bargaining. Robson and colleagues (2007) point out that these sometimes overlap in everyday experiences such as instances where young people accept to execute work or errand in order to resist secretly such as playing (p.140). Punch (2004) highlights pupils' agency in the classroom through engaging in play when the teacher is not paying attention. Migration, a prominent feature in young rural people's research, is a site of agency. While migration is seen as a form of agency for those coming of age, Bell (2007) asserts that in cases where it is not an option young people empower themselves through other means including personal relationships for money, negotiating wages, or engaging in agriculture.

Future Orientation and Youth Futures

Future Orientation: Definition

Future orientation has been conceptualized a variety of ways in different disciplines including psychology, sociology and education. In these varied literatures, it also carries different labels including future outlooks, dispositional optimism, and time perspectives (Trommsdorff, 1983; Zimbardo, Keough & Boyd, 1997; Smith and Boone, 2007). Though definitions of the terms are varied, it fundamentally is concerned with how people see and expect the future. It is understood as a cognitive-motivational-affective construct. Motivational properties include a person's subjective needs, anticipated value of related behavior outcomes, appraisal of intra-personal (ability and effort) and environmental conditions to achieve needs (Seginer & Schlesinger, 1998). These motivational forces facilitate "cognitive representation of prospective self and future related behavioral tendencies" (Seginer & Lilach, 2004) and sometimes evidences as fear and hope

Within the context of their work on assets, future orientation and wellbeing in North America, Shobe and Page-Adams (2001) defined future orientation as "one's ability to think about and plan for the future (p.111). Seginer (2008) in her work on adolescences' resilience in times of threat and challenge defined the same concept "the image individuals have about the future, as consciously represented and self-report. Nurmi (1989) presented a complex conceptualization of future orientation, which consisted of motivation, planning and evaluation. Here, motivation related to individual's interests, planning on how they intend to realize the future goal and evaluation of the extent to which they expected to achieve the goal. Finally, Trommsdorff (1983) offered a definition of future orientation that encompassed all afore

described elements. She suggested that future orientation encompasses the length of extension into the future, domain or content of the cognition, number of cognitions, amount of detail, affect tied to the cognition, motivation to achieve the cognition, and the amount of control an individual believes he or she holds over goal attainment.

The act of thinking, acting and planning for the future whether short or long-term is probably as old as mankind and the formalized study of futures came much later. The systematic study of young people's future orientation can be traced back to the 1950s with Gillespie and Allport's (1955) cross-cultural study of young people from several different countries during the cold war. Seigner and Lilach (2004) explain that "given that goals, plans, and hopes are located in the future, how individuals construct their future orientation is an important aspect of human motivation and development across the lifespan." Beyond what Seginer et al. propose researchers have explored the links between future orientation and education (Hicks & Holden, 1995; Gidley, 2002), wellbeing (Eckersley, 2002), sense of belonging, action and participation (Stewart), and sustainable futures (Hutchinson, 1999).

Within the young people future orientation research, adolescents have dominated. Loosely categorized as young people within the ages of 10-19 years (WHO, 2015), this period of development is seen a critical point in the life course where many decisions are made that impact adult life (Quinton, Pickles, Maughan, & Rutter, 1993). Researchers have found future orientation to have both positive and negative influences on adolescents' decisions and behaviors. Positive future orientation had been linked to high self-esteem (Rivas Torres & Fernández, 1995), greater feelings of efficacy, and higher potential for upward social mobility (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009). On the other hand studies show negative future orientation is related

to general delinquent behavior, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and partial educational attainment (P.Chen & Vazsonyi, 2011).

Ecological/ Structural Context of Future Orientation

Originating within the field of psychology, early scholars framed future orientation as an aspect of personality and development related to a person's expectations, emotions, goals, and planned behavior. Sociologists have contributed to contemporary understandings arguing that future orientation is influenced and shaped by a person's socio-structural context (Friedlmeier, Gangestad, & Schwarz, 2005; Seginer, 2009). Shobe and Page-Adams (2001) suggest that, "Future orientation may be shaped by structural instead of independent factors" (p.119). To exemplify this, they explain that upper and middle class people tend to have the luxury of planning for their futures because of greater possession of assets, whereas low income individuals spend more time and energy on meeting day-to-day needs.

Studies of young people's futures often feature the impacts of time and place, particularly how changing/unchanging social and environmental circumstances influence perceptions of the future (Seginer & Schlesinger, 1998). Aspects of the social context that co-varies with future orientation include culture, nationality, social class, and socialization setting (Nurmi 1991; Seginer & Schlesinger, 1998; Trommsdorff, 1986). In their study of adolescent boys and girls in rural and urban Australia and Finland, Nurmi (1993) found age and socio-cultural context (country, urban/rural) had an important influence in the content and development of life goals. They found difference in views of the future between rural and urban youth, with rural participants showing more pessimism due to lack of options. Arnett's (2000) study of young adults (21-28 years) found that participants were more optimistic of their personal futures than

that of their generation. Pessimistic views towards generational future were attributed to societal and environmental issues such as crime and environmental degradation. Other researchers have found agency a key factor in futures. Malone's (2013) work with young children where they were actively engaged as researchers and environmental change agents in designing a child-friendly neighborhood, showed that more agency in their future orientation had positive effects. She states that, "For the children involved in the project, their engagement in the "process" already has the potential to be a significant life event that could shape and motivate how they view their role as social agents and environmental activists now and in the future" (p. 392).

Sierra Leonean youth live in a recovery transient environment that is very future oriented, hopeful, and expectant. They are thus expected to think and act for the future. Trommsdorff (1986) asserts that the way adolescents anticipate and evaluate their future influences life planning, decision making, and behavior and that they construct their futures based on what future orientation they have developed. Sierra Leonean youth evidenced this by their acts of resistance during the war as a response to a perceived bleak future. More than a decade after the end of the war, exploring their views of the future can be instrumental to policy makers, community stakeholders and even the youth themselves.

Education, Future Orientation and Environmental Experiences

Globally, western model of school has become the universal method of educating and providing people skills to survive and thrive in their environment (Lewis, 2014). However, there is an urgent education crisis globally and more so for Africa where concerns about the benefit and relevance of the education system resulting in better livelihood, productive lives and participating in citizenship, are on the rise (Kendall, 2007; Lewis, 2014). Of Africa's nearly 128

million school-aged children, an estimated 17 million will never attend schools and more concerning predictions that 37 million in-school children will learn so little that they will fair no better than those who never attended school (Van Fleet, Watkins & Greubel, 2012). Despite its controversial introduction on the continent, through colonizers, western-style education has become the norm and influences the individual, community and state in various ways. Lewis (2014) writes that:

Education serves as a social control. Reproducing society and reflecting all its inequalities. But education also offers a critique of society and can change or even revolutionize it. Education has the power to liberate individuals; literacy can open the world and help people reach their potential. For a society emerging from an oppressive system of government, education can be crucial in the definition and pursuit of a new vision. Education can be the promise of lasting peace. It is seen as the means to improve a country's standard of living because it develops "human capital." Education is a prerequisite for engagement on the global stage.

Education in general and schooling in particular has become the central medium to address national advancement, community development and livelihood improvement. International commitments such as the United Nations Millennium development Goals of which 189 member states pledged to reduce poverty and the Education For All (EFA) initiative launched at the 1990 World Conference Education for All demonstrated the high influence attributed to education. While progress vary by country, Africa in general has seen some progress on the education and health related goals (MDG report, 2014). However, the adequacy of education in West Africa, and other regions of the continent (Kendall, 2007) continue to be questioned given conflict, political instability, natural and man-made disaster and the 2014 Ebola outbreak, where most countries lack both infrastructure and human capacity for response. The MDGs 2014 progress

report states, “Sub-Saharan Africa should redouble efforts to ensure crises such as the current Ebola outbreak in West Africa do not reverse development.”

Education is indeed both inherently both present and future-oriented (short & long term) thus preparing learners to operate within their present conditions while prepping for future situations. As Arendt describes:

is to prepare students to go into the future that they will have to create. So we have to open them up; we have to teach them that the values of the past, although we stand by them are not values that we can extrapolate into the future. Education should ground students in the past but allow them to soar into a future that is different from past or present.”

In attempt to prepare young people for both the present and future, constructivists have advocated for learner centered approaches that centers learners’ needs and outlook in educational program design and delivering (Pillay & James, 2014). The Future time perspective (FTP) theory as a cognitive-motivational construct suggests that students’ approach and engagement with learning is affected by their future orientation (de Bilde et al., 2011). Researchers theorize that for education to be an empowering tool, leading to progressive and productive behavior, learners must feel that there is hope for the future and for their ability to affect the issues they observe (Gidley, Batemen & Smith, 2004).

Eckersley concludes of his work with Australian youth that:

Any consideration of education must take into account the whole person- his or her outlook on life, expectations of the future, values and attitudes. These qualities will shape a person’s approach to all aspects of life, including education, work, citizenship and personal relationships. If young people believe in themselves (not just as individuals but also in their ability to contribute to society), and have faith in the future, anything is possible. If they lack these qualities, as the evidence suggests many do, no amount of conventional policy adjustment will deliver the results we seek. (Page 207)

Hicks (1996) & Holden's (1995a, & 1995b) numerous research studies on pupils' visions in the United Kingdom support the notion that having positive visions lends to emanating and motivating action. The opposite has also been found to have negative effects. Inayatullah Sohail (2002), whose research has focused on non-Western cultures, found that young people are highly discouraged with the state of their nations, resulting in desires and plans to escape to high-income areas. Carrington and Detragiache, (1999) found similar in Sierra Leone, where young people constantly sought opportunities to escape the country, with high numbers migrating to the city with hopes of eventually going overseas.

As previously noted education became popularly regarded in post conflict Sierra Leone as a mitigating tool through which young people everywhere can acquire the tools and skills to develop themselves, their community and nation. Its importance is underscored by both scholarship and governmental commitments through international agreements including the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (UN MDGs) and Education for All (EFA). Betancourt and colleagues' (2008) work with former child soldiers highlight benefits of education for reintegration and psychosocial adjustments. Their research found that education for this group improved social cohesion between themselves and the community, provided them a social and peer network, and helped with goal setting. More broadly, Gage and Bledsoe's (1994) discussed its significant role in social stratification and welfare through their work on nuptiality in Sierra Leone. They revealed increasing desirability for an educated spouse as it translates to more resources and opportunities. In sum consensus exist that education plays an important role for citizenship and quality of life.

Despite noted commitments, expected transformative outcomes at both individual and national levels post war has been limited due to structural and curricular challenges. And while structural challenges have received much attention (World Bank, 2007; UNESCO, 2007), the translation gap has not. Sawyerr's (1985) study and analysis of science education sheds light on what could possibly be the systems shortcoming. While his work focused on science education it resonates with much of Sierra Leone's present day status. First he notes the purpose of science education:

In Sierra Leone, science education is an attempt to provide every person with an understanding and application of science to Man's needs. It also attempts to ensure a sound foundation of the basic principles and facts of science for those who seek to make their careers and serve society as scientists or technologists. Moreover, science education must prepare all future leaders of whatever discipline to appreciate the special values and limitations of the scientific method. Other aspects of science education include the development of students' ability to cope effectively with the natural environment and providing opportunities for the development of critical thinking

Then he provides an analysis of the curriculum and learning outcome, highlighting education failed to achieve the ultimate purpose of developing learners' ability to contribute and engage within their environment, stating that,

In school he (learner) has been taught modern concepts of physical science and biological science but the school and the home are divorced. A majority of the students belong to the rural areas and cannot see the relevance of the "school science." There have been attempts to "Africanize" the biology syllabuses by studying local fauna and flora instead of British models. This has not solved the problem.....Science is man's conquest of his physical environment. The secondary school student has a spattering of scientific ideas which can be described as "School Science" or "bookish science." He has not been taught to apply this knowledge to solve his needs or to conquer his environment.

Sawyer (1985) concluded then that while secondary school education was not designed to prepare young people for the job market, it was however a terminal degree for most with few progressing into university and is failing in preparing learners to enter the job market, operate within their physical and cultural environment and for citizenship (future leaders). While primary school attendance has increased over the decades, dropout rates before or after secondary school completion remain high, thus its unofficial status as a terminal degree remains (World Bank, 2007; UNICEF, 2008).

Education for sustainable development, a central concept in Sierra Leone's education discourse, is primarily concerned with enabling "every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future.... to motivate and empower learners to change their behavior and take action for sustainable development" (McKeown, 2002). This concept is certainly not new or unique to this recently developed "education for sustainable development" framework. Several long standing strands and sub-sections within the field of education such as environmental, experiential, place-based, community based and citizenship education have aimed to connect learning to performance and problem solving. For example environmental education with older origins aims to develop "a world population that is aware of and concerned about the total environment and its associated problems and has the attitudes, motivations, knowledge, commitment and skills to work individually and collectively, towards solution of current problems and the prevention of new ones" (as summarized in Stapp, 2001). Currently Sierra Leone has no structure for evaluating learning outcomes beyond local and national exams (World Bank, 2007). Furthermore limited research work has been conducted that explores the link between education and personal and community development goals.

In addition to exploring young people's perceptions of their environment and the future also investigate their views on the role of education in relation to environmental concerns, hopes and desires for the future. The research goal is first to provide insights from young people themselves on the effectiveness of the education system in preparing them for self and community development and second uncover strategies that should be given consideration as the country "seeks to develop human capital, to empower people to reduce poverty, and to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals following significant strides 2008-2012through improving education quality and access, providing extensive health services, controlling HIV/AIDS, providing safe water and improved sanitation, population policy including reducing migration to the cities and slowing fertility, and mainstreaming gender parity" (Sierra Leone's Third Generation Poverty Reduction Paper 2013-2018: XV).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore young people's perception of their environment, its influence on their future orientation and view of education as a tool for personal and community development. I utilized a case study design to describe and understand the rural youth experience and perspective in post-conflict Sierra Leone. The primary goal was to explore and explain young rural people's experiences and perceptions of their living environment, views, and aspirations for the future and how education can better serve them.

Both chapter one and two highlighted the critical need for active youth engagement and youth centered processes in capacity building efforts particularly in post conflict environments. The need for more systematic empirical research through young people's voices particularly those in rural areas was the primary motivation for this work.

A multi-method research strategy was developed for the exploratory and descriptive nature of this dissertation. This chapter discusses the overall study design, multiple data collection methods to gather sufficient data to answer study questions and data analysis procedures.

The Research Strategy: Qualitative Case Study

This study's research goals required an inquiry strategy that allowed for exploration and description to understand the rural youth experiences that reflected their rich and complex lives. The strategy also needed to result in sufficient data to answer the three objectives of the research:

1. To understand young people's experience and perception within and of their environment.
2. How young rural people's environmental experiences and perceptions influence their views of the future?
3. How effective is the current educational system (formal & informal) to meet the needs of young people in Koinadugu District?

Hence, a qualitative case study was employed to attain the research goals and objectives.

Rational and Assumptions for Qualitative Design. Given the nature of this study and the subject matter, a qualitative research approach was considered appropriate. In selecting the methodology factors such as the research goals, setting and subject content were given special attention.

Qualitative research methods are appropriate when addressing issues centered on exploring individuals experiences, stories and interpretations of situations (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 1988). This method fitted the Koinadugu context as it provided both researcher and participants flexibility to delve into and explore several complex and interrelated issues that have no one correct answer (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative approaches affords the researcher to not only explore a topic in "depth and detail" (Patton, 2002, p.14) but also allows them bring both the personal and researcher self which though brings biases, values and interests which are reported, permits for deep understanding (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 1988).

The qualitative process encourages the researcher to be an "active learner" of participants' experience, and their natural setting instead of taking on an "expert" role (Creswell, 1998). The approach allowed for important learning that could be utilized as justification for

reform or change (Creswell, 2003). In this particular study, the goal is to discover what will serve participants, their community, educators, and youth development professionals nationally as the country continues to build citizenship and personal development. Information on what issues most concerned young people, sense of place, and their aspirations for the future can be useful in creating appropriate educational and capacity building programs.

The subject of exploring and understanding young people's environmental perceptions and future visions also helped determine the selection of a qualitative research approach. Specifically the study sought to examine their views of personal and community futures as well as the role of education in achieving their goals and aspirations. Thus, there are multiple reasons and factors that influence their perspectives. A qualitative methodology is thus appropriate in such scenarios where variables are numerous and at times difficult to define (Creswell, 1998). Focus group discussions and one-on-one in-depth interviews at five locations, three secondary schools, one vocational institute and one motorbike youth association served this purpose.

Case Study. This study employed a mix of intrinsic and instrumental case study qualitative inquiry. Yin (1994) describes a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident. It allows the investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events— such as individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, international relations, and the maturation of industries.” A study is intrinsic when it is undertaken to better understand a particular case as oppose to a generic construct or phenomenon. A case study of instrumental nature, seeks to examine a case to provide insight to an issue (Stake, 2003). This study is

intrinsic in that, I, the researcher was particularly interested in young people in Koinadugu district, the least developed region in Sierra Leone. Secondly, it is instrumental because I sought to understand the broader environmental experience of young people in a transient rural post conflict environment. The intrinsic and instrumental case study research strategies allowed an in-depth focus on the case while still seeking some commonalities in the phenomenon being explored.

Case studies are appropriate method of research when: (a) the questions to be answered are how and/or why questions, (b) the investigator has little control over the events being studied and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon with a real-life context (Yin, 1994, 2008). Creswell (1998) defines a case study as “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or a case (or multiple cases over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context (p. 61).” The bounded system or case is a program, an event, activity or individuals bounded in a time and place. The focus of this work is to explore and learn about young people’s environmental perceptions, future visions and views of education in rural Sierra Leone during a post conflict era. Stake (1995) comments that case studies are investigated because,

we are interested in them [case studies] for both their uniqueness and commonality. We would like to hear their stories. We may have reservations about some things the people tell us, just as they will question some of the things we will tell about them. But we enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn (p. 1).

Considered the least developed district in the country (World Bank, 2010), Koinadugu district can be assumed to possess unique geographical, social, political and cultural qualities that influence its status quo. As noted in chapter 1, it has a unique landscape that has been described as both a “blessing” and “curse” as regards to advancement of the district. Despite the limited research and literature that has been done and written on the district, young people’s voices remain absent particularly in the post-conflict era. This study is thus interested in understanding Koinadugu’s distinctiveness from the future leader’s perspective.

The case study design is particularly favorable for this work because it allows in-depth exploration through multiple data sources (Creswell 2007, p. 73). While focus groups formed the crux of data collection, one-on-one in-depth interviews, direct observations and documents reviews provided a wealth of data for deeper and broader understanding. Because written literature was very limited on related research topics such as local histories pertaining to education and environmental activities, interviews with community leaders and stakeholders was vital.

Yin (2003) noted five research design components important for case study research. These included: 1) research questions; 2) propositions or purpose of study; 3) unit of analysis; 4) logic that links data to the propositions or purpose of study and 5) criteria for interpreting findings. The primary question in this study is how young people are perceiving their local environments and what influences that has on their views of the future and education. The purpose is to understand young people’s lived experiences in rural Sierra Leone and how it influences their future orientation and views of the current educational structures.

Yin (1994) describes the third component, unit of analysis, as defining the “case.” This study’s units of analysis are young people in a small rural town in Northern Sierra Leone. While Sierra Leone’s definition of rurality is unclear, the term rural is often used to refer to areas that are generally open with low population densities and largely depend on agriculture as for livelihood (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2003, p. 36). The fourth component of case study research design is to link data to purpose of study. This primarily occurs during data collection and analysis phase. Yin (1994), recommends pattern matching during the data analysis process where research attempts to match emerging patterns from the data to the study’s theoretical propositions. Merriam (1998) also suggests the constant comparative method where researcher pays attention to emerging themes from multiple sources of data.

Study Design. The research design sets the pathway for data that needs to be collected and conclusions that are drawn to answer the initial research questions. Yin (1994) proposes two types of single case study designs. In choosing a case study design 5 components should be considered 1) the study’s questions, 2) its proposition, if any 3) the unit (s) of analysis 4) logic linking data to the proposition, and 5) the criteria for interpreting study findings (Yin 1994, p. 20). The current study utilized a qualitative case study design to examine experiences and perceptions of young people in rural Sierra Leone and the influences of those on their future visions and education. The researcher served as the primary instrument for data collection from the multiple sources.

The Researcher as Instrument

In Qualitative studies, the researcher is considered the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This indicates that data is mediated through a

human instrument, going through their lenses and selection processes. However, researchers have sensitivities, worldviews and personal biases that can influence the rigor of research. This makes it vital for the researcher to be aware and sensitive to their biases, values, experiences and judgments (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 1993). Greenbank (2003), suggest researcher should openly discuss relevant aspects of themselves in their report, their bias, assumptions, expectations and experiences regarding the study. This is important first for acknowledgement of said filters and also to provide readers a premise to assess the study's objectivity.

I chose this research work for both professional and personal reasons. I am an African from central-west Africa where I spent the first 15 years of my life. My formative years have been in the United States however I have stayed very aware and involved in African related issues both in the US and in West Africa at the local and institutional level. I hold a strong view that Africa is incredibly blessed but yet to enjoy its own resources due to continuous exploitation by individuals in and outside the continent. I believe that the current generation of Africans must become knowledgeable and savvy of global politics to begin to reshape the continent's narratives and truly develop systems that lead to sustainable livelihood for the majority of the continent's inhabitants.

As the program coordinator for a youth-community capacity building oriented community-based organization (CBO) in Koinadugu district, Sierra Leone, I have a wealth of experiences with parents, teachers, students, community members and the environment that highlighted the need for this type of study. Since 2011 I have had individual and group meetings and discussions with all mentioned groups, which have shed light on the great expectations, and some disappointments regarding youth civic participation and the education system. Significant

research work exist, as highlighted throughout this document, which note the gap between educational efforts and young people's ability to apply learned knowledge. I have come in contact with several young people who refuse to attend school even when finances are not the issue. I have also met a good number who are extremely skilled and interested in much needed areas such as electrical and mechanical work yet have not been integrated in their communities. However, without institutions that provide diverse and engaging education and training, a good number of these youth are idle or rely on motorbike riding as their major source of employment. As part of the Koinadugu CBO I have worked with and continue to work with many young people in Koinadugu who are perpetually seeking opportunities to leave the district for Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, with hopes of leaving the country. However living in Freetown is difficult as the city currently holds three times the number it was built for, it is congested and waste management issues have become an international concern for those who are aware of the situation.

I must admit that as a western educated African, I have been schooled to view developing countries particularly African countries with a lens that either intentionally or unintentionally perpetuates the idea of "needing fixing". As I conducted this research, I consciously engaged with works by Africans and writers who demonstrate great understanding of the politics of culture as they are, not in comparison to another. I also engaged in extensive reflexivity not only while in the field but also of my own experiences as an African. Greater awareness of my own experiences was important in developing listening and questioning skills that allowed participants to speak authentically from their own experiences.

I also brought to this research a background in psychology and rehabilitation psychology with a United States certification as a Rehabilitation Counselor (Master's degree). My master's degree program trained me to work with people with various types of disability though focusing on vocational rehabilitation also providing me skills in counseling and assessing holistic wellbeing. The counseling lens and skill sets provided me high sensitivity to emotional and psychological stress/distress, a relevant skill when working with the group of participants I engaged with who may have carry explicit or implicit vulnerabilities.

Selection and Description of Site and Participants

This research was conducted in Kabala town, the capital of Koinadugu district. Koinadugu is the largest district in Sierra Leone located in the Northern Province. I chose this district in alignment with my research goal to study young people's environmental perceptions and future visions in rural post-conflict Sierra Leone. I also chose the research site because of familiarity. I have been working there as the program director of a community based organization that works and engages with 8 schools (3 primary, 3 secondary and school for the blind) and various community organizations including the district council, Okada association. It was a good fit because of my interest in understanding the rural youth's perspective particularly those who live in countries that are considered developing and least developed. Given strong relationships I had established with schools and stakeholders in Kabala town over the years it made it a convenient space to conduct my study. Additionally, empirical studies that explore young people's environmental experiences and perceptions in Sierra Leone and the African continent in general remain few.

Koinadugu district is abundantly blessed with natural resources from its fertile soil, mountains, and favorable climatic conditions to its minerals. However, quality of life remains below average for many. Besides being attacked multiple times during the decade long civil war, thus destroying many of its infrastructures the district is located 180 miles from the capital city, which affects inflow of needed resources particularly for the health and education sectors. This lack in addition to low number of trained and qualified teachers and an inexistent tertiary education system has stifled efforts to build capacity within the district. Historically, it has presented direct consequences for the youth who lack skills and opportunities to participate in socio-economic and political community processes.

To conduct this study I first obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) from my institution, the university of Wisconsin-Madison. In country, I presented a letter requesting permission to conduct research in the schools and the district at large to the district education directorate who represents the ministry of education. Once I received district level permission, I also presented a letter to the 3 secondary school headmasters, director of the Forum for African women Educationalists vocational institute (FAWE) and chairman for the Okada association. Letters to the institution heads included a description of the study, and procedures. I hand delivered these myself and discussed with each individual best days and times to conduct interviews. It was important to have these discussions so that my work didn't interrupt exams, tests or major school activities. I received permission from all three senior secondary schools (SSS) as well as the FAWE and Okada. One principal suggested that I also interview some individuals one-on-one as I may get information that would not *surface* in focus group discussions for one reason or another. This suggestion I took and incorporated it into my study.

To gain a broader and deeper understanding of Koinadugu and the status of young people, I visited different offices for documents on young people including the ministry of education, statistics office, ministry of agriculture and the district council. In cases where the office couldn't provide me documentation, I asked to interview an adult or senior staff member.

Site Selections

Senior Secondary Schools All secondary schools are made up of a secondary (Junior Secondary School, JSS) and high school (senior secondary school, SSS) sections. My research was conducted with the senior secondary schools (SSS). The SSS students either follow the Science, Arts or Commerce stream. So at each school there are multiple classrooms for each level, e.g. SS1 (Year 1) may have 3 classrooms representing the different streams, if the number are too many as it usually is for the Art stream, they may have 2 classrooms. Upon arriving at each school around 8h30, I visited with the principal who assigned a teacher to take me to the classrooms. All the schools had a wide schoolyard, which was helpful for conducting the interviews in a private area when classrooms were not available.

I began data collection at the secondary schools, which are all located in Kabala town. The first focus group was held at Kabala Secondary School. It is considered an elite school with many former students in high-ranking positions from government to business. The students who attend it are quite aware of the school's notable position. In fact, during my data collection time, an alumnus "Old boy" as they are called, was putting up another 4-classroom structure in honor of a long time serving teacher. The president of the Sierra Leone came to commemorate the structure before I left. KSS is about half of a mile from the main street in Kabala. My research assistants and I took an "Okada" to the school. On our way we passed a primary school on the

left hand side of the road. A few kilometers from it on the right hand side is a car garage. KSS is on top of a small hill, with land designated as the school's garden. The front of the school has a large yard with several big trees. On the other side is a basketball court though not in the best of conditions.

Upon arrival I visited the principal who assigned a teacher to take me to each of the SS classes. I wanted representation from all the streams (Art, Science & Commerce), so in each class after introducing myself and presenting the purpose of my visit, I asked interested individuals girls or boys (on designated interview days) to give their names to the class prefect (head boy or girl). I informed them that I would pick two individuals from the list of volunteers. The purpose for only taking two was to keep the number as suggested manageable number. However, as I prepared the chairs and space in a private part of the schoolyard, I saw every volunteered student from each of the stream making their way to the circle.

On that first day I had a total of 35 girls participate in the focus group interviews. Once the girls were settled I thanked the teacher and informed him this would be an interview only with the girls. The interview began in around 10:00am and lasted to about 1pm. I had to become innovative in capturing student's experiences despite the large group. Given the large number, I provided writing materials to all students and asked them to write down their responses to the questions I asked, this was optional as some expressed they would rather talk about their experiences. After providing a few minutes for others to write down their response, I opened the floor for discussion. I had two research assistants with me, one was in charge of the tape recorder, meaning he had to move around and ensure every response was being captured. My note taker took notes, while I also jotted notes as students spoke.

Most students were open to talking however I was mindful about giving all participants an opportunity to respond to the questions. I was done around 1 pm. I thanked the students and since it was lunch time, I asked my colleague to go purchase snacks which was distributed to students. I thanked the principal and teacher for their assistance and left. I followed similar structure in all schools and all groups. However, I kept the female and male groups smaller at the other two schools. The male group was larger for KSS hence I used the writing response option with them as well.

Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) The FAWE vocation school is strictly for young women located within Kabala town in the same neighborhood as the Kabala secondary school. FAWE's mandate is to support women and girls acquire education for development and better livelihood (Taqi, 2001). It is one of the very few functioning vocational training programs in the area. On the interview day I arrived around 9 am. The program director was not yet in, so I waited around for a bit to speak with her before commencing. The assistant director arrived and informed me she had traveled. I explained my purpose of being there and that I had gotten permission from director. He asked me to speak with the girls present for volunteers. There was a mix of young women present, some already participating in a FAWE program and others waiting to know if they have been accepted. I explained my study to those present and asked for volunteers. About 22 individuals volunteered to participate. Given my experience with both big and small groups I decided to engage all 22 women to increase the diversity of experiences and perspectives.

Interview questions followed a similar pattern to the secondary school focus groups. On the question of education, this group was able to talk about both the formal and non-formal

education structures. This was so given that several of them were young mothers, a few teenage mothers who had to drop out of formal schooling and were now seeking opportunities in the non-formal sector. The interview lasted for about 90 minutes and was strictly oral.

Okada Association I met with the Okada chairman a few days before the scheduled interview to discuss where I could conduct the interview since Okada bike riders are spread around the town with different meeting areas. He proposed coming to the location in the center of town. After discussion with my two research assistants (RA), I decided to conduct the research at the “cow yard” Okada (motorbike) youth meeting location. Reasons being that the central town riders hardly sit for too long as they try to earn as much income as possible in a day. I also decided to go with the other location because there would be space and privacy to have a meaningful focus group discussion. The Okada association had an office at the center of town but it lacked sufficient chairs and desks and extra space away from the daily business. With the cow-yard group, we went to the Project 1808 Koinadugu community based organization office, which had no staff members or students at the time. The focus group interview lasted for about 90 minutes with oral responses recorded. Although all participants volunteered, some were more vocal than others and while I asked questions of all, several would say they agree with what some of the more vocal have said.

Participant Sampling

Study participants comprised of 155 young people and 5 adult stakeholders living in Kabala town. Youth selected for this study ranged from 17 to 25 years old with 2 participants (Okada riders) in their early 30s. The definition of *youth* varies within Sierra Leone; ages 15 to 24 are popularly utilized to describe youth (World Bank, 2007), while ages 15 to 35 appears in

some contexts (UNESCO, 2008). Because this study utilized focus groups, I was cognizant of not having a significant age gap between participants. The educational status of participants included secondary school students, dropouts, vocational trainees and one individual who had never attended formal or non-formal schooling. Participants were selected so as to achieve a sampling of different age groups, educational background, and genders. I recruited participants from the three senior secondary schools in Kabala; FAWE (Forum for African women Educationalists), a Pan African non-governmental organization focused on providing young girls and women gender responsive vocational education; and the Okada (motorcycle taxi) association comprising of young men who had either graduated and had no other employment, were still in school or had dropped out of school. In the SSS I selected participants from all four class-levels for diversity in experiences.

In addition to young people, I interviewed several stakeholders due to lack of written literature on the district pertaining to some inquiries such as the district's education history, curriculum development processes, various environmental issues and work being done to tackle them. The interview questions for these interviews were also guided by data from focus groups. For example, when students spoke about the lack of textbooks, I wanted to understand if the issue stemmed from national level, district or family influences. Interviewed stakeholders were from the education, environment, district governance and agriculture sectors. I applied convenience, snowball, and purposeful sampling for participant selection. Convenience sampling occurs because certain individuals are available at the time of data collection (Auebach & Silverstein, 2003). Snowball sampling occurs when interviewees or community members recommend someone who is knowledgeable about the inquiry. This was applied in cases were

documents were not available and I was directed to particular individuals to talk to such as the environmental officer. Purposeful sampling was utilized throughout as I strived to deepen my understanding through the collection of additional data from various sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Collection Procedures

For this study, data was collected in the forms of semi-structured focus group, one-on-one interviews, direct-observations, collection of documents, and a reflective journal. In striving to achieve the goals of this study, I chose the following objectives to serve as guidelines:

- Conduct a literature review pertaining to youths' environmental experiences and perceptions and their relation to future visions. Additionally, I reviewed other research, delving into the intersection between education and perception of future, particularly in post-conflict environments.
- Conduct semi-structured, focus group interviews using the research questions outlined in Appendix A; an environmental scan and assessment of quality of life is implied by the first series of question to gain insight on how education can enhance sustained engagement and knowledge application.
- Conduct one-on-one interview with young people and stakeholders to gain deeper understanding particularly when literature was not available. As a result of the war many documents were destroyed hence history data/information was sometimes difficult to acquire. As one stakeholder commented when I asked for education related material, "we don't have them written but I have it all in my head, I am like a walking encyclopedia".

- Analyze the qualitative data collected in interviews, documentations and journal.
- Provide a rich and detailed description of the case study data using qualitative methodology to describe research findings appropriately.

Data was collected through focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Although focus group were originally planned to only have 5-6 participants at each site, there was a lot of interest from young people who wanted to participant hence some groups were much larger while others stayed just above the planned numbers. I decided to keep the large number based on discussions with qualitative researchers on my committee who had advised based on their own research experiences that I be flexible while in the field. One in fact described how an unplanned large focus group she conducted in a southern African country provided her many perspectives and rich data for her research inquiry. I too found this to be true in large focus groups; there were diverse important perspectives from young people based on their varied experiences.

Research sites included three senior secondary schools, FAWE and the Okada Association. An IRB approval was received from the University of Wisconsin Review Board prior to data collection. I had contacted the district's education director, who represents the government at the district level and oversees all education matters. Once research permission was granted I sought permission from principals at each school. Although I had been formally engaged within the Kabala community for over three years, I recruited an "insider" to accompany me during the research process. This was because I would still fall under the category of "outsider," as my visits have been on short-medium term basis. Krueger and Casey (2009) suggest getting an insider, "a gatekeeper" to assist with recruiting and even being present at focus group sessions. This person is a trusted individual within the community and is able to

maintain neutrality when moderating a group. The “gatekeeper” who supported my research work was a young man in his early twenties who had graduated from high school and was waiting on finances to head to the university. He displayed great maturity and neutrality in many situations not related to my research hence my decision to have him as a research assistant.

On the day of data collection, prior to recruitment and focus groups, I reviewed the research with my gatekeeper. At each site we spoke with appropriate individuals. At schools, these were the principals. Each principal then assigned a teacher who took us to each classroom. This teacher was in charge of communicating with his colleague if there was a class going on. I explained my study to the class explaining that participation was voluntary, that there was no direct compensation and they will not be identified by name in the final study report. At each site I asked for either a private classroom or space where students could speak freely. Once volunteers had been gotten, the group will moved to that private space, away from the presence of any school officials or onlookers.

I, and the gatekeeper, when necessary, served as primary conductors of the focus groups. Participants had the option of providing their responses in either English or Krio, the lingua franca. Although, I speak Krio and am a native speaker of its sister language, Pidgin, the gatekeeper, a native Krio speaker from the Koinadugu region, provided clarifications and translations to participants where necessary. Interviews were semi-structured, lasting between 45-60 minutes or whenever group completes sessions. Being flexible with time was important in this culture as it has great oratory traditions as oppose to written. Interview questions primarily covered the following focus areas: (1) a typical day of a young Koinadugan (2) what they like about their environment and district (3) what they do not like in their environment and how it

affected livelihood; (2) perceptions of personal and community futures and; (3) the state and role of education for personal and community development. Participants also filled out a short demographic form.

Focus Group Discussions and One-on-One Interviews

Focus groups interviews was the primary form of interviews conducted using open-ended, semi-structured questions to explore young peoples' conceptualization of environment and its relation to quality of life, their perceptions of personal and community futures, and their views on education as a tool for development (Teufel-Shone et al., 2006). Additionally, one on one in-depth interview were conducted based on community members recommendation and as researcher assessed research process and saw opportunity for further learning. A focus group when well executed helps participant feel comfortable and freer to share their opinions. There were a number of considerations I was mindful of, in creating a comfortable non-judgmental environment for sharing and learning. These included:

- 1) Location: it was important that participants be in an environment where they could speak freely and comfortably.
- 2) Nutrition: I provided lunch money to participants at the end of each focus group interview although they were not previously told they would be getting this compensation. This was important given knowledge from literature and personal experiences that show a good number of students go to school without food and have no lunch while there.
- 3) Age: Krueger et al. (2009) suggest avoiding significant age difference between participants. Within the formal schools system, students were generally between the

ages of 17 and 20 years. For FAWE and the Okada association the age was wider 18-27 years, with some outliers in their 30s. Because of Sierra Leone's ten-year civil war it was not surprising for young people of such age variances to find themselves at the same development stage professionally.

- 4) Asking question: I paid special attention to asking questions in formats that was easy to understand. My research translator was also effective in clarifying questions for students in the *lingua franca*.
- 5) Engaging participants: Because some focus groups interviews lasted longer, particularly for larger groups, I came up with alternative ways to capture participants' responses beyond oral expression. In such cases, I asked participants to write down their responses with the option to share orally time permitting.
- 6) Recording Data: Interviews were audio recorded in addition note taking by a hired individual from Kabala. I also maintain notes throughout the interviews.
- 7) Number of Focus Group Interviews: It is suggested that researchers should at first conduct 3 to 4 interviews and then determine if saturation has been achieved. 8 focus group interviews were conducted for the current research.

One-on-one interview participants were selected using a similar recruitment process to focus group. Participants were selected from the three secondary schools, FAWE and the Okada association. I compiled interview questions that have been used in other contemporary studies and comparable lines of research. Appendix A illustrates prompt questions based on previous studies pertaining to youth views of their environment and future (Hillcoat et al., 1995; Eckersley, 1997; Loughland, Reid, Walker & Petocz, 2003).

The first part of the interview was based on a modified community case study procedure. This technique allowed participants to share their description and analysis of their community, its assets and needs in different formats and language of comfort (Roseland, 2000). After setting the atmosphere and collaboratively setting some ground rules for the discussion, I delved into the first research question, which was to understand young people's daily interactions with their environment to better understand sources of their environmental perceptions. The prompting questions was "describe your typical day and activities from the time you get up to when you go to bed" I had follow up questions for students with regards to where they got water from, how far it was; mode of transport to school, the distance and lighting facilities. Similar to Robson's (2004) work with rural youth in Nigeria, young rural Sierra Leoneans' time use data by recall "provided valuable information on the variety, duration and location" of their work, school and leisure.

The second sets of questions asked participants to discuss assets they see in their environment and district as well as needs and challenges. I was deliberate in having them speak about assets before needs given knowledge of the district being viewed in a negative light. My intention in doing so was to hopefully mitigate the natural tendency of falling into the usual negative perceptions of the district. In speaking of some positives perhaps they would be more critical and balanced in talking about the challenges. The prompting questions were "what do you like about Koinadugu district, what are some of the good things you see in this environment?" and "what do you not like about Koinadugu district?"

In the second part of the interview, participants were asked about their personal future as well as that of the community's. Prompting questions included, "With the good and the bad

things you have described about Koinadugu district, how do you see the future of the district? What about your own personal future, how do you see it being?” Participants will be encouraged to describe how they imagine life will be a few years from now, what they perceive it will look like and what they would prefer it to be. The third and final portion of the interview was focused on education in both formal and/or non-formal contexts. I asked questions such as, “given the needs and challenges you have observed and experienced in Koinadugu district, and the future that you will like to see for the district and yourself, do you think the education you are receiving now is good enough or sufficient for it? Why do you think it is or is not?”

Documents review

Qualitative research pioneers have emphasized the importance and relevance of documentary information for developing understanding of a case. Merriam (1988, p. 118) states that, “documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding and discover insights relevant to the research problem.” In addition to reviewing electronic writings on Sierra Leone and Koinadugu prior to the study, I collected non-electronic and unpublished background documents on Koinadugu as it related to my question of understanding young people’s environmental experiences. Two key criteria were used to collect documentary information, 1) document authority for credibility, for example government reports and relevance to young people’s experiences. While I had a strategy to collect particular documents, this expanded as I conducted focus groups and began preliminary data analysis in the field.

I visited different offices where some of these provided documents were detailed while others were broad. Sometimes documents produced by the local offices were not available because it had been sent to necessary office in the city and there were no copies available at the

district level. Due to time and resource limitations, I couldn't trace those documents. In some cases where documents were not available such as at the Koinadugu regional ministry of education office, I conducted interviews. I collected data from the statistics office to understand the demographics and topography of the district. For example, I interviewed a staff member in the ministry of agriculture local office as he could not provide documents regarding youth engagement in agriculture. In certain cases, such as collecting information on general youth activities, documents were not available and individuals were not available for interviews. Many of my research participants described difficulties in accessing portable water. This prompted me to the Sierra Leone Water Company (SALWACO) office three times on different days in the mornings and afternoon to learn more about the general water situation in Koinadugu. However none of the office members were present during the times I visited despite being asked to and waiting between 30-60 minutes each time.

Direct-observational data

Although interviews formed the crux of this research work, I also recorded observational data from current and previous visits to the community. This data collection method was useful for describing several social, economic, cultural, and environmental features not found in written forms. I used this data to understand local conditions, community culture, and landscape. Such firsthand data particularly as it related to specific research questions contributed to the rich descriptive text. For example, both stakeholder and researcher observed new consumption practices, such as the increase in use of synthetic hair among girls and women over natural hairstyles, which though cheaper are being seen as less sophisticated. This observation signified a changing cultural landscape within which young people are active contributors.

Reflective Journal

The last form of data collection related was keeping a reflective journal and field notes. The journal allowed me to describe my feelings during the research process. According to Morrow and Smith (2000), the use of a reflective journal adds rigor to qualitative inquiry as the investigator is able to record his/her reactions, assumptions, expectations, and biases about the research process. As discussed in the “researcher as instrument” section, I engaged in self-analysis to identify beliefs and assumptions that could influence data collection and analysis. For example it was important for me to reflect on my initial engagement with the community as part of a non-governmental organization, which was from a development standpoint that initially perceived the community from a deficit viewpoint. Through reflection of experiences and interactions within the community I became more aware of assets and agency as well as insufficiencies within the community. Such continuous reflection was important in data collection and analysis, as I was more cognizant of the multiplicity of experiences.

Ethical Considerations and Participant Safety

Participant privacy, physical safety and mental health were critically considered throughout this study. First I was cognizant of power dynamics within school systems, between young people and adults hence in explaining the purpose of research and also emphasized the participants that all information shared be held confidentially. Researcher also explained that participants may choose to leave the study at any point without consequences should they be inclined to. Informed consent from participants was orally obtained. The present study did not present readily identifiable risks, however given the context some considerations were kept in mind when working with young people in a post-conflict country. Questions were carefully

formulated with special attention to psychological wellbeing. No participant demonstrated distress while or as a result of participating in the study. Additionally participants were treated in accordance to the ethical guidelines of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Data Analysis Procedures

Qualitative research amasses large amounts of data, making it imperative to be well organized in maintaining data (Yin, 2003). Glesne (1999) summarizes that “data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned. Working with data, you describe, create explanations, pose hypotheses and link your story to other stories” (p. 130). Merriam (1998) posits “the right way to analyze data in qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection” (p.162). Merriam further assert that qualitative research is inherently reflective in nature and thus the researcher “is committed to pondering the impressions, deliberating recollections and record data, sometimes pre-coded but continuously interpreted, on first sighting and again and again” (p. 242).

Data analysis for this study began in the field using the constant comparative method. Merriam defined this method as the researcher starting “with a particular incident from an interview, field notes or document and comparing it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set (p.159). To facilitate the process only one focus group interview was held per day to allow time for review and initial analysis. This proved to be quite useful in making sense of young people’s environmental experiences and perceptions as well as researchers direct observations in the environment, thereby greatly informing the process of further collecting data

related to the research question. Utilizing this method was beneficial in requesting documents or in interviewing stakeholders where documents were not available.

There is no one set recipe for qualitative data analysis given the process is centered on making meaning from multiple data sources (Straus & Corbin, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The analysis process involved sense-making of transcribed text, preparing text for analysis, exploring data for deeper understanding, and representing and interpreting data (Creswell, 2007). For the thematic analysis, the researcher will follow step-by-step guidelines suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). These guidelines include (1) familiarizing yourself with your data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) reading throughout each transcript to immerse in the data, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Data analysis included both researcher's reflections and content analysis. Reflexivity allowed for inclusion of personal insights and ideas that are related to the problems and research questions.

To make data more manageable for analysis, before the data was analyzed, I transcribed all interviews, observations, documents, journal entries and field notes. The process of transcribing allows the researcher to become acquainted or re-acquainted with the data. I utilized Microsoft Word for interview transcriptions, and scanned documents, and journal entries. I subsequently created a PDF document of all research data, which was stored on my private portable computer protected with a password only I had access to.

Qualitative research analysis process requires intimate and careful engagement with the text (Esterberg, 2002). Three level of coding was conducted. I employed open coding initially, working intensively with the data, line by line and noting emerging themes to the right hand side of each page. I also used different color highlighters to denote different emerging themes such as

health, education, environment and future visions. This first level of coding, reading interviews, journal notes and documents from start to finish provided a holistic view of the data. The codes from initial coding were typed into a word document and committee members were consulted and presented with progress for external input before moving to level two coding.

The second level of manual coding was more focused, where the researcher began to subsume codes into categories which were entered into an excel spreadsheet. Again qualitative and quantitative committee members were consulted before proceeding. This was done manually. Level three coding done using the traditional “paper and pen” method, facilitated review and refinement of previous coding to develop highly refined themes. Although I had intended to utilize a qualitative software such as NVIVO for level three coding, I decided otherwise, as I preferred the intimate “touch and feel” of the traditional method. I was guided by Yin’s (2003) core principles for high quality analysis 1) attending to all evidences including consideration of alternative interpretations and rival hypotheses, 2) addressing all major rival interpretations, 3) focusing on the most important issue in the study and 4) researcher using their prior, expert knowledge in the analysis.

Trustworthiness and Validity of Study

Qualitative researchers utilize various validation strategies to ensure their research works are credible and rigorous (Creswell, 2008). Given that researchers are the main instrument for data collection and interpretation of data, Stakes (1995) cautions against narrow thinking and suggest seeking understanding from participant’s perspective. This can be achieved through triangulation; that is using multiple sources of data to confirm emerging findings (Merriam, 2002; Stake, 1995). In addition to triangulation several other important processes as suggested by

qualitative research literature were used to increase trustworthiness and validity of study findings (Merriam, 1998). The credibility was achieved through the following:

Triangulations – this involved using multiple sources of data to confirm emerging findings. Importantly Merriam suggests, “shifting the notion of triangulation away from a technological solution for ensuring validity and instead relying on a holistic understanding of the situation to construction plausible explanations about the phenomena being studied” (p.204). Multiple sources of data for this study included focus group discussions, one-on-one interviews, document review and direct observations.

Long-term observation- required repeated observation of the phenomenon being studied and gathering data over a period of time. I utilized experiences and observations from multiple short-term visits to the town and region since 2011.

Review- I engaged other researchers all part of dissertation committee throughout the data analysis process to comment on emerging themes and findings. This was particularly useful for further analysis and overall situating my work in scholarly works and considering implications of findings.

Researcher Reflective/Bias- self-reflection by the researcher regarding assumptions, biases and worldviews as it may affect the study is important for qualitative study. I stated my background, experiences earlier in this work so that the reader may know the lens, which I bring to this work.

Maximum variation- purposeful actions were taken to attain diversity in sample selection for representation and greater application of findings (Merriam, 2002, p.31).

Audit Trail- a detailed account of methods, procedures and documents are described in this document and included in the appendices.

Rich Description: A rich, thick description as provided by this study is important for external validity where the narrative is contextualized enough so that the readers are able to determine the extent to which their situation matches that of the research. Hence the extent to which findings can be generalized.

Stake's "critique checklist," was used to assess the quality of the case study report (1995, p.131).

These twenty criteria checklists are:

1. Is the report easy to read?
2. Does it fit together, each sentence contributing to the whole?
3. Does the report have a conceptual structure (for example, themes or issues?)
4. Are its issues developed in a serious and scholarly way?
5. Is the case adequately defined?
6. Is there a sense of story to the presentation?
7. Is the reader provided with some vicarious experience?
8. Have quotations been used effectively?
9. Are headings, figures, artifacts, appendixes, and indexes used effectively?
10. Was it edited well, then again with a last minute polish?
11. Has the writer made sound assertions, neither over-nor under-interpreting?
12. Has adequate attention being paid to various contexts?
13. Were sufficient raw data presented?
14. Were the data resources well-chosen and in sufficient number?

15. Do observations and interpretations appear to have been triangulated?
16. Are the role and point of view of the researcher nicely apparent?
17. Is the nature of the intended audience apparent?
18. Is empathy shown for all sides?
19. Are personal intentions examined?
20. Does it appear that individuals were put at risk?

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Overview of Study

The current study investigated from rural young people's perspective their environmental experiences and perceptions, views of the future and role of education for personal and community development. In particular, I was interested in uncovering if how they experienced and viewed their environment and community influenced their future orientation. Sierra Leone's rural youth's experiences in post-conflict transitioning is emergent as most youth studies have focused on urban setting. This dissertation set out to understand the everyday experiences that contributed to constructed perceptions. Specifically research aims included

1. Understanding young people's perception of their environment
2. How young people's environmental experiences and perceptions influence their views of the future?
3. How effective is the current educational system (formal & informal) to meet the needs of young people in Koinadugu District?

This section presents data from focus group and one-on-one interviews on how young people perceive the local, immediate surroundings and regional environment, district wide. While incorporating insights from adult/stakeholders interviews and researcher's direct observations, the analysis primarily focuses on young people's narratives from focus groups and one-on-one interviews. A majority of interview responses presented here were translated from Krio, some are verbatim with minor editorial modifications to correct English usage. However, great effort was made to retain exact meaning and opinion as stated by interviewees.

This chapter also provides an overview of participants involved in the study. Findings are presented for understanding of perceptions and experiences that contributed to those perceptions. The time use data collected during focus group interviews provided valuable information on young people's daily activities including the duration, locations and challenges of their engagements. Narratives of daily life activities are presented, followed by young people's response to the question, "What are the things you like about Koinadugu district and the general environment where you live?" Subsequently are findings to research questions, "what don't you like about Koinadugu district and the general environmental where you live? How do you see the future of the district and your personal future" and "Is the education you are receiving adequate towards achieving the type of community and personal future you envision?"

Description of Participants:

Participants included a total of 158 consisting of 153 young people and 5 community stakeholders. Participants represented various backgrounds educationally including in school, out of school, non-formal and non-students. The table below provides demographics of participants by gender and institution. The Okada association is unique because its membership has a mélange of all above educational backgrounds. That is, they have riders who are currently in school, some who dropped out, and some who have never been to school and some who graduated. The in-school students as noted by those who participated in focus groups at secondary school site made up the majority of youth participants, 72% (n=113), followed by those at the vocational institute, 16% (n=25) and then the Okada riders, 9% (n=15). While the same number of males (50%) and females (50%) participated in one-on-one interviews, a slightly higher number of females (53%) took part in focus group interviews.

Five community stakeholders (n=5) interviewed for this study included the district council environmental officer, district level director of education, district council chairman, a district councilman who is also a nurse and the development officer. Stakeholders were all males (100%), as the majority of government positions are held by men. Table 1 provides a comprehensive layout of participants' demographics by educational background and gender. Figures 1 and 2 provide chat display of these demographics separately.

Table 1: Participant Profile according to Gender and Educational Background

	Focus Group Interviews		One-on-one Interviews		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Loma Secondary School (LOMA)	8	6	2	2	18
Kabala Secondary School (KSS)	32	35	2	2	71
Ahmadiyya Muslim secondary school (AMASS)	10	10	2	2	24
Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)	0	22	0	3	25
Okada Association	12	0	3	0	15
Total	62	73	9	9	153
Stakeholders					
District Director of Education			1		
Koinadugu Environmental Officer			1		
Koinadugu Council Man			1		
Koinadugu Council Chairman			1		
Koinadugu Agriculture Officer			1		
Total			5		
Grande Total	62	73	14	9	158

Figure 3: Participants' Educational Background

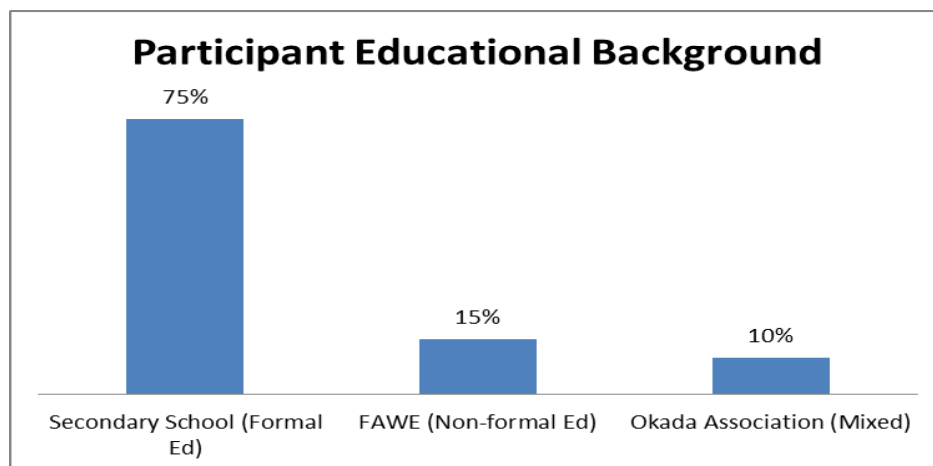
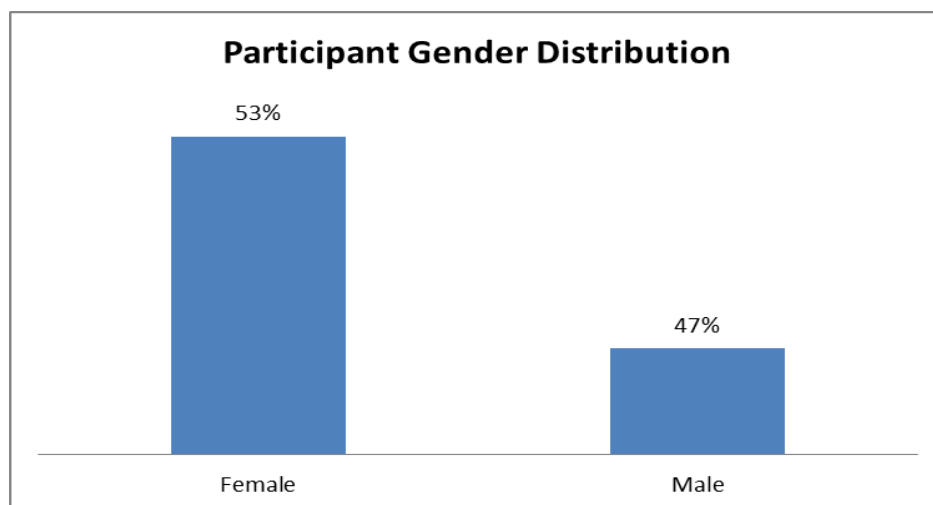


Figure 4: Participants' Gender Demographic



Codes

To maintain participants' confidentiality I use codes in reporting results below. Participants were informed that their real names would not be used in reporting. Table 2 indicates codes I use for young people and community stakeholders.

Table 2: Codes Used for Reporting

Participants	Code
Secondary School Girl	SSG
Secondary School Boy	SSB
Okada Rider	OKA
FAWE Student	FEW
District Director of Education	DDE
Koinadugu District Environmental Officer	KEO
Koinadugu District Council Man	KCM
Koinadugu District Council Chairman	KCC
Koinadugu District Agriculture Officer	KAO

Research Findings

The goal of this research was to investigate young people's perceptions of their environment, the influence of such perceptual orientation on future visions and their view of education as tool for development. The overarching research question providing foundation for this research was: *what are young people's perceptions of their environment, and how do these perceptions influence their views of the future and the role of education for self and community development?*

The focus was the relationship between young people's environmental experiences, perceptions, future vision and implication for education. Hence research questions and sub questions were intended to explore daily life experience and interactions, perceptions of their place, views and goals of the future as well as views on the state of education.

Several themes emerged from the data. In general young people's perceptions of their environment were associated to its symbolic-Aesthetic, economic, environmental and ecological functions as it relates to personal and community livelihood. Overall findings showed young people hold a positive perception of their environment though most believed the built environment could be improved to better align with personal and community needs.

Their daily experiences and environmental interactions significantly influenced how they perceive their community and place. Accounts of daily activities were often accompanied with commentaries of like and dislikes about different environmental conditions or community situations that needed change or improvements. Time use by recall data showed that young people engaged in a variety of activities every day. School-going youth reported performing significantly more activities everyday as opposed to their non-school going counterparts. They spent a large part of their day in school, 8:00 am-2:00 pm and 6:00 am-6:00 pm for those in national exams class. Before and after school times are largely occupied by self (eating, bathing, laundering uniform) and household maintenance and reproduction such as procuring water, providing nutrition (going to the market, cooking) and other domestic chores (cleaning the compound, washing the dishes). Leisure (playing football, basketball, hanging with friends) and studying was a major activity for school going youth. For non-school goers, engaging in or seeking income-generating activities (Okada riding, vocational training) occupied a majority of their time. While both male and female reported self-maintenance activities, more females described engaging in household maintenance work similar to those described by students. A majority of both school and non-school going participants reported engaging in religious activity (going to the mosque or church).

This work found that despite popular perception of their district as least developed, young people maintained a positive perception of their place. There are several things they like about their place ranging from social, economic to environmental resources. Major social attributes young people like about their community can be summarized under five major areas: cultural and natural diversity; improvements in provision of basic amenities such as education, health, water and roads; leadership and youth engagement. Environmental elements they were particularly proud of included both the district's natural resources and changes to the built environment which signifies "development" to most. In the economic realm, tourism and the district's lead in agricultural affairs took prominence.

Apparent in the findings was that while young people had positive orientation regarding the natural and social wealth found in their place, their daily environmental stresses such as lack of infrastructures, and basic amenities contributed to environmental concern. For example, while young people expressed pride in the mountains, which attracts tourists to the district, they also complained about natural resource exploitation and destruction by outsiders. A majority of participants while responding to what they liked in their environment often ended with something that needed improvement. Major concerning issues for young people included, poor natural resource management by local leaders, no or inadequate infrastructures and social amenities as well as related issues with unemployment, poor quality of education and health care. In their narratives, they highlight push and pull factors that contribute to migration to or out of Koinadugu district particularly to what some of the country's major cities.

This study found that overall young people are optimistic about both their community and personal futures. It evidenced that perceptions of their environment do influence how they

view the future. Young people's optimism or pessimism was often dependent on their lived experiences, evaluation of the district over the last couple of years and even decades. Those with optimistic orientation highlighted recent development work related to street solar lights, pumps and better roads. Those with more pessimistic outlook based their views on continuous personal struggles, lacks and unfulfilled political promises. However even those with such orientations held some amount of "conditional optimism", given recent community development endeavors. Young people demonstrated a high self-efficacy and sense of place. Generally, young people were more optimistic about their own personal futures, many citing self-responsibility and accountability. Many believed the community's future rested with youth. Several participants vowed they would return to serve the district upon completing their university education.

This study confirmed that formal education and certification is highly regarded among young people. Across the board, young people expressed education is important for increasing one's options and opportunity to participate confidently in various citizenship activities as well as achieve personal career goals. While they believed the current formal education provide basic skills, few thought the education in their region was adequate for their future goals and hopes for the district. This was particularly so for those in the sciences. A number of prominent issues were highlighted regarding the poor state of education including lack of qualified teachers, poor teacher pay and incentives, lack of teaching and learning, vocational institutions and university; monetization of test and exams and distracting social activities.

The study found that young peoples daily experiences whether encountering hindrances and facilitators influenced their perceptions of their environment and community. It also influenced how they viewed the community's future and to a lesser degree their personal futures.

Young people do not believe that the current education system is adequate to achieve their hopes and desires for the future. Below findings are presented by research aims and direct quotes from participants are included to corroborate emergent themes.

4.1 Research Aim 1: Understanding Young People's Environmental Perceptions

Data analysis revealed several key themes relevant for research aim one: *understanding young people's perception of their environment*. Three main open-ended questions were posed to answer: a) participants were asked to describe their typical day from morning to bedtime. This was to gain perspective insights on how they interacted with and within their environments; b) young people were asked to describe what they liked about their community and district at large and c) what they did not like about it. Below key themes from each questions are described, to answer research aim one.

Young People's Everyday Experiences

Data revealed spaces and places in which young people spend their time and how daily environmental experiences and negotiations influenced their environmental perceptions. Analysis of young people's narratives of their daily activities not only revealed what they do but also things that were of concern or importance to them. As evident in the analysis of their likes and dislikes about their community, conditions that facilitated or hindered their productivity in everyday experiences were very salient. Five major themes emerged from young people's narratives 1) praying, 2) fetching water 3) transportation to school or destination for main activity of the day, 4) food security and 5) after school chores, activities and play. Quotes were used throughout this chapter to corroborate these emerged themes.

Praying. Data revealed that prayer is an integral part of young people's everyday livelihood. A significant number of young people, both Christians and Muslims engage in prayer everyday particularly in the mornings. It was a recurring theme that prayer came in the morning before they began their days. While some pray at home, a number of both Christians and Muslims get up as early as 5-6 am to participate in prayers at the mosque or church before continuing with the day's activities as described by the secondary school students:

SSG: I wash my face, I go to the mosque, after prayer (I get up 5 am to go to the mosque, leave the mosque at 6 am). I greet my parents.

SSB: I get up in the morning. I pray before doing anything.

This was the case regardless of the youth's educational background as Okada riders follow a similar prayer routine:

OKA: (in the morning), I wash my face and mouth, pray to God and go up to Cow yard (where young riders hang out and wait to borrow bikes to work)

Being that Koinadugu is majority Muslims, prayer is embedded throughout the day up to five times. Hence several participants reported praying in the morning and at their school mosque during the day.

SSG: When I wake up in the morning, I pray, I go to church, I sweep, I get water from the pump not too far from me. I sweep, wash the dishes. I prepare to wash and go to school. I dress, I pray again...before I enter class I pray.

Fetching Water and Morning Domestic Chores. In addition to self-maintenance activities such as bathing, and ironing school uniforms, almost all participants except for Okada riders reported doing some type of domestic chores in the morning. As oppose to morning activity narratives from riders which largely consisted of self-maintenance and checking their

bike to ensure it's working, school-going youth and out of school girls at FAWE reported doing diverse domestic chores. Amongst these morning duties included sweeping, preparing breakfast, washing the dishes, with fetching water being a popular chore. Both boys and girls had home responsibilities although more boys reported no house chores. The below narratives provide direct insight on secondary school and a young FAWE mother's everyday morning activities:

SSG: I get up at 5 am in the morning and I brush my teeth, wash my face. After that I sweep the compound and take out the dirty dish outside and I wash them. After that I went to the well down the street to get water for cooking then I went to get my wash water at 6:30 am and take my bath.

FWE: Me, I have two children, one is in school. I get up at 6am, make food, heat up water for him and escort him to school. I dress the 2 year old and come to FAWE. I get water from a pump, which is a bit far.

SSB: From the morning, my first work is sweeping the compound, washing the dirty dishes and carrying water from the well of over six rubber (jugs) and drinking water is far from our house.

Reported domestic chores seem a common activity among interviewees which in and of itself posed no problem. However, a number of school-going youth expressed challenges in balancing those chores and school activities. Many reported school tardiness due to domestic chores especially for those fetching water from far distances for their households. Agnes and Fatimata's stories highlights this quandary:

SSG: I wake up at 6:30 am, I wash my face and scrub my teeth after that I sweep the compound and prepared meal for my younger ones and boil water for them to go to school because I am the elder one. I do not fetch water because I have a well in front of my house. After that I dress them for school before I too prepared for school. Sometimes I am late for school because after doing all these works, I will be late. I usually walk on foot to school, because the distance is not too far from my house to school.

SSG: My name is Fatimata, I wake up at 5:30 am. I use the toilet after that I swept the compound and fetch water. The water place is not far from my place because I have one in my compound. Wash the dishes and take bath, iron my uniform and

set fire in the yard. Normally I use three firestones to warm my cool rice, eat and dress and walk to school. Sometimes I am late because of the domestic work at home. They flog me almost every day (at school for being late). The school time is 7:30 am; I normally come at 8:00 am and walk on foot every day.

School is over at 2:30 pm I walk on foot again to go home, take off my uniform and went to the market to my mother, greet her and she will give me the money to cook, after cooking I wash my uniform and also my younger ones' sometimes. I usually finish my work at 7:30 pm and wash. That time my father will come from the market and also my mother, both of them will say "go and study" but I will be very tired and also the light that I am using for studying will have mechanical problem so I will sleep early because I am very tired. So the following day I do the same. I am very weak in class.

About 90% of young people reported fetching water in the morning for self-maintenance, household chores such as cooking, washing dishes and to store for household use throughout the day. Both boys and girls reported engaging in this activity. Certain details were highlighted in their descriptions such as source of water, quality and accessibility. I paid attention to this as it showed what was important for them in those activities. Data indicated three sources from which participants fetched water, pump, well or the river. Some participants got water from only one source, while others used different sources for different activities such as the well for chores and pump for drinking.

Distance was an underlined element in the water fetching activity. While some had pumps and wells in their compound or veranda, others had to travel a few miles. Young people's narrative revealed their abilities to negotiate environmental challenges in their daily life. For example, given some had to travel farther in the morning to fetch water while ensuring they were at school on time, many ensure they were up early to beat the long queues.

SSG: Where I am, to get water is far. Some mornings when we go to get water the place is so full! So some days I have to decide and get water at night because if I wait I will be late for school.

SSG: I wash my face, go to the mosque, after pray...I go get water, If I don't get up early, I will not be able to get water. I sweep, spread the bed, wash the dishes and wash myself.

Transport to School or destination for main activity of the day. As evident through water fetching activity narrative, transportation and means of mobility was significant constraint for participants. Bad road conditions affected them in various ways. A majority of student participants mentioned their means transportation to school, elaborating on how easy or difficult the process was for them, specifying on distance and availability of finances for motorbike (Okada) transportation. Most students reported that they walked to and from school with some living quite close (<1mile) and others quite far off (>4miles). Others described that they alternated between walking and catching an Okada. The nearness of the school and extra family resource makes transportation easy for the below participants:

SSB: my dad will call me to come out, put me on his motorcycle and bring me to school or sometime I walked to school with my friends. The distance from my house to my school is half a mile

SSB: after eating I come to school at 8:30am because I am not very far from the school. It is just about one and a half mile

The majority of participants lack such resources and for some long distances is coupled with food insecurity affecting both school attendance and nutrition as underlined by narratives below:

6:00 am I get up from bed. After I sweep around the house, after sweeping I fetch water, the distance to the well is too far from my house. After fetching water, I wash the pans and scrub the pots. After doing all my work, I iron my uniform and wash my body and go to school by foot. Sometimes I went to school without eating.

SSG: I walk 3 miles every day to come to school and sometimes without lunch but I still come to school and make fun with my friends. And the school time is 7:15am, sometimes I do not afford money for transport to pay bike to come to school. Sometimes I always come to school late.

Food Insecurity As already noted nutrition and food insecurity presented itself within the narratives of young people's daily lives. Lack of food whether in the morning, during lunch or dinner is something that several participants highlighted while describing their day. This emerged for girls, boys, those in formal schooling and not. While some spoke strictly about the lack of food:

SSB: Again when I come to school I have nothing to eat but because of the love of education in me, I will always be patient by staying in school

Others described the layered challenge of walking long distances to school without something in their stomach. The below excerpts underscores various experiences of food security:

SSB: The distance from my house to my school is about one mile; I left my house at 7am and arrive at 8 am. Which takes me one hour at road walking. I eat nothing before going to school.

SSB: Actually I don't eat during the morning, it is not easy for us to eat in the morning and from the house to the school is 1-1/2 mile

SSB: When I am coming to school in the morning I am not eating anything even in the evening. I am the one struggling to pay my fees...my house to the school is one mile away...every day I will be late for school.

Some participants describe how they must negotiate needs of mobility and nutrition. Some are forced to use their lunch money for transportation to make it to school on time.

SSB: Sometimes I use my lunch money to take bike, whenever I am late to come to school.

Others have to fend for themselves, as their guardians are not able to provide regular meals. In addition to availability of food, participants also talked about the quality of food. Their narratives particularly those of Okada riders, also begin to highlight the relationship between basic needs such as food and their ability to focus on schoolwork and education:

OKA: Life very difficult for us in this part of the country. I was attending school but left because of no assistance. I begin motorbike riding to get a living..... I eat twice a day, morning and before going to bed. I don't eat good food just because there is no means. Sometimes I cook my own food, sometimes I buy because it's Le 2000 (.50cents).

SSB: After school I will go and ride Okada to find something to eat because my father has died long time ago, that is why my mother cannot have food and lunch for us because we are plenty to our mother, so after school I cannot have any time to study. I only study for 30 minute.

SSB: I come to school. Most of what I eat is fried cassava because it doesn't cost much lunch (Le 500). If I am at home, I buy garri (cassava based food). When I go home, if there is food I eat, if not I buy garri.

OKA: In the morning I wash my face and mouth, pray to God and go to cow yard, if some bike riders have worked and want to take a rest, I borrow their bike. Life is not easy for us. Sometimes we wait all day (and don't have a bike-no work-no money). Some mornings I don't have tea to drink, sometimes if I eat in the morning, I don't eat in the afternoon.

Direct Observation: During data collection, researcher found this to be true for several students.

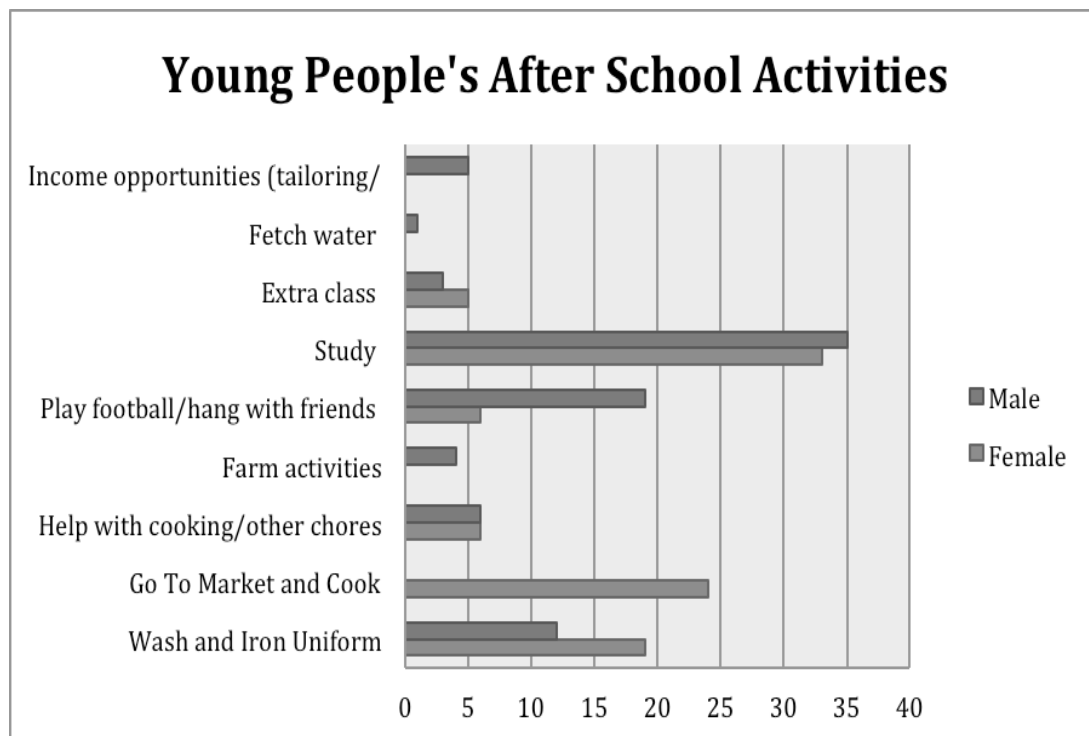
Notable was talking to a student from the blind school who mentioned that he and his colleagues usually had no money to buy lunch. This was despite walking more than 5 miles to and from school. Speaking to a stakeholder, they acknowledged that food security was indeed a problem and explained efforts by NGOs and the government to reduce its impact on schooling. These efforts, primarily focused on villages outside of Kabala town, provide meals to school going children. These programs were developed as a response to findings that revealed lack of food was a major hindrance to school attendance in the villages, rather many children accompanied their parents to the farms. Because most farmers brought the family's meal to the farm, children were brought along if they were to eat anything that day. The stakeholder explains:

KDC: As a council we are really aware that we are constraint with resources, so what we try to do is to maximize what we have. For example we have development agencies helping us in this areas...we are targeting...quality of

education...quality of education- we did a survey and found out that poverty is the main reason. In the raining season most of the mothers go to their farms, they have only one meal per day and they cook it in the farm, so they take their kids to the farms because if their kids don't go there they don't eat- so we have attached kitchens to some of the schools and recruited local people to do the cooking. So in these areas we provide a meal to all the students, every day that they come to school and because we want to improve the girl child, we give the girl-child two rations- we give them a take away ration. All of a student, the ratio of the girl child to boy child (59-51) has reduced. It was enormous when we started (20-80). And now the parents are supportive because they know that when that child brings the ration, the small child at home who is not going to school, eats some of it. Now we have no problem with admissions, we have more kids than we have buildings for. Admissiary retention- as long as they are in school, they are fed.

After School Chores, Activities and Leisure. Young people engage domestic chores, school-related and leisure activities in the evenings. That is, after school or their workday. This includes 1) home related responsibilities and activities, 2) studying and other school related activities and 3) leisure playing. Given the purpose of this study, in addition to understanding young people's environmental interactions in the late afternoons, I also paid close attention to what school related activities they engaged in. Findings here showed interesting environmental experiences and influence of gender in activities. Again students were not asked to specifically talk about particular things in their day. Young people were simply directed to describe their typical day, I was interested in seeing what they highlight as important or what was salient to them in their own daily experiences. The below table shows activities young people engaged in:

Figure 5: Young People's After School Activities



Overall, four major activities stand out, 1) laundering their school uniforms, 2) going to the marketing and cooking 4) leisure, playing football or handing with friends and 4) studying. The activity of laundering is deeply connected to young people's experience of roads and water availability, which becomes evident in their analysis of their environment.

Gender differences were evident in young people's activities. In the narratives much fewer girls than boys reported engaging in some leisure activities. Whereas only 6 girls talked of hanging out with their friends, 19 boys reported going to play football, basketball or spending time with their friends. Girls reported engaging in more reproductive work such as going to the market to purchase food items and cooking. No boy reported going to the market to purchase food items and cooking as oppose to the high number of girls who did. However, boys reported helping with cooking. Boys reported engaging in more productive income-generating activities

than girls. For example only boys reported going to the farm or engaging in income generating activities such as Okada or selling. This does not signify that girls may not engage in them, but that reproductive activities are more prominent and important for women.

Both girls and boys engaged in home chores after school, however girls were more engaged in domestic work than their male counterparts who have more time to play. Some girls seemed to take on the role of parent in the household. One girl states that she is “*like a mother*” to her brother at home while another girl reports that, “*after school I went to the market and prepared food for me and my elder brother.*” A number of school-going students reported their parents worked hence they had the responsibility of cooking and feeding the family after school.

The below narratives show most girls after school time use:

SSG: after school I walk to go home. I launder my uniform together with my aunt baby clothes...at 2 o'clock my sisters come from school and I launder their uniforms. I also prepare my younger sisters for 4pm lessons. I help to care for the baby, at 5 I iron our uniforms by 6pm, I prepare dinner for my uncles and family.

SSG: after school I go to the market to buy the cooking items and to go and cook because I am always responsible for cooking. After cooking I wash the pots and launder my uniform....

Studying and School related activities. In addition to household work, young people engaged in several after-school related activities including laundering, attending extra classes and studying. Due to dusty road conditions, the majority of students have to wash their school uniforms every day after school. This task is important to note in light of already noted concerns regards to water quality and accessibility.

SSG: I walk because I do not have transport, when I go home, I remove my uniform, wash them after washing them, I dry them, then I eat, after I rest in the evening hour I will go for class.

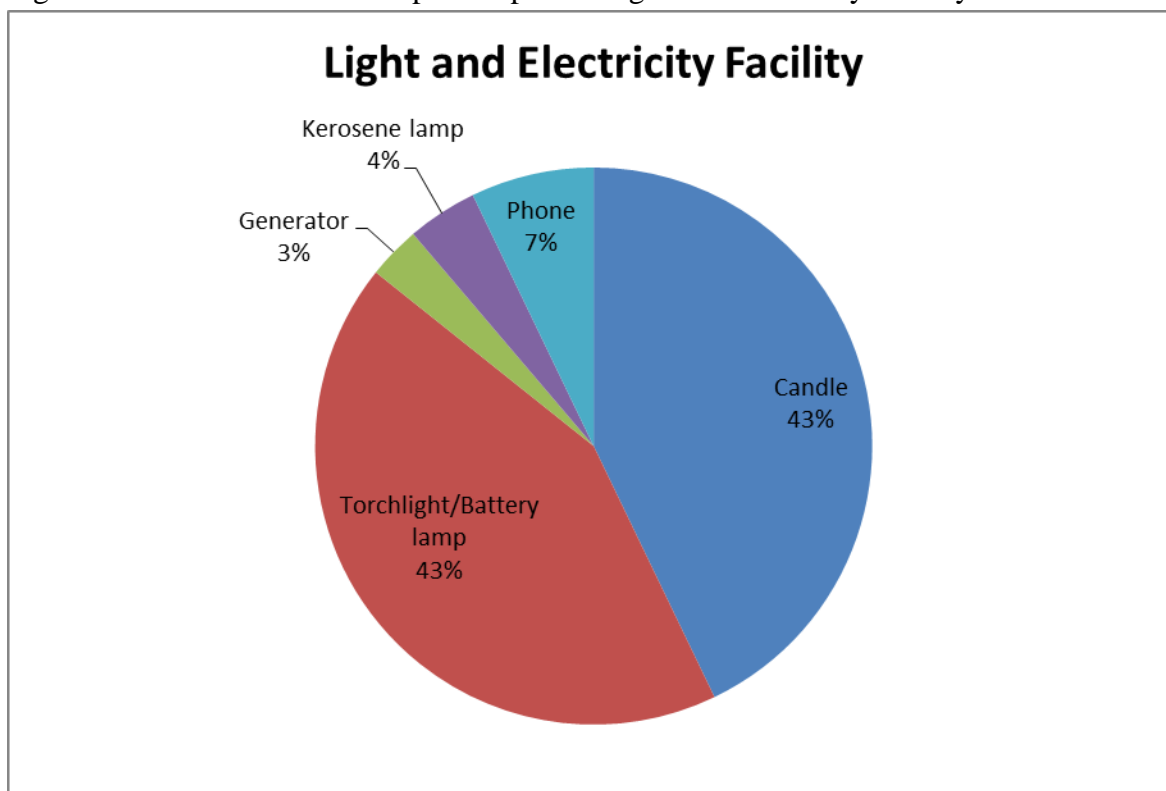
SOG: every day after...laundry my uniform after laundering and have a rest in the evening I iron my uniform because I can't do all that in the morning if not I will be late.

Students in national exams taking class also attended extra classes put on by teachers:

SOG: At 12:30pm, I go to my mother and ask her if she have any money for cooking, if she has, I will go to the market and I cook. Maybe after cooking, I go for class.

The majority of school-going youth engage in studying after their daily chores or play. They use various types of lighting facility ranging from solar light, generators, using their phone, Chinese light, kerosene lamp and three-stone fire for one student. For the majority, finance determines the type of resource they have. Many alternate between Chinese lights and candle, which is much cheaper. The chart below shows the distribution of light source participants reported using:

Figure 6: Distribution of Participant Reported Light and Electricity Facility



Some students report that lack of stable and sustainable light facilities in addition to home responsibilities hindered and limited their ability to study.

SSG: I use to read with torchlight, other times I use candle to read because when the battery is finished, I do not have money to buy battery. The money is more than the candle

SSG: I use generator light to study but I normally do everything (chores) at home, at times I don't have time to study

Study showed young people are creative where they lack resources, such as those who find time to study during daylight as they have no light facilities at home. One participant describes their approach, "I do not have light to study, I study only in school, during lunch time (SSB)."

What Young People like about their Environment and Community

Cultural and Natural Resources: "Koinadugu is the Land of Powerful Mixture" Young people in both focus groups and individual interviews expressed great pride that they come from a place with large cultural and natural diversity. In particular they were most proud of the diverse cultural groups and the district's natural richness including mountains, animals, and agricultural bounty. As demonstrated by the below narratives, many interviewees referred to Koinadugu as the "the Land of powerful mixtures":

SSB: (Koinadugu) is the land of powerful mixtures because we have minerals, hills, good temperature, hot and raining seasons. Best grass for cattle rearing, good land for good farming. We are a cultural people; we can perform in terms of culture.

Young people's pride is affirmed by the many tourist who visit the district every year for its wildlife, landscape and vegetation:

OKA: (Koinadugu) is the biggest district, land of powerful mixtures, so many mountains, most tourist come here to observe certain things. They usually take Okada riders to go a stroll (economic opportunity). This land is a blessed land, it has diamond and gold. Many investors come here to invest.

OKA: (Koinadugu) is a land of powerful mixtures. First thing you notice is the type of mountains, the mountains we have, you can't find anywhere in Sierra Leone. We have cows here, it is only here to see cow and humans co-living... only here will you see a very large cassava, yams...that's why many people from the outside visit, they leave the city to come to Koinadugu to see things they can talk about when they go back. People are not wrong to think that Koinadugu is a land of powerful mixtures

In addition to variety of environmental resources, young Koinadugans were very proud of the cultural diversity unique to Koinadugu district. They articulated this in highlighting yearly cultural showcases and celebrations that bring people of all ethnic groups in Koinadugu and neighboring countries together. These spaces they explained are important for community building chiefs for chiefs and their constituents. Below youth describe agricultural produce showcases and ethnic group gatherings such as the Nakafala gathering of the Yalunkas people:

SSG: (during Christmas), they usually organize dance, different cultural groups from Guinea come and perform in Koinadugu district and the president usually witnesses this.

SSB: Koinadugu is a nice place to live.... the minister of tourism usually puts on the cultural events. We interact with each other. The chiefs talk amongst themselves. Some chiefs are far away and they are not able to talk often, but when this cultural show is put on, they are able to interact, make fun, play and make happiness.

Koinadugu is a big district with many tribes. We have a big show for yalunkas called Nakafala. We get many visitors from outside. This is important to us because it brings one-word (unity). This occasion really allows yalunkas to solve many problems because some yalunkas are located in guinea....this festival allows for everyone to talk and try to resolve various issues.

Infrastructural Developments

Young people also expressed a spectrum of views around nascent changes they are witnessing on availability of social amenities particularly relating to roads, water, light, health, education, and youth participation. Across all groups, newly installed solar lights, on-going road

construction, and installation of water pumps emerged as positive changes. Health was discussed in light of installation of new centers, volunteer doctors and the improvement of roads conditions.

Roads were a major point of discussion in all groups particularly so for secondary school students. They highlighted the importance of roads in relations to health, delivery of health services, transportation of food and food security, tourism, and education. While many spoke about the constraints caused by bad roads, some recognize “small” progress is being made. As pertaining to health interviewees stated that:

SSG: before the roads was really bad, if you were coming to Koinadugu before, you will vomit so much, if you are not careful, you could be admitted to the hospital. Even the township is dust, everyone, people are suffering from dust. But now they are starting to fix the road small.

SSG: The road, the township, so so dust, so even the food they sell in town has dust on them because of the road. Only in recent time we are seeing some road work, anywhere where there is development, people will want to come but as long as there is no development in Koinadugu, people are not thinking of staying.

SSG: I like Koinadugu because of the way they are making us get street pump. The government is helping us get good roads. Previously, before you reach school, your uniform is all dirty but now it is better. They water the road and spray water to reduce dust.

The provision of basic amenities is viewed as a sign of development amongst young Koinadugans. Hence the installation of solar street lamps and construction of water pumps around the community is a sign that the district and their town in particular is getting close to being more urban like Freetown and Makeni, two of the country’s urban cities. For young people newly installed street lights serve several purposes including increasing a sense of safety, community as people can stay up later, and provides night studying opportunities for students when guardians can’t afford other lighting tools. Interviewees commented:

SSG: we are happy for the solar lights because the place was too dark. Now most places are bright. Where the light is installed is in our veranda, so I am able to study at night.

SSG: I am happy for the light, some days my sister doesn't have money to buy candle but I go study under the light.

SSG: I am happy about the light because Kabala was in the dark. Some days by 10pm, you don't see anybody outside; everyone has slept, like for us in one-mile people get in quick. Now people hang out and the old men walk around.

Newly installed street pumps around the township were recognized for the need it addresses and progress it symbolizes. As already noted, young people spend much of their mornings fetching water for self-care and household chores. Given constraints around water accessibility and availability talks and work on water pumps installments are important for young people.

SSG: I am happy about Koinadugu district... before we were having water shortage, so I am happy about the (water) pumps that they are bringing.

SSB: I am happy about the street pumps, because sometime where we go to get water it is not too pure but now with the street pumps we can get clean water. Some wells have color and taste, so I am happy for this pump

SSB: at least if person come from outside, they will admire the town small, streetlights, street pumps, roads. At least I will encourage the person to stay

Provision of health services was also important to young people. Local government and Koinadugans in parliamentary positions such as the minister of tourism and culture (MOCT) were credited for observed developments. For example, participants often credited the minister for a newly constructed health center in the district and visitation of Italian volunteer medical doctors who provided free eye operations.

FWE: The minister of tourism and culture has really helped us. First time if you wanted to do an operation it will be 350,000. If you don't have money you will die. Now he is bringing doctors to do operations for free."

SSG: We have a very good health center in our district. The council is trying hard to see that the health center develops. The Minister of Tourism brings people from

Italy to come do eye operations and checkups for free. They help treat very bad illnesses.”

Young people also commented on some improvements within the district in terms of education particularly with regards to changing adult attitudes about sending their children to school. Participants note that more people are going to school, which is benefiting families and communities as students disseminate learning to others. Others are happy that they have good teachers who are able to teach well for understanding.

SSG: on the education side, people’s eyes are now. Before parents would prefer to send their children to marriage instead of school”

SSG: without education you can’t go anywhere in the world. Some people who were not going to school before are now going, so some mothers are benefiting. You can meet people and tell them what to do and what not to do”

SSG: we have good teachers here, in Loma. They help us understand the issues. They gather us all and explain things to us, how to do things”

Landscape and Environmental Resources In addition to cultural wealth, young people presented strong positive affect towards Koinadugu’s landscape, diversity of minerals and agricultural advantage nationally. A prominent environmental feature highlighted across all groups were Koinadugu’s mountains, which served economic, aesthetic and community building function. The mountains among other sites positioned Koinadugu as the country’s emerging tourism center as one respondent commented, “*We are one of the tourism centers. The president and ministers usually come here and people come from other countries to see the landscape.*” As a touristic site, young people are not only chanced to interact with thousands of visitors every year, particularly in the holiday season in December and January, but for some it provides income generating opportunities. This is exemplified by the following comments,

SSG: as for me, when you look at the statistics, Koinadugu is said to be within a hole because it is surrounded by hills, during December visitors come to climb the hill.

SSG: we have this hill. God blessed us with it. In December during Christmas there is a lot of population. People come from every part of the world. People really like to climb the hill. People come from overseas, Freetown, Makeni...

For young people the mountains provide validation and a sense of worth to their place, which is often regarded as the most “backward” place in the country. Youth’s narratives reveal their awareness of outsider perspective whether positive or negative,

SSG: Bintimani Mountain is an attraction for tourists, tourists come from abroad to see what is there, they go to measure it and some people go to see to believe because they don’t believe there are nice things here

SSG: we have agriculture, Bintimani and Loma Mountains that is to show that Kabala has good things.

In addition to mountains, Koinadugu’s minerals were popularly viewed as positive although poor resource mismanagement was highlighted in commentaries. Young people largely valued minerals because of its potential for income revenue generation for district’s inhabitants. However, they are well aware of the mismanagement and lack of returns to the district. On describing this natural wealth:

OKA: This land is a blessed land, it has diamond and gold, many investors come here to invest.

SSG: Koinadugu produces minerals, gold, silver in Diang (chiefdom); tourists are attracted to the minerals. Tourists come to manufacture the minerals then they come sell it back to Sierra Leoneans.... sometimes Sierra Leoneans benefit, sometimes we don’t...

Agriculture is an integral part of the Koinadugu identity particularly when speaking in a national context. Blessed with fertile soil, and good weather, the district produces the largest amount of fruits and vegetables sold across the country. The district is also known for livestock production

particularly among the Fula ethnic group. Participants commented that Koinadugu has “*good products, if you want good beef- lots of cattle...cow milk. Come to Kabala, good agricultural products.*”

SSG: Like here so, we have fruits, so many fruits and vegetables- here in Kabala, we are blessed!”

SSB: we are the head of the agricultural activities. If you look around the country, we produce the highest number of things like rice, vegetable.”

Furthermore, young people note that Koinadugu enjoys some form of agricultural tourism if only nationally.

SSB: we have cows here, it’s only here to see cow and humans co-living. We are used to each other. Only here will you see a very large cassava yams-if you witness the agriculture show (in March) you will see all these crops. That’s why many people come from outside, they leave the city for Koinadugu to see things they will talk about when they go back.

Much of young people’s appreciation of Koinadugu’s environmental abundance is linked to their ability to meet the world through tourists. Hence tourism may also be considered a major feature in the Koinadugan identity, particularly with the current minister of tourism being from the district. Young people liked the fact that they are able to interact with “white people” from other countries who come to admire the district’s natural beauty. They prided themselves in treating visitors well and also getting small favors from tourists.

SSB: we have tourist centers that white people can come and see. They make friends with the blacks. They like the children and sometimes give them money. They also adopt children

SSG: Koinadugu, I am happy that we have people coming from other countries, that shows they love Koinadugu...in Koinadugu we are not unfriendly. We take everybody as one. We treat strangers very well.

SSG: The minister of tourism usually bring strangers (visitors) from different countries, he puts on a cultural showcase of the Korankos, Temne, Fula etc

What Young People Do Not like about their Environment and Community

Given my experience and interactions within the community, I expected this question to generate much reflection and discussion. Several environmental issues concerned and affected young people and their communities. Several participants became emotional as they narrate what they describe as their “suffering.” Both boys and girls expressed distressed in their struggles to attain an education and make a life for themselves. At least 4 girls were at the verge of crying as they narrated their struggles. One at a secondary school, and another at FAWE, who had ran away from their marital homes and were trying to make a future for themselves. One who had dropped out of secondary school due to early pregnancy and another at FAWE with 3 children who said the husband didn’t care for her and so she wanted to gain financial independence. Both I and other focus group members provided verbal support. Other participants were very effective in responding to their distressed colleagues, knowing the appropriate consolation words to say to which the distressed responded well to and continued to engage in discussions.

Young people were concerned about many things in their social and physical environment including natural resource management, roads and water quality, availability of electricity, social issues such as education, leadership, employment and health. The below statements encapsulates the crux of young people’s concerns about and within their environment:

OKA: we don’t have basic needs that all humans must have like health, water, and electricity. Like Makeni has 24 hours light, in Kabala the solar light that they brought, some are not working. The road, the township has too much dust so even the food that is being sold in town has dust on them. Only in recent times are we seeing some roadwork. Anywhere where there is development, people will want to come but as long as there is no development in Koinadugu, people are not

thinking of staying...some basic needs, education, infrastructure, good water supply.

FWE: Koinadugu is a nice place but the dust is really disturbing us. In our neighborhood, there is no water, they (government) have come with pump installation (to Kabala) but we don't have it. Koinadugu is a good place to live but there is a lack of facilities. If they fix the roads, it will be good. Give us pump (water), light

SSB: Koinadugu is so beautiful, land of powerful mixtures but the way the district is, it doesn't tell well. The way the roads are, if you are walking, dust will surround all your body.... people walk 3-5 miles to fetch water...for education, for chemistry and physics we don't have a regular teacher, for a teacher who comes and goes is not a teacher.

Natural Resource Mismanagement

Young people were generally discontented with management of the districts abundant natural resources. Many expressed concerns that indigenes' quality of life remains below par as those from other countries and corrupt stakeholders benefit from these resources. Key areas of concern for participants were mining, deforestation and lack of agricultural development.

Mining: the Benefit and Damage Participants highlighted low returns and benefits of the mining wealth to the people of Koinadugu, in addition increasing deforestation and loss of lives due to lack of appropriate equipment and use of human labor in dangerous jobs. Many felt strongly that the district should be more developed given its natural resources:

SSB: we have gold and minerals, I feel that Koinadugu should have been developed but we are always behind, no good road network, KSS only 5% paper qualified teachers, for the sciences we only have one chemistry teacher in the entire school."

Some blame foreign miners for unfair trading who "*fool*" their leaders as the participant below elaborates:

SSB: Sierra Leone has a lot of resources but foreigners come and fool our leaders, take the minerals, their own countries keep developing while Sierra Leone is left behind”

Others as demonstrated in the below statements put the responsibility on local stakeholders to ensure that harm is reduced and even suggesting that capacities be built in-country to process these resources and ensure Koinadugu and Koinadugans benefit from them:

SSB: On my side of the district in Diang chiefdom, they are mining gold. They dig this big hole called «dama» where too many people are dying. I want government to stop it, if someone is coming to mine, they should bring machine, too many people are dying and that is not good for Koinadugu district”

SSB: They are destroying the nice forest...most of the people who are not from Koinadugu district they are cutting the timber and taking it out of the district and they are killing our animals...In the mining areas, in Diang (chiefdom), when they mine, they don't process in Sierra Leone, they process it outside, develop their own place. They don't do anything for Koinadugu; they forget that the minerals came from Koinadugu.

SSG: (Koinadugu has) gold, silver in Diang chiefdom...tourist are attracted to these minerals, tourist come and manufacture the minerals, then they sell it back to Sierra Leonean people...sometimes Sierra Leoneans benefit, sometimes we don't benefit...but we get less because it is mostly outside people who come and manufacture then they take it and go. Some come from Ghana, China, England and South Africa.

In reviewing general literature on the district, it appears that young people's concern may not be shared among adults or at least not to the same degree. While a local district government share young people's concern about lack of financial gain to local people, it does not touch on other topics highlighted by young people such as deforestation and loss of lives.

Mining is not of much headache for now as gold mining is intensively though uneconomically done in one chiefdom, Diang. It is hope that the mining would be controlled by a viable company so as to bring about financial gain to the people and council/government. The fauna are relatively safe with collections of shotguns.

Statistics document

Deforestation: “They are destroying the nice forest” Young people were concerned about the loss of a natural resource, which, as established above, served an important function in their identity of place as “the Land of powerful mixtures”. During focus group discussions participants linked deforestation to mining. While local government literature does not explicitly make this link, the environmental officer in a one-on-one interview recognized deforestation as a major concern stating that the district is having, “*serious issues with logging, (particularly) red wood used to manufacture strong furniture*”. He also reports that the decrease in forest cover and drastic decline in vegetation is resulting in disease outbreak.

Forest covers have been destroyed. And therefore we are seeing disease outbreak (cholera). There is a drastic decline in vegetation as you can see on the mountains. Also we humans are contributing heavily on this, we are burning bushes especially the cattle rearers who want new grass for their cattle and Koinadugu is known for having many cattle.

Across various data sources; youth interviews, local district documents and stakeholder interviews, deforestation appeared as an issue. Deforestation is cited as a major concern in the district’s local government documents linking it to farming and logging practices, wood for domestic use and construction, especially after the war as families and institutions rebuilt destroyed homes, bridges and other community property. Young people demonstrated knowledge on the causes and effects of loss of forest on wild life conservation and soil quality.

SSB: Deforestation is an issue, people just cut down trees without replacing them...also wildfires, people just burn bushes, it destroys some of the important plants we have.

SSB: Deforestation because there is no control towards the unnecessary cutting down of trees in the district can lead to harmful temperatures and also drive away wild animals which contribute in fertilizing the soil and also in mixing the soil.”

Poor Agricultural Management “the bread basket of Sierra Leone.” Agriculture emerged as a significant part of the Koinadugan youth place identity. Young people prided themselves and their place for being the “bread basket of Sierra Leone,” producing the best vegetables and meat in the country. However, they also feel that this sector needs a lot of improvements to continue to thrive, particularly in the areas of production and processing, storage, transportation and marketing. Comments as the one below indicating high produce by farmers but low financial gains were recurrent:

SSB: Government needs to improve the agriculture sector in Koinadugu. They produce but harvesting is an issue because there is no machine to help them. They have to pay people for harvesting, sell and pay school fees.

Agriculture in Koinadugu is still subsistence. However, the perception of the young people illustrates that Koinadugu has a commercial potential that remains untapped. Major limiting factors study participants stated include seedling, tools, storage and transportation facilities for perishable goods. According to interviewees, the lack of good roads and storage equipment leads to high spoilage. The below quotes discern these points:

SSB: Koinadugu doesn't have support, even inside the villages, they don't have good roads to come to town and sell their goods. When they sell them, they spend money to go back. If agriculture doesn't improve, they will not be able to support their children go to school.

SSB: again the agriculture development system...amenities to push agriculture forward is not available like storage, so much of the produce spoils

SSB: We have never had good roads, it affect our vegetables, the farmers, their product to take them to the city or town. Transporting them is difficult and for the farmer, their products waste.

Stakeholders interview confirm these concerns noting that Koinadugu is indeed losing economic opportunities to neighboring country Guinea. The stakeholder interviews

revealed that lack of good roads prevents transportation of goods within and outside the district. Due to time, resources and the scope of this research, I was not able to further investigate the actualization and effectiveness of these centers. The below excerpt showcases a stakeholder perspective:

KCC: We are losing all our resources-agricultural to Guinea at the moment, how do we know this? The indicators are there, when we go to collect local taxes they pay you in Guinea Francs because they do their business in Guinea, they only have Guinean currency. It is our fault because we are not taking roads to them. All our resources go there. If we open this corridor, IFIE- in the raining season it is completely cut off- it will open markets.

In agricultural sector we have tried to set up agricultural business centers to add value to their work. We target this from several angles. Financing- we have established FSA- community financial banks. We have 8 or so at the moment. These give loans to farmers at almost no interests; also there are no collaterals like banks will ask for. Then we create ABCs centers- a place and chance to market their goods. We give assistances in terms of fertilizers, and seedlings but we encourage them to be in groups – We have youth groups in SENBEH and other regions. Our problem is that we are not talking about what we are doing and Kabala is not Koinadugu, we have to think about equitable distribution of the resources.”

Poor Road Networks As already highlighted in narratives above, roads were a major concern for young Koinadugans. Young people spend a significant amount of time on the road going to school, fetching water and generally moving from one place to another. Both in and out of school interviewees commented on the state of roads in Koinadugu accentuating the personal, local and district-wide impact of its unfavorable conditions. The quality of roads has several implications for almost all aspect of livelihood in Koinadugu including access to services, road safety, food security, education, agriculture, and tourism.

Health-wise, lack of good roads in Koinadugu is impacting attaining medical services for the sick, acquiring certain foods and condiments for a balance diets and maternal and infant

mortality. Because Koinadugu lacks certain services such as health specialists for certain health conditions or even health care for certain serious health and medical conditions, patients are referred to more advanced hospitals in Makeni, located 70 miles way from Kabala. According to focus group participants, poor road conditions are leading to deaths either due to the long distance or susceptibilities to road accidents. For them, this is alarming especially for pregnant women and their unborn child:

SOG: They should construct the roads because when they refer people to Freetown for emergency...if the road is not good, it will waste time and cause dead for the person

SSB: the roads are causing accidents they should expand the road

OKA: the road business is bad, because you will find out that the health side is not stable, with bad roads, when a woman is pregnant, to transport her in an ambulance 40-45 miles to come to Kabala is difficulties. You will find out that by the time they reach, the woman has lost her life or even the child has died because of the gallops.

Beyond accessing health services, young people observe that the dusty roads make the town not aesthetically pleasing but more critically leading to sicknesses and increases in deaths.

SSB: I want to talk about this, road tarring Kabala is very dusty, it even reaches your house. To even enter Kabala, some places there is not tarred road, Kabala is like a brown house. The dust causes cold, it gives eye problems, when cars pass, they blow dust and it enters your house.

SSB: the stakeholders (local leadership) have eaten the money. If someone gets sick, spits, and a car raises the dust, everyone will get it. Deaths are becoming too many.

OKA: The dust is really disturbing us, it is not good, the dust gives us dry cough. If somebody has TB, they cough, spit and a car passes by, raises the dust, another person breaths it, they will automatically get that disease. Like during the raining season, everywhere is mud and because the roads are too narrow, they cause accidents.

Both youth and stakeholders highlight inadequate transport infrastructure for food, leading to economic loss and nutritional deficiencies. The district does not only lose produce to neighboring country, Guinea, certain villages within the district reportedly do not have regular access to some basic food condiments as vehicles do not visit their communities often:

OKA: this road network, it is causing shortage of some items in our villages. Some food items we don't get them unless we come to town (Kabala) and then to take those back is expensive, so the business men will sell them at a high price to the people. But they don't have a choice so they have to buy it. Like basic spice to cook, palm oil, salt, Maggi and even soap can be scarce. During the raining season we have rice crisis because we use it all for festivals during the dry season."

SSG: During the raining season, you will find that the trucks that transport goods in Koinadugu get stuck. They can sometimes be stuck for up to 3 days with traders' goods inside. If someone had eggs in the car and the car is stuck for 3 days, they will get spoiled by the time the truck arrives at its destination. That is a big loss for the trader. So they should fix the road for the transport of goods in and out of Koinadugu"

School-going youth described several ways in which poor road conditions affect them. Issues ranged from missing school due to dust-causing illnesses, having the added chore of laundering their uniforms every day because of dust, being forced to make financial compromises between transportation and fee payments for those coming from far villages:

SSG: I feel that they should make good roads, when we take bikes to come to school, by the time we arrive, our uniforms are all dusty and some of us only have one socks"

SSB: the road is the main important thing, if there are no roads, you will not grow....for me, I wash my clothes 5 times and still it doesn't get clean. When I wash them before it gets dry, it is dirty again. In fact it is spreading diseases"

SSG: I feel that they should make the roads, because the dust is really disturbing us, you know that when there is dust it causes sickness. It is from the dust that we get dry cough"

Many students come from far away villages to attend high school in Kabala town report extreme hardship when it comes to transportation. Being that most families rely on selling farm produce to help them with school finances, they also have intimate experiences on the impact of roads on agriculture and its effect on education. Because of bad road conditions, transport tends to be high and so sellers spend a hefty amount from their sales to make their way back home, leaving little to send their children to school. Some students in their quest to attain education walk many miles on foot to Kabala town to attend high school, as most villages still don't have any:

SSB: In Koinadugu, the big issues is roads, we lack good roads, for me, I come from Niang chiefdom which is far from Kabala, 100 and something miles. My parents are poor farmers so they cannot afford both transport and school fees, so sometimes I have to walk by foot to come back to Kabala for school and that takes me 3 days. Because I want to learn and there are no other options, I bear it (and) I walk by foot.

SSB: the road network is really causing us a lot of stress. For me, where I come from is 18 miles (from Kabala) but when it is rainy season neither cars or motorbikes can come through, so we have to walk. (During that time) if you take a motorbike, you will have to spend Le 40,000 or Le 50,000. We are really struggling.

SSB: There is no support for Koinadugu, even residents in the village do not have good roads to come to town (Kabala) and sell their goods. And when they sell spend a lot of money on transport to go back. If agriculture does not move forward, they are not able to support their children go to school”

SSB: In Koinadugu we are good in agriculture but we lack transportation inside the villages. They produce a lot of things like rice, cassava, potatoes and pepper but transport is hard. The truck (that transports goods) only comes once a week and it is not able to carry produce from all farmers. Even for us the school children, when we go for holidays, we can wait for a vehicle for up to 3 weeks.”

Water is Life (Water na Life). Concerns associated with water quality and accessibility was the second prominent concern among young people. While distance to fetch water was discussed, pollution and contamination leading to health issues took center stage. Through their

experiences they were also able to make a clear connection between poor qualities of roads leading to poor water quality as illustrated in this narrative:

SSG: The water well is in the ground, so when the place is dusty, a car passes by, it raises dusty, which dirties the water. When you drink it, you get cholera, when you get cholera you can't do anything, or come to school. They should help us make the road and also improve the water. Most fo the water is in the ground, only a few pumps and some of the water is not covered. The whole night, cars are passing, dust is entering the water well, in the morning people come and carry the water. That is how you get cholera and you are not able to do anything”

Data revealed that water accessibility was still problematic for a fair number of young people in the district. While a good numbers of students had wells in or near their place of residence, others walk long distances to get water. For those fetching water from far distances in the morning, long lines at wells and pumps sometimes results in tardiness to school:

SSG: the water issue, water is life. Water is really affecting us in Koinadugu. Some people who come from Yogomaia (neighborhood) are really struggling; some of them wake up at 6am to get water. When they delay, they come late to school and the teachers don't want to hear any excuses, they will punish you. Some areas the water is not pure. We get water from the stream, which is exposed, no cover. I want them (government) to give us tap water, let them fix the pipes especially as March is soon here”

In addition to the distance, young people also highlight the health dangers sometimes associated with water sources of whose quality they are not certain. Students express a lack of water education by community members for those coming from elsewhere. For those who do not have wells or pumps in their area, they are not always informed or know the quality of where they are getting water from, leading to illnesses. To address some of the water issues, the government has begun installing street pumps. However, young people have a contention with the process as some note that several months have passed since the installation of the pump yet there is no water. Others highlighted the lack

of community involvement in the process, commenting that they will not drink from the pump because the water source chosen by the Chinese company sent by the government is not clean:

SSG: We wash our clothes in Fula town, and some of the water is not pure. They (residents in Fula town) don't drink it but they don't tell us. Most of the time we will get cholera in the dry season but the water issue is tough. We travel 1 mile to go get water. We see that they have come installed pipes but we are not sure that the water is clean, so even if the tap works, we will not drink the water because it will cause cholera and even death. The Chinese who government sent went and installed the pipe in Musaya, where we go for outings and do things. So the water is dirty.

Participants further described experiences of heightened difficulties of accessing clean water during dry seasons when the wells dry up and water worms become present in large quantities causing diseases such as cholera, diarrhea and dysentery. Interviewees also highlighted human activities such as laundry and natural occurrences that contribute to water contamination:

SSG: the water supply is causes diseases like cholera, diarrhea, dysentery. People are using these rivers and streams to drink but having pipe water will help people drink good water. The river impurities are coming from people because of activities such as laundry, refuse and some natural things like dead animals.

Lack of Electricity Infrastructure Electricity, good roads and portable water are defining elements of development for young people in Koinadugu. Results show that young people regard electricity as critical for health, education, economic activities such as tourism, and safety. They also note the dangers and unsustainable forms of lighting such as Chinese battery operated torch lights which require regular purchase and candles, which has led to house fires in the past.

SSG: the lack of electricity is really affecting me greatly, some of us don't have money to buy generator for light. We are using Chinese light and some of them are not good. You use them one, two days and it goes bad. If you decided to use candle, you still have a problem, either your house catches fire and people even die in the fire accident, then the solar lights they have brought, we have become used to them.... before we were able to walk in the dark but now we are not able

to anymore. Now some of the solar lights are getting bad and we are used to walking in the light, they should bring us NPSE light even if for small money, we will pay. It would be good to have solar lamps at our homes to avoid candle accidents”

They are also concern about how a lack of such amenities may affect tourism given potential visitors reside in countries with such services

OKA: like the tourists, if they want to come do anything in this district, they are used to light, so let us help the town with lights and water”

They acknowledge the increased sense of safety afforded by the new street solar lights

FWE: we need light, these solar lights have really helped, if it wasn't here, stealing would not have reduced. The night carpenters (thieves), some will trace the person but now, every can see, so it's really good.”

While noting how lack of electricity leading to poor educational performances because students are not able to study:

SSG: Koinadugu, Kabala only has a few solar lamps, the town itself is still dark...people are afraid to walk at night. For us the school children we don't have light to study, we are failing exams, we beg the government to give us light so that we can study and do well in the public exams”

SSG: light issues is affecting us the students, when we go to school, they tell us to read at home. The Chinese lights can make you blind, the candle can roast your house. The street lights, some school children sit and read under them but the dust affects them, again siting outside you catch fresh cold. You can't study in the afternoon but in the morning you are in school and afternoon you help your parents at home, so nighttime is the only time for us to study. We really need this NPSE light, please.”

Young people also linked electricity to food preservation and health. Noting the importance for food storage:

FWE: if they bring electricity, people will not sleep in the dark, and the food as well, they will be taken care of and put in a good place. There are some things that if it touches you, it will cause skin disease but if light is there you can avoid them”

Community Social Issues Across focus groups young people shared similar concerns regarding social issues in their community. Main concerns included poor quality of education, local leadership, and health care and high employment rates. Generally, both school going and out of school youth, some who are mothers and fathers expressed concern about the quality of education in the district citing lack of qualified teachers, the monetization of schooling, exams, forced extra classes, teacher conduct, changing national policies and increased social activities in the township as factors contributing to high dropout rates, unemployment and teenage pregnancy. As already portrayed, provision of quality health care is inadequate, here young people elaborate on the need for better-trained health care professionals. While acknowledging that the new free health care policy is a move in the right direction, they complain that implementation is being stifled by corruption. Below young people's perspectives on each major issue is discoursed in depth.

Education

Lack of Trained and Qualified Teachers Data showed lack of trained and qualified teachers was a major concern for participants. Students noted that several of their teachers did not have teacher qualifications, with some subjects being taught by individuals who themselves failed the subject at the national exams.

SSG: The quality of teachers is too poor. Many of them failed WASSCE but they will come and tell students they are foolish (lacking understanding of subject being taught). Some teachers like to cane, they prefer to threaten the students. Even when they write on the black board, you are not able to read. Sometimes even they cannot read what they wrote on the board

Students complained that many teachers, not distinguishing whether qualified or not, do not teach consistently or follow the curriculum. Several students across various schools noted that

some teachers provided little explanations rather copying notes on the morning and expecting students to process content on their own. This is problematic for all students but particularly those preparing national exams such as BECE, and WASSCE.

SOG: the educational background in Koinadugu, is poor to me, I know my friend says it's good but for me it is poor because as a WASCCE student, some days we come and teachers don't teach, they don't consider us. Sometimes we can be here all day, idling then go back home without them teaching us. And they put these social sports activity above learning. They spend almost the whole term just for that. Like for me in SS4, my notes are not even up to 10 pages since we started school. It is all this that causes bad results.

Tensions begin to arise as students are sometimes blamed for not being intelligent however given frequent students' mobility to other parts of the country particularly the city, they are aware that the issue doesn't solely lie on them as they compare notes with their counterparts:

OKA: in the educational system, we lack qualified teachers; some of these teachers are not able to express themselves in letter writing. If you leave here and go to Freetown to learn, you will have a very difficult time to learn there"

Poor Teacher Conduct and Motivation. Young people describe teacher conduct and motivation as major factors influencing the quality of education they are receiving. In the case of teacher conduct, age of the teacher seemed a contributing factor. Both school going and non-school goers noted teachers' sexual pursuit of young girls as something that is rampant in the system. And this is even causing some parents and even certain ethnic groups to remove children or not send them to school, opting for marriage as the fear family disgrace if their daughters got pregnant out of wedlock. Below the issue of gender and education is discussed further:

FWE: Teachers have impregnated many school children that is why we the Fula people pull us out of school because they don't want disgrace rather than get pregnant in the street better for let there be respect."

Poor and inconsistent teacher pay is described as a leading factor in such teacher misconduct. There was appeal across all groups for the government to pay teachers on time and increase their salaries so that qualified teachers would stay in the education sector instead of being through into NGO works that tend to pay higher. Again this has implications for girls.

SSG: we don't have enough qualified teachers except community teachers. The qualified teachers don't want to teach because government is not paying them enough. Teachers prefer to go to advance places. Because of that many girls have dropped out, early marriage, teenage pregnancy”

These negative experiences do not only have an immediate effect on learning but as young people note is deterring people from the teaching profession in Koinadugu:

OKA: In the educational system, the reason why we are not doing well in national exams is because of the teachers. If you don't prepare well for exams you will not be able to do well. If somebody prepares you well, you will do well. **You see that anyone who sits for the WASSCE and goes to the university, they don't want to teach, they are looking into other type of work** (bolded by author). And this teaching is the most important one, even if not for us but for our younger ones.

This finding is corroborated by researcher field observations and notes. On a regular education program, the district director of education lamented about the difficulty of getting qualified teachers, even those who are from the region. On this particularly Sunday he touched on the quality of education and issues facing the teaching profession.

DDE: Requirements for TC (teaching certificate are BECE and HTC secondary is WASSCE. People taking the BECE exams are expected to be able to read and write so that the TC should only buttress the knowledge. – However students taking BECE cannot even read a letter. There are only 50-university graduate in the school district as teachers. Most of the graduates are in Bo, Makeni and Freetown.

The DDE continued to narrate his encounter with a young Koinadugan university graduate and his attempt to persuade him to come teach in his hometown, to which he responded:

‘Asta fulai (God Forbid), Weti a di cam do na Kabala (what am I coming to do in Kabala)?’ there are complains of poor teachers but the district is forced to.

Struggling Science Education While the issue of teacher quantity and quality is a challenge across class levels and subjects, high school science students are most affected. Many science students described poor quality of learning due to lack of teachers as well as teaching and learning materials. Participants explained that lack of well-equipped labs, practical and qualified teachers affects student performances at the national exams. Data show a discriminating impact on girls, who are sent into early marriages when they do not pass these exams:

SSG: We in the science stream are really straining, we don’t have a lab and because of that we are not doing well in external exams. We don’t do practical work, we don’t even know the instruments or chemicals, so when we go to WASSCE, we are not able to do any better. Again when you don’t pass, your family will send you to marriage because they are not able spend a lot of money and then you fail again. So you will give birth to many children and this is what is making Koinadugu not to development.

SSB: We the school children, we need science laboratory and the textbooks. With textbooks, where the teacher ends, we will be able to take from there to read and research. We just call ourselves science students but that is not science, we don’t have textbook, laboratory and practical.

SSB: We are lack of teachers in the sciences- biology, chemistry, and physics. We have qualified teachers but they prefer to go to other districts, they say Koinadugu is too difficult to work here, that it is full of selfishness. We the students don’t have labs, how can we do experiments if we don’t have labs.

Monetization of Exams/Test and drop out both young people and stakeholders report that illegal monetization of various aspect of schooling is quite rampant in Koinadugu and has many consequences for both boys and girls. Teachers are said to charge fees for exams, tests, homework and making extra classes outside of school hours mandatory where students must also pay. The impacts are multiple fold including: student demotivation in actually studying for content comprehension when they are able to pay their way through exams and test; a breakdown

in school dynamics where students begin to lose respect for teachers who engage in sexual activities with girls as pay, increases teenage pregnancy and single mothers as girls are abandoned by sexual partners; increase dropout rates and rise in Okada riders. The below narratives depicts students' experiences:

SSG: the teachers are pressing us for money on the side, it's not even 500 Leones, that are asking for 1000 or 2000- even if you are very intelligent, you study all night until the morning, when you come the teacher will say what you wrote is for nothing as long as you don't give money. So I want let authorities impress on the teachers to teach us. If we don't pay school fees we will not be able to attend, so if we have paid let us get educated. They are pressing us to pay for assignments and exams. If you don't pay you will not pass...we don't come to warm the benches for nothing and go with nothing in our head.

PAGE 80: The education in KSS is poor especially for the ones who have sense. You can write until... but if you don't bring money it's a problem. We have some people who are intelligent but due to this money issue some of them don't sit (for exams) but you see them in SS4 (next level) next year. We want them to reduce this money business; it is making intelligent students not to study."

On the influence of such school bribery contributing to already high teenage pregnancy rates:

SSB: Teachers are taking too much advantage of students. They are asking school children for money, this forces girl to have boyfriends leading to teenage pregnancy.

SSB: Again the drop out is too much in Koinadugu; again you will find that this money business is too much. You will see some are engaging in raray (prostitution) for money. Once they start this raray (prostitution) business they will get pregnant and their education is done.

SSB: Teachers are not qualified and principals don't check on them. Inspectors are here sitting down without doing their work, some students are studying but they can't pass, teachers always say "woside dem tie cow, na dey yi de eat' (Siaka Stevens).

Boys are forced to join the motorcycle taxi business to afford these regular monetary demands:

OKA: in education, we are suffering, we are paying money to teachers, if you take WASSCE and you don't pass, you join Okada, steal, sell fuel, for girls, it

leads to prostitution and that is not good for Koinadugu, and the teachers they are collecting bribe from the students, it is making them not to study.

OKA: Again the education is a problem, they say education is the key to success but it will only be if we improve it. What is disturbing us in Koinadugu here, is the money business, it is spoiling our system. Some students don't study but do pass exams and it is very disheartening for some people to study hard and you sit exams with someone who did not and he gets a better grade. That weakens people who want to study, they will say 'if it is money then let all of us bring the money' it is even contributing to some of our brothers leaving school to join Okada and we know that Okada is for the moment but education is for life, until you die before the benefit of education stops and even when you die, it will not stop because when you are alive you will be able to teach some people so that when you die the education will continue.

Social Activities Young people were also self-critical with regards to the district's notable poor educational performances. While they expected the government and stakeholders to create a good learning environment with sufficient resources, they also blamed students for not being focused. They attributed increasing distractions to social activities particularly during nighttime. Aramack, one of the two clubs in town, seems to be a major distraction for students:

SOG: We the students, when they say an artist is at Aramack, if you see the population but when they say time to study, people do not study, they do not cooperate. So that all is bad. Koinadugu is bad in education; we are not even competing within ourselves.

OKA: Socially, this Aramack, which is the social center, people go there to enjoy but we take social issues more important than education. Like in one whole week, a child will go to club 3 times; girls go to clubs anytime they want."

OKA: the social activities affect youths, especially the girl child, it leads to teenage pregnancy, abortions, and we are facing increased abortions

Stakeholder interviews also reveal this growing trend and changing priorities within school going pupils. The below interviewee describes young people's prioritization of other material things associated with social functions over education materials:

DDE: the problem is not with the teachers it is with the children. It is their responsibility to buy the textbooks. Our education policy, the assistance stops at BECE level. At the primary level we supply teaching and learning materials but it's inadequate. The supply we are receiving is enough for the teachers- it is the responsibility of the children to have their own textbook. You will see a girl child in Kabala school- the bag they are carrying, can purchase more than 5 textbooks, the shoes they are wearing can purchase about 2 textbooks, the phone- we have this soft touch (smart phones) (600,000), you go to the school, you see hundred, I tell them instead of asking their boyfriend for phone, ask for book. But they won't. They will ask for expensive fashionable things. This phone can procure, fees of 10 students, so many textbooks. Even the manner in which they sew their uniform, they put it above the knee and use expensive material. When they have functions in their school- a hair called Brazilian worth \$300 (1 million), you see over hundreds of school going children they have it plaited. **How did you manage the 1 million to get the hair, use that same method to buy textbook. Then there is lack of competition,** formerly schools used to compete, debating society, where in students came with ...now they don't know the answer, they don't even admire their friends that are doing well. They don't read, they don't go to library. --- During our time there was competition but now they lack the spirit of competition, they are only interested in bribing teachers when they fail.

What happened? Two factors, the coming of this 6 3 3 4, mass promotion. So there is no repetition. When you get to form 3 if you fail you go go TECH VOC, and some move to SS1 and those who fail WASSCE, come back to teach because there are no teachers-garbage in- garbage out"

Old and New education Policy According to young people, two significant education policies are negatively impacting their ability to further their studies. The first relates to the free education policy, which supports the girl child through secondary school. Participants explained that the absence of financial support once girls get to high school is leading to an increase in drop outs as parents can't afford the expenses. A FAWE student describes this impact:

For JSS, 1, 2, 3 governments paid for fees for the girl child, 2 terms and 1 term for the boys, parents hoped for that to continue. Now they have stopped it and many have dropped out. Also this new policy is making many to drop out even though they have paid 300,000 Leones. The schools don't want to give the students' money back. Some of the SS4 kids have dropped out and want to go marry now"

The other change in the schooling system is the addition of an extra year to the high school and call for an older policy, which stated students should not be admitted to the next level if they failed the national exams. While the national exams rule is not so recent, implementation had not been consistent and the sudden hard and fast action to follow the law is leading to much distress. The sudden implementation of this policy is resulting to drop outs. Below I present quotes from focus groups as well as field notes of conversations with a local teacher:

SSG: This SS4 business, I am not happy about it. Now parents did not prepare for SS4, so they are not able to pay for it. I was prepared for SS3.

SSG: when (I) asked about the case of students who did make the 35 (passing score on national exams), he said most of them are already in the street, some petty trading, others had gone to the village and some will probably be sent to marriage. He said there was a lot of crying when the list of approved names were sent from Freetown.

I should note that young people did not disapproved of the rule itself. They simply wanted administrative consistency in implementing policies to avoid the chaos that is now being experienced by families and their students.

Girl Child, Health and Education Young people in Koinadugu of all gender are deeply concerned about the status and challenges the girl child faces. Teenage pregnancy and early marriage was a concern for young people both as a health issues and as the result of the poor educational system. They blamed both parents who send their girls into marriages without their consent either because of poverty, or limited perceived options, and young people for seeking quick pleasures in the night scene rather than focusing on school. Young people comment that:

SSG: Some of our parents are not aware that girl child education is important, some of us girls want to learn but they are not aware and they will quickly marry us and that is not good for our community

OKA: Poverty sometimes leads people in this community to send their children to marry. If you don't have money to send your child to school, you marry them off.

For the boy child, you send them to the farm. For some girls, if the parents don't give them what they want, they jump in the street

DDE: For most of the girl child who are coming from poor homes, these Okada boys can easily influence them because you are sure of having Le 1000 or Le2000 a day. And because you are not mature, you don't know about preventive measures, you start having sex by the time you know it, you are pregnant and the boy don't want to take responsibility

SSG: the health issues, young girls with pregnancy is too much, and early marriage as well. Some women force their young girls to marry even though they don't want to, so that sometime leads to HIV or they die quick. Some of the girls get fistula problems because they have not reached the age to give birth.

Participants described many challenges girls face in attaining an education including; lack of parental support, financial resources to financial harassment from teachers at school:

SSG: in education, we the girl child are really falling, some of us don't have parents, some do but they are not caring. Most of us strike for yourself for education. We are striving to educate yourself, we don't want to be a drop out, tomorrow when we can achieve something. I tell you some men now, if you don't learn, I swear to God, even if you are together tomorrow he will not accept you if you are not focus on education. I want the government to support the girl child; so that they can be educated...I want them to be strict on the teachers, so that we can be educated. We did not come to school to warm the benches for nothing and go with nothing in our head. We the girl child are really straining, they say there is prevention (pregnancy), most of us are taking preventive measures so that we can achieve what we have plan for our future but now the teachers are hammering us down.

Another described her experience on the verge of crying:

SSG" I have spoken what is inside me, what is painning me right now I am the one who pays my fees, I pay house rent for myself, and so if I come to school, I want to learn. I don't want teachers to keep disturbing me to much with this assignment (monetization) business. I have a mother and father but my father doesn't care for me. He said because I refuse to marry the man he gave me to, he will not help me. But I think to myself, I pray to God that tomorrow I should be somebody, so that my enemies will not look down on me, my father will be ashamed. I am striving, I am going everywhere so that I can be strong myself but the teachers who are supposed to teach don't.

The issues of food security, which emerged in a number of student's narrative of their daily-lived experiences, reappear in discussions regarding strains for the girl child in schools. Participants described how the lack of lunch leads some girls to seek money in avenues that leads to pregnancy, particularly when they see colleagues who are able to afford food during lunch hours.

SSG: we the girl child, when we see our friends buying lunch and our mother's don't have money to give us, it leads one to go find money in ways you should not be using to get money. Let the government help us, the girl children. Even if they pay our fees, our mothers can take care of our lunch. Our mothers are not able to buy us uniform, pay school fees and provide us lunch; this leads the girl child to get pregnant.

Poor learning environment of concern to young people was also the physical space where learning took place. Largely, young people are concerned about crowdedness as some of their classrooms hold over 90 students. This does not make for a conducive learning space where writing space is tight and noise levels are high.

SSB: we have poor school buildings, not enough for us, sometimes, 4, 3 people in one chair (bench), with this, they won't be able to pay attention because of noise"

SSG: the classroom environment right now is not good because we are overpopulated.

SSB: we are 80 inside one class, for the long bench is 3, some class are high, that makes some students not to be able to write but the principal is trying to build more classrooms. For the senior side, some class are 80, some 90, the junior side are more than this number.

Lack of University or Vocational Institutions Over the course of my time within the community the desire for a university became quite evident among both young people and adults. Two things probably account for this, 1) the in-depth understanding of their environment, what can and should be improved and their believe and zeal to improve their place and 2) continuous exposure to both Koinadugans and visitors like myself, tourists and the Italian

doctors who have post-secondary degrees. As a woman, I received much praise from both western education and non-western educated community members. Most parents have commented the founder of the NGO I work with and myself, that they did like their sons and daughters to be doctors like us. Young people see the lack of a university nearby as a hindrance to fulfilling some of their dreams:

SSG: Some girls want to learn, but no materials, no colleges and they come from poor home. Some people learn but they can't further their education”

SSB: Makeni has a college, Kabala here, there is no college, we are straining. We are wasting money to go to Freetown and Makeni.”

Poor Local Leadership While participants praised individual leaders such as the Minister of tourism and culture, they are largely dissatisfied with the local leadership. They believe certain developments have not occurred in their environment because of poor and corrupt leadership. Again they often look to the nearest city of Makeni as a comparative for what their town and district could be. Many young people feel that the leaders are not invested in the people citing situations where they fend for themselves and their families such as sending their children abroad to better schools while doing little to improve local schools:

SSB: Koinadugu in terms of development is down, if you go to Makeni, you will admire them, for us it is only in the last two years that we are seeing street light and pumps. The government looks down on Koinadugu. The big ones (leaders) are seeing how the town is but they do not say anything, so me I don't know what their responsibility is. Really our parents are trying their level best because they say, “education is the key to success.

SSB: This Kabala dust, the leaders, when money is sent they eat the money. We are the ones suffering because they have their big cars; they have their bikes, so we are the ones suffering.

OKA: To say Koinadugu is last, I blame the big ones (leaders), they are sending their own child outside, which is making them not to fix the schools. And you

know that this world now, education is the key to life. They say Koinadugu is behind, it's the people that make it stay behind”

High Youth Unemployment Rates Employment or income generation opportunities were an issue that ran implicitly and explicitly throughout interviews as young people discussed some of the hardship faced by their colleagues and parents. The concerns were both around the lack of job availabilities and Koinadugans loosing employment to non-Koinadugans. According to young people the district needs more jobs and indigenes need to be educated so that they can take up job opportunities:

SSG: The government should help our brothers with jobs. Makeni, the young people have jobs. Koinadugu our brothers rely on Okada, after Okada, they will be causing trouble to their parents. If they have jobs, it will make the country to move forward”.

SSB: “Many workers are not from Koinadugu so they do bad things to us”

FWE: the students really need help to study ...education is important because when employment comes, they give it to people from other district but if Koinadugu people get educated they will be able to do the work.

Free Health Care and Increasing Qualified Health Professionals Health is a topic that was cross cutting with almost all other environmental concerns. In addition to before mentioned health related concerns relating to poor road conditions, teenage pregnancy, and portable water availability, participants expressed concerns about inadequate health care facilities, national free health care program implementation and availability of qualified health professionals.

They emphasized the lack of medical facilities, specialists and qualified doctors and nurses leading to the demise of patients:

SSB: The social amenities we are lacking....the health facilities, most of them has no qualified doctors and nurses leading to many deaths.”

SSB: The medical facilities are poor they are causing deaths. We don't have good instruments in the hospitals. We don't have specialized doctors, like to say this is a specialist for stomach, eye. So when you have a wound (cut), the doctor who doesn't know how to dress wound, will come and dress it"

SSB: On the medical side, some disease when it attacks you, you have to go to Makeni or Freetown. Even to do x-ray, you must go to Makeni, the machine is available but no person to operate it.

Interviewees stated that although the free health care program is good and needed, health care professionals fail to implement it by the book noting pregnant women are being asked to pay fees for services that should be free while medicines are being embezzled:

FWE: Inside Koinadugu there is only one government hospital. They say free medical for pregnant women and under 5 but I don't think that is happening. If you are sick and you don't have money, you will die. They do not treat you when you have no money

SSB: They there is health care for pregnant women but not. If you go for blood, unless you buy. To give birth, they will talk rudely to the pregnant women, they do not help them. It is this that causes women and children to die. Sometimes there is no blood, the health care policy is good but the disadvantages are many.

SSG: Some of the nurses in the villages, they are not qualified; they are embezzling the medicine that government sends. When sick people are dying because there is no medicine.

Research Aim Two: Future Orientation- Personal and Community

Both national and local discourse in Sierra Leone is colonized by hopes; expectations, action and development plan to improve the country and people's livelihood. This research set out to not only explore young people's perceptions of their place but also how they influenced their future visions and orientation of community and self.

Overall this study found that young people have optimistic views of the future. Generally they believe things will improve for their community and that they will attain the level of success

they hope for themselves with hard work and support from the government. Young people showed a stronger sense of optimism and certainty for their personal than community future. This in part is due to an external loci of control when it comes to the community and internal, as it relates to their personal futures. They demonstrated a high level of self-efficacy and sense of place. The subsequent section presents data on young people's views of their personal and community future. I categorize responders as optimistic, pessimistic and conditional optimistic for those who believed things would improve if certain things were put in place.

Community Futures

Young people had varied views of the district's future. While some were more optimistic (asset view) given recent developments and efforts by the government and individual Koinadugans, others were more critical, in large due to limited trust in both leaders and community members to make choices and decisions that will engender substantial change. A smaller number held more pessimistic (deficit view) views given personal experiences and observations of deficits within the district.

Asset View (Optimistic orientation) Young Koinadugans' experiences of recent developments in infrastructure such as roads, installation of water pumps and solar street lamps and improvements in attitudes and performance in the education sector gives them confidence that things are improving and will continue to do. Other factors contributing to this sense of optimism included positive leadership and community engagement from Koinadugans in parliament and diasporans who are returning to their district with various community development initiatives. Additionally, historical place knowledge either from parents, older adults or personal experience of how things have improved in the environment gave participants

hope for the future. The below narratives highlight major factors influence young Koinadugans future positive orientation.

Then and Now: Infrastructural and Attitudinal Changes History, memory and personal experience were significant components of young people's future orientation formation. Study participants described both recent changes they have personally experienced in the district as well as their parents experiences of progressive change. Participants talk about the presence of streetlight, which year was not available a year prior.

OKA: the way I see, Koinadugu will change and it has begun to change. Before we did not have light but now we have seen streetlights, before we did not have water but now they are installing street pump and the now they are fixing the roads. Now we have many secondary schools, before we did not have that. Before we did not have many qualified teachers but now it has improved. Before Koinadugu was not doing well in national exams but now it has improved...all that are changes.

In addition to personal experience of changes, older community members serve as historians of changes that have occurred over the years. For example participants narrated stories from their parents who did not have nearby schools in their youth and had to travel far for education:

SSB: I believe no situation is permanent, inside Koinadugu we are talking about schools, roads before we did not have any of these things. Before people will leave Koinadugu to go to school in Kono, again people here used to go to school bare footed, they did not have shoes. But through improvement, we are going up small.

Furthermore, young people observed changing parental attitudes in favor of sending their daughters to school as a sign of progress.

SSG: In 5 years I feel that Koinadugu would have improved, from the time we were in primary school is different from now. Before our parents were not aware, once a child started developing breast they have sent her to marriage but now they are aware that education is important, now as the child is weaned off breast milk, they send her to school.

All these observations make a large majority of study participants optimistic about the future:

SSG: the way I am seeing, they (government) will develop it (Koinadugu) because last year we did not have light but they have brought light for us. Like the people who are parliament, they are trying in their duty, like the minister of tourism and culture”

Positive Leaders and Leadership Local leadership, according to young people, seemed to be a key ingredient in improving the district’s future. Some participants believe things will change because leaders are working together. Again, the Minister of Culture and Tourism (MOTC) was reference by multiple youth for his service to the district. Others are optimistic not in the current leaders but in their own ability as future leaders to learn from their “fathers” and do better for the district.

SSG: Koinadugu is improving small small, we have people who are doing work small small like the minister of tourism and culture. We have leaders in Freetown (parliament); they are joining forces to have one-word (togetherness). The road business we are seeing small progress, like from Bafodia to Kabala, the road is now good.

SSB: the way I see it, Koinadugu will be good in the future because we have good leaders like Momoh Konte, Abangba (MOTC), and Mr. Mara. Momoh Konte has provided bikes to the youth, the Minister of tourism is trying very much. So I think that if only the leaders put hands together, the future of Koinadugu will be good.

FWE: I feel fine about Koinadugu because the stakeholders are helping to take Koinadugu forward. Right now they are trying to bring college to Koinadugu, they are trying to help the youth.

Other young people are confident that with the lessons of the past, they as the younger generation will do better, implementing their own ideas with regards to developing the district:

SSB: I belief Koinadugu district will make it up in terms of development because we the younger ones are now learning about the bad effect of this district although the leaders are not in line to develop the community but we the younger ones will not take the foot step of the leaders. We will come up with our own idea towards development of our district but we will appeal to the leaders even they are not

putting us in that development but let them help us in our educational endeavor so that we will come up with our own idea of developing our community.

SSB: Koinadugu will develop because the generation that are growing, I believe that there will be a change because we may not be like our fathers. We all have life and a right to live, then the government has promised to help in the medical facilitated, we need to be as one and stop the following, corruption, tribalism, and put up oneness. If only these bad things will stop, Koinadugu will be developed as any other province.

Critical View (If-Then): Conditional Optimism

While some interviewees were confident in a better future, others were more tentative, asserting that the future will be better if leadership, job opportunities and social amenities including education, health care, water, roads and electricity are improved. They acknowledged the progress that is being made so far but feel the work is still to be completed:

SSB: If all the needs of the people are fulfilled I believe that Koinadugu district will be bright in the future. Think presently about the road network is at work, there are street lights but not personal electricity. The government hospital is improving than before next is the education which is the biggest problem in Koinadugu but as we have a promise from our H.E Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, father of the nation and other stakeholders to build not only a college but a university. With all this promise, I believe Koinadugu will grow in the future.

Some were still concerned about the lack of employment and opportunities for young people even for those who attain a higher level of formal education:

SSG: the country as a whole, we lack of employment. Koinadugu, employment is too low. Our brothers have taken WASSCE but have no money to go to the university. Most of our brothers have joined Okada bike riding, while our sisters have joined in going to ARAMACK club and prostitution. With this, I doubt how my own future will be because most of these people I am talking about, we come from the same background, same families. If they are not able to afford to go to college, I doubt for ourselves, I think we will all be dropouts, marry quick, have many kids...we need jobs.

SSG: As we all know, some people go to college when they come back they have no job. You come and sit on a long bench, waiting.... that is why you get old,

how will you sponsor your family? We want job opportunities, some people have achieved education but there are no jobs.

Education and High Drop Outs This study revealed that young people believe the district's future is in the hands of the youth and that education plays a central role in preparing them for that role. Presently they are concerned about the lack of higher learning institution, i.e. a university as well as new and old education policies which they say is contributing to high drop outs rates. Young people are concern about two policies in particular, one regarding government support provided to the girl child which stops once they graduate from secondary school and the other, recent enforcement of the no promotion for students who do not pass the national exams. Students comment that the enforcement of this law years after it was instituted is leading and will lead to high number of dropouts. Although they believe it is a good policy, they feel alternative solutions should be developed for those without pass marks instead of having them stay in the same class as younger students. Because of the importance of education for development, they believe this increase in dropouts will affect the district's future.

SSG: if government helps us...we don't have a university even college...it is only one college here but I don't call that a college, I call it "behind yard college"...I want them to bring college, university for that matter. Because some of us, we want to further our education but if we don't have someone in Freetown, and Makeni where the colleges are now, we will not be able to go." Because we see that if we go there, we will strain, if there is a college here, we will be able to manage..."

SSG: as for me, I see our future as dropouts because the Minister of Education is saying that those who took BECE (a few years back) will not take the WASSCE this year. If you think about that, some people were probably sick; others have different different reasons why they failed the exams (BECE). Now if you say they should not sit WASSCE many will leave school.... dropouts will increase, so our future is very bad.

SSG: This SS4 business is good but it's not good, like for the girl child...this has discouraged many of them. It is good for boys but for the girls time will beat you.

Many girls are ashamed because of that, to return from SS4 and come and sit with your small one. There will be no respect, the law is good but it is worry many of our friends. They should look for a solution for our elder (students) many have dropped out.

Local Leadership In large, young people believe that the district leaders direct the future. Though they are confident in their ability as future leaders, as demonstrated above, they comment that current leaders need to pave the way and “do the work as they are supposed to.” In that regard, they feel the district will develop if they “have good leaders, who are honest, good leaders who feel that they should fix Koinadugu for their children’s future.” Overall it can be extracted that their confidence in local leadership is low except for a few individuals such as the MOTC. This is evident in their frustration regarding the implementation of education policies:

SSB: if we have good leaders, who are honest, good leaders who feel that, they should fix Koinadugu for their children’s future. I feel that it will improve if the leaders are honest. If not, we will never prosper, we will always be behind.

SSG: I want the leaders to be constant in their decisions, like if they had wanted to impose this (education) law which states that you have to pass the BECE to go to SS1, they accepted some who failed. If they don’t want drop outs, they should be strict on the law. Now they are asking people to go back, it means their decision is not constant.

SSG: right now we are school children, so our leaders have to help development the community but if they don’t develop it, I don’t think we will be able to develop it when we are done with school. ...If they leaders don’t develop it many of us will drop out. I feel that many of us will be dropouts.

The future is in the people’s hands many young people believe that the district’s future depends on its inhabitants and how they choose to develop it. They believe if the community comes together positive change will be created:

SSB: the future of the community lies in our hands, the students, teachers, parents, and elders. If it will be good, it is us. If we come together, it will be good. The elders should help the ones who need help.

However they also feel that the leadership is not transparent and that effective change can only occur if destructive attitudes and behaviors are changed:

SSB: the development of the community depends on the people living in the communities. I believe if we change our attitudes and speak with one voice then we will make improvements. The leaders are not transparent when government spends money the stakeholders eat the money. If we don't have good teachers, health centers then the future will not be different but if we see changes in the big ones (leaders) we will see a bright future.

They again emphasized the fact that young people need to be technically prepared to as future leaders to bring about positive change. In their perspective the current lack of qualified teachers is a major hindrance to such desired outcomes:

FWE: Koinadugu's future lies in our hands, which means that we the school pupils need to put our attention on education but teachers in this part of the country are not qualified to teach us. The people are also tribalistic which means that they want their ethnic groups to achieve for themselves.

Natural Resources Mismanagement The current mismanagement of the district's natural resources contributes to the conditional optimistic stance. Young people with this orientation are concerned about the current mineral exploitation:

SSG: we want doctors who studied, qualified nurses and a lot of medicine. We want good roads, like America, when they come and take our minerals from Koinadugu; they take it to America and develop their own place. Why with the minerals we have, we are not developing our own place? Because they always say the land of powerful mixtures, why are they not improving our own place with the gold and iron ore they take from this place but always they take them and go out. We want inside 5 years, to develop. More, we the future of tomorrow, when we learn, we will not go and fix another person's place, we will come fix Koinadugu, so that people will admire and say 'yes, this is our hometown'. The English man says "there is no place like home," always come improve your home. ...we want development not underdevelopment- Good roads, tarred, qualified teachers, hospitals, doctors, nurses. I have confidence and hope that it will change, if they do what we have said.

Environmental degradation and deforestation was a cause for concern for this group who felt it will cause bigger issues and increase rural to urban migration:

SSB: I see the future as far, because of this mining; my geography teacher told us that earthquake will take place. After they mine, they do not replace the soil that they have removed, so some day earthquake will take place.

SSB: if we continue this deforestation it will lead to a desert, desert will come and we will hate Koinadugu. And the road network, if they don't fix it, Koinadugu will become empty; we will all leave here and go to town (the city) where there is development.

Deficit View (Pessimistic Orientation)

A small number of young people presented a more pessimistic orientation regarding the district's future. Their orientation is similarly built on personal experiences and observations within their environment. Main factors stated for this negative perception of the future includes, poor educational standards, employment opportunities, unfulfilled promises from leaders and resources and mismanagement of the district's natural resources. These participants' perspectives summarize the general view from this group:

OKA: when I think about the future of Koinadugu, I am feeling bad for now because in all sides we are behind, we are behind in education, health but I don't know about tomorrow, let us make the future better.

SSB: The hospital business, the minister of tourism brings doctors and nurses because there are not qualified nurses in Koinadugu. They take a form 3 child to do nursing...really if we had good nurses in Koinadugu, we will not need to bring nurses from outside...for now, I don't feel good about the future of Koinadugu district, and right now the issue is paining me. As I am explaining to you, these issues are disturbing me, no library, decent hospital, right now, I have a big big sore in my heart.

Concerns with educational standards and opportunities were the most prominent of all. This is perhaps based on the general perception held by many that "education is the key to life". They associate the absence of a strong educational system to a bleak future. Similarly with unfulfilled

promises of a university where many high school leavers without the options to further acquire skills that would lead to gaining employment or providing the district with skilled professionals such as doctors and nurses:

SSG: Education is poor in Koinadugu; some of our friends are not educated. For us here, some others are coming and taking our place (employment) but we are the ones who should be educated, and try to fix our district so that others will be inspired...they will say I grew up here, I got educated here and we are the ones who developed this place. They will take us as examples. But the other ones who are coming from other district are showing off to us and when I see them, I am not happy. It is us who should improve this district, this is where we were born, this is where we grew up, and when we develop the district we will have more power as stakeholders. Government should do more for us, good road, if we have good light, good water, Kabala will be develop. Within the next 5 years, Kabala will stand.

OKA: I don't feel good about the future of Koinadugu, I am not seeing much improvement, since I sit my WASSCE, they told us that they are coming with a college but it has been five years now and there is no improvement. Even when we ask about former council, they just say the program is going on...maybe in 5 years there will be a change, maybe but those politicians they like promise but they will never follow through and there are many examples of that. Like they promise us college but we haven't seen it. If they fulfill their promise, maybe.

OKA: People are suffering; employment opportunity is not around for the youth. When the youth have employment opportunity in any environment, you will see the place is better. If you go to Makeni right now, the young people they have jobs-African minerals- if you see the place, it is development.... presently I feel negative about the future of Koinadugu, because I don't like what is going on in town because there is no consultation for things, to say lets come together put our brains together-no.

Personal Futures

In general the majority of young people interviewed felt optimistic about their personal futures. They strongly believe that through hard work, staying away from distractions and support from stakeholders they will achieve their desired careers and futures. A majority believe

achieving formal education is the key to leading a successful life and helping develop their community hence many are keen on furthering their education and heading to the University

SSG: For me in the coming years, I pray that I pass the WASSCE, go to university, graduate and become successful. The world where we live now, if you are not educated, you are nothing, so my wish for the next coming years is to be an educated person.

SSG: what I see for our future, if government helps us, if that goes through, if I am educated, anything I get, and it is my place I will first come to. I will help the poor ones. We need good teachers, if we learn; we will do much about our place and our people.

FWE: "I was going to school, a stopped in class 5, 1995. Right now, I have 2 children, I am having it hard. But I want to make my children go to school. Since God made me not to learn, I am fighting hard to educate my children.... my husband is around but he is not responding that's why I decide to do business.

Some youth had high internal locus of control when it came to their person futures, while others displayed a more external outlook. Those with internal locus of control tended to show more conviction that they were going to have a good future. Others saw the trajectory for their personal futures as largely dependent on the decisions made by local and national leaders.

SSG: for me, if any there is no improvements, after I take WASSCE, and I don't have anybody to take up some of my responsibilities. If my parents say I should get marry, I have to agree because I don't have somebody who will be responsible for me.

SSG: to me I really want them to bring scholarship. If donor supporters really want to help, they should bring scholarships because some of the girls are really trying. Some are getting 4/5 credit but because there is no support, some are going to get married, get pregnancy or some decide to "sit down" that is increasing prostitution.

FWE: I have suffered, so I really want to be somebody that is why I am holding my education seriously so that I will be able to be somebody. But I really hope that they will improve the education level with college because now my mama is able to assist me but when I reach college she will not be able to. If they assist me, I will not ever mess up my life. I am learning from my sisters on the street who

have messed up their lives. I want to become a nurse. I want to help Koinadugu and Sierra Leone as a whole.

Self-Efficacy Many interviewees believe if they work hard, they will make a future for themselves. They take inspiration from leaders, community members, visitors (me included) who they perceive as successful. Most school going participants would like to further their studies in the university. Young women at FAWE, hope to complete their trainings, get a good job or start businesses of their own while many Okada boys are interested in completing their education.

SSG: I am thinking about my future, I want to be an accountant as I am a commercial student. As I am taking an example that the GTB bank (new bank in Kabala), the person who is the manager is a woman, I too am a woman, who I am that I should not make it in life? I think about my future all the time. I see myself as a fellow human, we have to love and help each other. If I see somebody straining, I should help them, we should help the blind people, and they too are human. We are asking the government to help the blind people particularly because of their eye sight and the cripple, I will help all these people.

FWE: my father has suffered and died, my mother has suffered and aged. I don't want to age like that, they should help me, if I learn tailoring a will be able to help myself.

SSB: I believe that my future is in the hands of the teachers and myself. I want to be like you to get a PhD; I want to be a medical doctor. I believe the science stream is suffering here. I will want to improve it.

SSG: I want to pass Madam Linda. I come from a poor family, we are 6, 3 girls, 3 boys. One sister has taken the WASSCE but she has not gotten a job. I am the only girl who has not been sent into marriage. So I am holding my book serious, so I can help my mother. I want to do engineering; I want to work with the biggest company in Sierra Leone.

Migration: Going Abroad. Several participants will like to go further their studies abroad in countries such as Australia, the United States of America and United Kingdom. It is interesting to note that education is a major push factor to leave Koinadugu and Sierra Leone among this sample group. Many who spoke about leaving Koinadugu and the country were boys

as they have heard stories of being able to quickly get a job and income. Many remark that, should they leave Sierra Leone, they would return to help improve Koinadugu and Sierra Leone.

SSB: In the next years to come if God prolong my life, I will first consider my education and to be a lawyer in the future and my expectation is to study law in America. When I come back to my home, I promise that I will act as an ambassador for law and order to stop all corruption.

SSB: my ambition is to become an engineer but I will not be in Koinadugu, I don't mean long distance education, I want a real university. I want to even go out of Sierra Leone. If I am educated, I will come develop. The science stream is suffering, we don't have a physics teacher, so how will development go before?"

SSB: In the future, I want to obtain doctorate, I want to attain Cambridge, I like it so much. I have many constraints in school, in the future, if I get scholarship I will want to help Koinadugu.

SSG: my brothers have promised to support me for college. I want to study law. My brother will help me to go to London to study, a want to go to London or Freetown. I will be able to come here and help and go back to London. I want to stay in London because however, I don't think Koinadugu it will never equal to London"

Sense of place in speaking about their personal futures, young Koinadugans demonstrated a strong sense of place with many stating their desire to contribute in developing the district when they have completed their university education whether or not they are based in the community.

SSG: I want to be an accountant. That is my wish and aim. If God helps me because I know that with God, all things are possible, I will help orphans. I will help develop Koinadugu, because Koinadugu's development is all our responsibilities because we cannot leave everything to government because the government has plenty of work to do. So we in Koinadugu have to help move Koinadugu before"

SSG: I want government to make our wishes come to pass. If that happens, Koinadugu will be like Europe. I want to talk about the health centers, schools- we want qualified nurses, doctors, teachers to train the others who are not good yet. For me, I want to be a doctor or nurse so that at least I will be able to bring health care to the ones in the village. I will like to take care of the ones who don't

have parents with education. Even right now as I sleep and wake, I am asking God to help me to be able to help my people everywhere in Koinadugu and Sierra Leone.

SSB: I want to be a politician for Sierra Leone as a whole, if God be my helper go to the university and study political science. For Koinadugu, if I become a politician, I will help Koinadugu district in different ways, educationally, agriculturally, socially, economically, everything about Koinadugu district. I will put mechanism in place to make sure that suffering here will be minimized. Because for now, our elders and stakeholders are not caring about other people, they only care about themselves but for me if my dream comes into existence, I will make sure that I help Koinadugu because it is my motherland. I will always be proud of it no matter the condition; I will always remain to be a Koinadugan.

Is the current education adequately preparing young Koinadugans to tackle perceived environmental issues and achieve the desired goals?

Young people were asked to reflect on the current education they are receiving in light of issues they see in their communities and visions they have for the future. Interviewees spoke about the importance of getting an education, challenges in the current system and changes that have occurred over time. In general young people were happy about getting an education, which they believe is important to increasing one's opportunities, and getting respect in the community.

SSB: The education I am getting now is good. If you go to some places, and you don't have an education people will say 'you, you are foolish' but if you are able to read, they will say, 'you are intelligent'.

Even those who had dropped out were proud of the education they had received particularly because it not only facilitated their ability to engage in certain activities in the community, it also elevated their status within their peer group as described by Okada riders I spoke with:

OKA: Education will help improve my life because in any community if you are not educated you will not participate in certain issues. In any community if you have the basic, you are the first choice. They will recognize you. Like for me, I belong to so many youth group and all of these groups they give me

responsibility. Last time I ask, why, they said ‘because you have basic’. I was so happy for what my parents have done for me. So I tell my mom and dad.

OKA: when you are educated you will be able to succeed in the world. Education is the key to the world. Right now, there is no job that doesn’t need an education because any job you get, you have to sign your name. It is not easy to get a job when you are not educated, even this Okada union, we have people who are older than us but because we are educated are higher than them. If I did not know anything, I would just be an ordinary rider.

Those at the vocational institution seemed quite happy with the learning system and structure. They appreciated the supportive environment, mentorship and ability to get training without having to pay. The below FAWE students describes her positive experience at the institution highlighting the confidence building aspect provided by the programs director:

FWE: I like the education I am getting here. They are educating us so that we understand anything they teach us. Here, they teach us well, we write, they teach us about agriculture...here they are helping us, Makeni you have to pay but here you don’t pay. Mrs Korio talks to us well, she says Koinadugu is behind in everything and that we the women are contributing, so she says we should hold our work well so that everyone will do well.

Although the majority of young people expressed frustrations with the current education system, several acknowledged some of the progress being made such having a science lab, and increase in qualified teachers.

SSB: we have good teachers, mostly our principal. He has built this lab and found some instruments. Yi goes out to find qualified teachers to teach us

SSG: I like school because they train us...with coming to school we will be able to predict our future. Like for me, if I am in my house and in the street, how can I become a lawyer? I love school because they train us to be a good person in the future.

Some participants believe the education is good but students are not taking advantage of it. Here students’ misuse of educational opportunities is more salient. Participants highlight previously mentioned behaviors such as bribing teachers instead of studying, too much social activities and

general lack of seriousness. One student points out that, “the education itself is good but the social, club activities has made the standards poor. The teenage pregnancy, the whole school now is pregnant girls too much.” Others buttress this point:

SSG: for me teachers are trying very hard but some of us the students are not working hard, they go pay teachers instead of studying. Again students don't study at home. Even if you don't pay and the teacher doesn't give you mark, you will have the knowledge in your head and anywhere you go, people you know that you are somebody

SSG: the thing that makes me not like about school is how the students are misusing the school. The teachers come inside to teach and they go outside, for me I like school, I always listen to lectures.

The FAWE institute is the only structured educational opportunity for young girls who have either never been to school or dropped out of school to gain some training in employable skills as well as to read and write. Students at the institute, most of whom were teenage moms, were happy and deeply appreciative of the opportunity to gain skills that will allow them to get an income for a better livelihood. In addition to mentorship, institute attendees like the practical aspect of their training:

FWE: I am here not because someone brought me here, if I am accepted, I will focus. Before we had FAWE, Red Cross, FRC but now everywhere has closed except FAWE. We want them to help us with not only getting a job but to know how to read and write. If you are a tailor, you must know how to read and write

FWE: Education is very very important, when people are educated, it is development. When someone is educated, and they work, they will be big somebody. It is education that makes you minister, president, somebody with humanitarian feeling to fix your place...here at FAWE they are advising us. Here we do many practical and theory. Some people come here and they don't even know A, but now some can spell their names. We Thank God, even they talk about it...this education will help me reach my future goals, anything is sacrifice, when you sacrifice, you will see output.

FWE: I am really happy for this free school here, FAWE. I sat BECE, got pregnant but my sister asked me to come here. Some other places, you have to pay

Not Sufficient While participants acknowledged improvements in the education system, many felt it is not enough to equip them both to achieve personal goals and to help achieve a better future for Koinadugu district.

SSG: the education is not enough, we want the teachers to teach us well. They should improve educational standards in Koinadugu district. We came to school this morning and still we haven't had a teacher. The education business is not too good even though it is better than before but we want more improvements

SSG: the education we are receiving for now is not sufficient to prepare us for our future careers. As for me I am an arts student but we don't have trained and qualified teachers in our departments. So we need qualified teachers especially for subjects like government, and English language. If we have these teachers who are trained and qualified then my dream which I am yearning to become a politician will come into existence but if not, then I am afraid. For Koinadugu as a whole, if the stakeholders do not put mechanism in place for us to enjoy this our beloved district- if it remains the way it is now, the future of Koinadugu is not easy- I want stakeholders to work hand in glove to achieve a better future for Koinadugu

SSB: If we think about the current educational system, it is not enabling us for the future. The distance college we have brought here, they don't have materials. For me I want to be a lawyer but how can you achieve that if you don't have materials?

Students expressed and reemphasized the already mentioned multitude reasons that contribute negatively to the current state of formal education in Koinadugu and the persistent poor performance in national exams. These included lack of qualified teachers, learning and teaching materials, parental support, teacher pay and conduct, and student motivation. Participants felt that various parties contributed to the issues from the government not providing adequate resources and qualified teachers, teachers not engaging in bribery, some parents not supporting

their children and students not taking their schoolwork seriously. One participant described her thoughts on the complex state of affairs:

SSG: the failure of students, the students are responsible, the parents are responsible, the teachers are responsible, the government is responsible. For the students, some parents are doing all things for their children and when they ask the children to go to school, they will go to other places- when they get to school they don't want to take punishment- and will decide to go home. When they get home, parents don't ask why they came home early. They will say go take off your uniform, they don't ask anything. The parents don't audit the children, they don't ask anything about how school is going, what you are seeing is the parents' fault.

On the teacher's side, you will find that some students are more intelligent than their friends but when it's exams time, they all get the same mark because others pay the teachers. Then you will find out that the intelligent ones don't want to study anymore, they say 'if it's to pay, we will all pay'. But this is affecting us during national exams because when you don't study, how will you know anything? And for the national exams, you can't pay anybody. So you will find out that we in Koinadugu we perform very poorly.

SSG: For the government, our libraries has nothing, we don't have labs. I pity the science students.

SSG: For us the school children, some of our parents didn't go to school, so they are not able to audit us. But we the school children should focus and plan that this thing, any kind way I must achieve it, if you want to be a doctor, you have to focus. But some of us come to school, going up and down. And when the teacher sees you acting that way, they will say come let's make love, and when you make love, you don't focus on school. Even if you get the papers, you go apply for a job; you are not able to express yourself because you didn't learn. The students should focus and stick to their plans.

Low and Inconsistent Teacher Pay Young people felt that low teacher salaries and timely payments were a major contributor to poor quality of education in the district. They observed that low wages demotivated qualified individuals from entering the teaching profession while inconsistent payment of salary affected consistent workflow from teachers. Moreover this

contributes to teachers' monetization of assignments and exams, putting a strain on students from low economic background.

SSG: the education that we want, they are not teaching us that way. When we come to school, we will sit until 3rd period; no teacher comes to the class. Some days like yesterday, they said we should pay school fees but teachers did not teach, they said teachers are grumbling because they have not been paid. Some of us, we are the ones who pay our fees for ourselves so we really want them to teach us.

SSB: Government should increase teacher salaries; private school teachers don't collect money from students. Like CRC, they pay them (teachers) 800,000 Leones, here they pay teachers 100,000 Leones and they have children

SSB: we have qualified teachers in Koinadugu but if you are qualified, and they pay you 50,000 vs. 1 million Leones. You will leave that and come to the classroom? So we are begging the government to increase teachers' salary

Poor Teacher quality and Conduct Students conveyed that the high numbers of untrained and unqualified teachers, many of whom are young high school leavers who did not pass the subjects they are teaching in the national exams, poses major issues for good academic performance by students in the district. According to participant narrative, this is particularly problematic for the science stream, where teachers are few and non-existent for certain subjects.

SSG: we have some teachers who are not delivering the message well. Like one time we got a teacher who said he came from Njala university and we have certain books that we use here, before we had another teacher from Freetown, he was explaining the concepts to us and we were understanding some but this Njala guy came now, even to call the names of the books, he did not know. He just came and misinterpreted the book

SSG: the education is not enough for us the science students, we don't have enough teachers, and they don't come on time. Look like today, we came to school since 6am, we have not had a teacher up until now. Like for us the science students, we have to do physics and further math but we don't have teachers to teach us that. We don't have labs to do practical, in fact, I don't understand. We the science students are suffering. When they are ready, they will say we are intelligent but they will not give us materials to learn.

SSB: for me, the science department no laboratory, here we only have 1 chemistry teacher for the entire Kabala, so we will come and teach small and go”

Monetization of Exams and Assignments Young people also complained about conduct of many teachers as role models, which they are considered to be. This was highly noted in terms teacher relations with female students, as some teachers ask for sexual relation as bribe for favorable exam scores and in-avertedly causing students to be less serious about education.

OKA: Right now, education is poor in Koinadugu. If you think about external exams, always Koinadugu comes behind. You can see that in most years, it is hard to get somebody to go to the university because we are not getting the requirements to go to college why? Because the education business is poor here. The teachers are loving with school children that makes the children to be careless over school because they will say ‘after all the teacher is my boyfriend, if I don’t pass, he will make me pass.

SSG: Some teachers don’t know they should not do certain things in front of students like drink, small and all that is not good. You as a teacher should be a brighter example for the students so that we can also be good leaders tomorrow. But some of our teachers are not good.

SSG: They should ensure that before any teacher comes to the classroom, they should have a first degree. Some of the teachers only have WASSCE, even some students are more intelligent than them. They do not even know the dress code and it is leading young people to copy bad things that the teachers are doing”

As a result of poor salaries as previously noted, teachers seek other means to make money. In cases where students do not have money, the girls are forced to engage in sexual activities.

SSG: “Some teachers force students to pay money. Some students also push the teachers. These our skirts, some girls will make it short, as if the teacher has no feeling. When the teachers see it, they will say “let me also taste”

SSG: some of our friends when they fail, they will go to meet the teacher to pay in kind or cash. The teachers will not say you should pay in cash, they will say you should pay in kind. Once the teacher has gotten you pregnant, you will become a dropout

OKA: my own problem is with the teachers, they talk about sex and interact with the kids too much, some parents are happy about it, some not.

Stakeholder interviews support students' observations while also highlighting parental contribution to some of these behaviors around teacher-student relations. According to stakeholder interview, Koinadugu has many community teachers, getting paid a small salary by the community while they wait to be fully hired by the government. These teachers are forced to find different ways to subsidize their livelihood and charging students is a means to do so. In cases where students can't afford the money, they give their bodies:

DDE: the problem we are having is with the parents, 'I am a teacher; you fail an exams...your parents will come to talk to the teacher. They will come with a lot of reason and force the teacher to admit the students- some excuses include the student being older now and not having to repeat classes. Some of the students are also forcing the teachers- some even sell their bodies- I have told the students if a teacher asks you for money, write officially and complain about the teacher but they won't do it because they are an accessory to the offense. The teacher will not ask them for money after exams it is the same students who will come and ask the teacher about their grades and ask them for payment—the teacher is also a community teacher and not getting paid enough- so out of poverty, definitely the teacher will be forced to accept''

Distracting Social activities Social activities as previously stated note worthily contribute to poor student academic performance. While a large part of the distraction is the local nightclub, school related non-academic activities seem to be taking more attention than schoolwork for both students and teachers.

OKA: Again the school social activities has taken too much focus and the teachers are not completing the syllabus and not all students have a change to get books to read

FWE: availability of schools is not the matter, now we have plenty of schools. Now the school children are not serious. Those whose mothers are well off, go and meet up with bad friends and smoke Jamba, when you spoke Jamba, you feel fine. The girls, their mothers don't have but they are not focus, some of their mothers' give them money and they give it to their boyfriends until they get

pregnant. Some parents take their children to school in the morning but they will leave school and kek (illegally skipping class).

Learning and teaching materials and Learning environment a non-conducive learning environment and lack of learning and teaching materials was a highly discussed issue by young people. As young people also discussed in other parts of the interview, the overcrowded classroom obstruct learning. Asked what should be improved in the school system, young people said to reduce the number of students in classrooms. Students also would like to have more qualified teachers and learning and teaching materials. Because Kabala has only a small number of qualified teachers, students are desperate for learning materials to continue to learn beyond the classroom. This lack of school materials is leading some students to leave the science stream.

Students describe their struggle:

SSB: According to history, Sierra Leone in Africa as a whole is the place where people came from all over to study. Right now, if you check, Sierra Leone is the poorest in terms of education. As compared with Freetown and Bo students, its not that we are not intelligent, we are but we do not have the right materials and the teachers don't teach all the materials on the syllabus. So you will see that we are not well prepared for the national exams

SSG: some of us have brains, so we really need qualified teachers who are able to explain well. Some of our teachers, when you ask them questions, they will say its assignment to go and research but if we don't have materials how will we research

SSG: the only think we lack are some materials like school library, even lack of labs is making some people go to ARTS, COMMERCE, many people don't want to do sciences because there are no equipment for experiments.

Educational Migration: Lack of University, Vocational Institutions The topic of migration for education was frequently mentioned as participants responded to the topic of adequacy. Many indicated their desire to seek higher education and with no university or college,

they are forced to move out of the district. They also acknowledged the fact that many Koinadugans who leave, do not come back to help develop the district:

SSB: The educational level in Koinadugu is not sufficient; people move and go to other places to learn. When they get their papers they do not even think that 'I should come to my district because this is where I was born'. Because they see that all things are not sufficient here. It is only now that we are seeing this long distance college that they have brought now; first time when you sit WASSCE you have to go to Freetown or Makeni.

However, data indicate that young people would prefer to stay in their communities if there was a university or vocational institutions with qualified instructors to gain employable skills. They believe having these structures nearby will increase employment for the youth, especially men:

OKA: we need vocational institutes, where young men can go learn a trade. The idleness is too much because there is no work, even this Okada it is just a place to wait, when you get a job, you leave it. We are doing it out of necessity...we should have a good college here. Anywhere where there is no education, there will be struggle.

And help reduce dropout rates especially for girls:

SSB: That is making many of our sisters to drop out, get pregnant, when they go outside where their mother and father are not there. You have to pay fees, you have to find something to eat, and you have to find something to wear. Some girls cannot withstand all those constraints, so they will follow men and as that happens they will get pregnant. Once that happens they will drop out from school.

OKA: So I believe that we should get trained and qualified teachers and lecturers here. I believe that if we get those, children will not leave their mothers and fathers to go other places and get pregnant. Because the child is where the mother and father can audit them; how far, when they leave and when they come back. Although they are saying we have drop outs, I don't blame the children because when children have left their mother, any girl who strains and even boys if you don't have heart, you will steal. Even to eat, they don't have, so when you sit in class, you are not able to concentrate. I believe that if we have qualified people in Koinadugu will go before but without it, I don't think we will improve.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

The current work provides insights into how young people in rural Sierra Leone perceive their environment, envision the future and view the role of education for personal and community development a dozen years after relative peace and stability. Ultimately it aimed to contribute to understandings of the heterogeneous youth experiences in a post-conflict transient nation, which greatly depends on their participation and citizenship for sustainable peace and development. Specifically, it sheds light on young people's everyday transactions within their physical and socio-cultural environment, and provides practical environmental concerns and needs through study implications.

This research addressed a critical need for more empirical research to better understand youth experiences and perceptions of their environment, particularly those in rural areas who have generally received less scholarly attention. The study was informed by previous research which posited that young people's status post-conflict has not fundamentally changed as conditions which led to disenfranchisement still exist and continues to hinder their economic and social mobility (Freeman, 2008; Restless Development 2012). This work also addressed the well-documented unfulfilled expectations of the education system to provide youth with necessary skills and knowledge to be change agents in their communities and country. Hence the investigation of their desires, hopes and fears for the future within the environmental context in which they find themselves (Betancourt et al., 2008; GoSL, 2008, 2013). Lastly, this research

was aimed to enhance understanding of young people's positionality within a generally very future-oriented systems (education) and environment (post-conflict).

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize, discuss and situate research findings within the literature. Summaries are presented to address the three main research aims that guided the study. Subsequently, implications for young people, educators and community members as well as policy makers are discussed. Limitations of the study are also addressed and finally recommendations for future research are made.

Summary of Findings

Findings presented in this chapter describe; (a) young people's environmental perception of their place, paying attention to how everyday experiences shape the way in which rural youth view their environment, and critical issues they assess as affecting quality of life and well-being, (b) young people's future orientation and how environmental experiences and perceptions interact with their views of the future and (c) their experiences within the education system and views of its relevance vis a vis personal and community development. Overall, focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews reveal young people's cognitive construction of their world. These revelations showed the psycho-social-environmental structure of rural livelihood and implications for the personal and community development. Discussions in this section situate young people's perceptions and narratives within the broader literature. Furthermore attention is given, though to a lesser degree, to overarching findings as it relates to young people in a rural, post-conflict, post-colonial physical, political (the State) and socio-cultural setting.

In general, given the post-conflict context study youth narratives did not prominently feature memory of the war. It is understandable, given that most study participants were

teenagers and young adults (17-25), who conceivably had limited direct or conscious experience of the war as they would have been born during the war and were very young children. Furthermore, research questions did not ask participants to speak specifically about the war or related events. However, two participants (Okada riders) who were in the early 30s and likely went through the war as teenagers tended to be cautiously optimistic about recent developments unlike younger participants who perceived them as a sign of development and change.

Six key findings emerged from the study. First, findings show that while young people had strong positive aesthetic and affective responses to their natural environment, they viewed the built environment as incongruent with their “life goals.” That is, it presented challenges for daily livelihood, pursuit of desired activities that has implications for achieving future desired goals. Second, data analyses revealed that young people in Koinadugu district have a strong sense of place influenced by both personal experiences and outsiders’ interface with their place. Third, this study found that young people are experiencing cultural and economic globalization processes and are cognizant of both its advantages and disadvantages particularly as it relates to environmental destruction and economic inequalities. Furthermore, findings show that globalization processes influences rural youth desires, perception of place and consumption practices. The fourth learning related to future orientations, showed that while young people were generally optimistic about the future, personal futures were perceived with more optimism than community futures. This finding correlated with high self-efficacy found among participants with regards to personal futures and goals. The study also showed that young people’s relationship to place influenced planned migration intentions, presenting great implications for understanding youth rural-urban migration. The fifth finding relating to education, indicated that

while young people believe the current education system affords “basic” literacy, it remains inadequate in preparing young people to achieve personal career goals or actively participate in community development. This was particularly salient in discussions related to the poor state of science education in the district. Lastly, this work found that young people receiving vocational education were more satisfied than their colleagues in formal schooling as learning was more linked to personal development which participants at their ability to becoming contributing community members.

Research Aim #1: Young People’s Environmental Experiences and Perceptions in a Post-Conflict Rural Region

Young people’s environmental perceptions are multi-dimensional consisting of both concrete and abstract aspects. Concrete dimensions highlighted experiences within the physical environment while abstract processes revealed affective components such as feelings, attitudes and imaginative thought (Cele, 2006). Researchers within the field of environmental psychology have focused on understanding people’s living environment and related impact on wellbeing and general quality of live (Kaplan, 1985; Smardon, 1988; Ulrich, 1983). The person-environment fit theory has found human-environment congruence to be important for youth development whose needs are often rapidly and constantly changing (Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield, Buchanan et al. 1993). Hendry & Shucksmith (1998) emphasize that the “goodness of fit” between individuals and their environment influences people’s behavior, motivation and health.

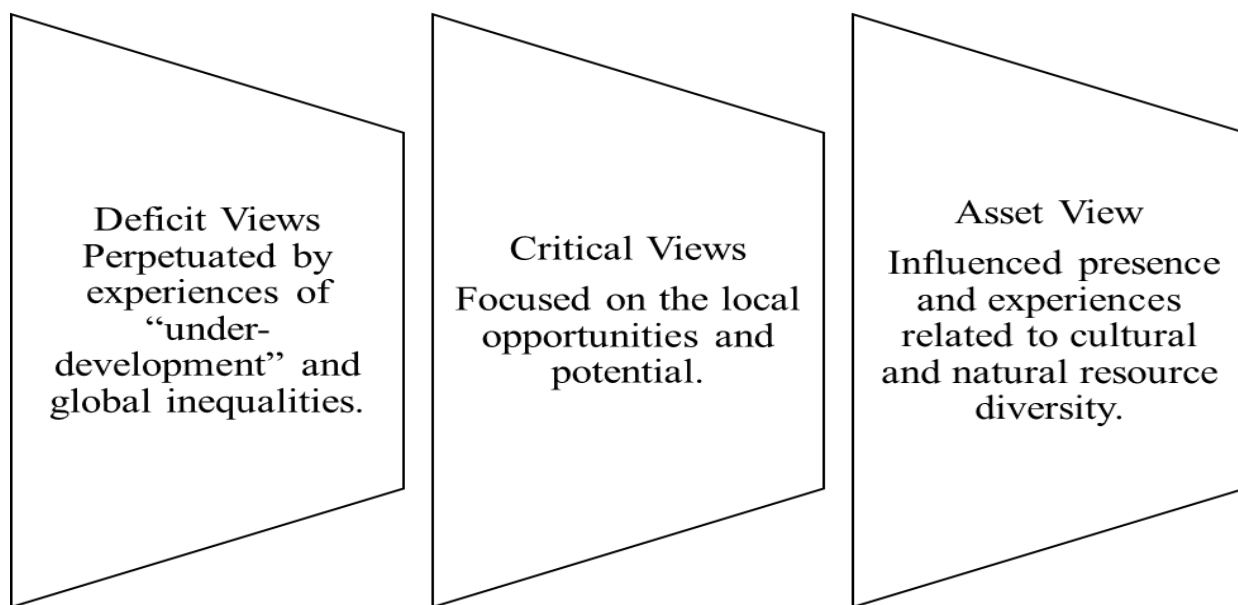
The current study showed that young rural Koinadugans hold complex understanding of their environment influenced by daily environmental experiences and activities. As Katz (2004) notes in her work, people and children particularly, form comprehensive bodies of knowledge

based on what they do, know and need to know. Respondents' breadth of knowledge regarding their physical-social-cultural environment evidenced that participants engage in active Situated Learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This posits that learning is a function of activity, context and culture (i.e. social & physical environment) in which it occurs. Such learning is usually unintentional as oppose to classroom learning, which is deliberate. Study participants provided rich descriptions and insights to Koinadugu's natural, social and cultural environment and how it relates to residents' quality of life. While some environmental information was "textbook" based such as "Koinadugu is the largest district in Sierra Leone", "Koinadugu is the bread basket of Sierra Leone," much else was derived from daily practices hence the myriad of environmental knowledge derived from and interconnected to multiple aspects of lived experiences. Below I discuss young people's positive and negative environmental perceptions

Youth's perceptions of their environment can be categorized as asset-, critical- and deficit views (see figure 7). Study participants presented strong positive orientation regarding their natural and cultural environment but were dissatisfied with the built and social environs. Both everyday environmental transactions as well outsider's perceptions influenced how young people viewed different aspect of their place. Through daily practices at home, in school, within the community and regular interactions with 'outsiders' coming in, young Koinadugans acquired knowledge of their place, developing different affective orientations (negative & positive) based on these experiences. Their experiences and perceptions of environmental advantages, disadvantages and potential are similar those identified in other youth rural studies (Katz, 1992; Panelli, Punch & Robson, 2007). Those with asset view focused on local environmental advantages compared to other places other places nationally and even globally (influenced by

tourism). Youth's travels to other parts of the country, and tourism were spaces of learning about other places. Participants with critical viewpoints acknowledged the opportunities but were critical of perceived unharnessed opportunities such as the underdeveloped agricultural sector despite the district popularly known agricultural advantage. Lastly, those with deficit views were influenced by personal experiences of "under-development" and inequalities.

Figure 7: Young People's Varied Perceptions of Their Environment



Participants' place experience narratives and perceptions of their place can be further understood using Jencks and Mayer's (1990) conceptual framework for studying neighborhood effects (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Jencks and Mayer presents a five model taxonomy that includes, the *child and family related institutions* which emphasized importance of community infrastructure and institutional resources such as schools, libraries, *collective socialization model* underscoring adults key role in monitoring young people's behaviors and serving as role models, the *contagion model* that emphasized spread of behaviors among peers, a *social competition model* where residents compete for limited environmental resources and

relative deprivation model which posits individuals evaluate their status relative to peers. While the diversity of young people's experiences and perceptions evidenced all five constructs at play, those relating to community infrastructure and institutional resources particularly in comparison to regional, nation and international neighbors were most prominent.

Asset Views of the Neighborhood and Regional Environment: When asked to describe what they liked about their environment, young people spoke of both their immediate environment, neighborhood, and regional place, district. Landscape features, infrastructural development, and demographic structures dominated their narratives of positive environmental attributes of place. This finding is a line with dominant popular and scholarly images of rural life, whether elicited from a deficit or asset perspective (Rye, 2006; Matthews, Taylor, Sherwood, Tucker & Limb, 2000). Young people's interpretations of local environmental assets ranged aesthetic, ecological, economic (tourism) and social/recreational (yearly cultural/agricultural events) functions. These physical-cultural-social functions were experienced and observed to positively serve the self, community at large and visitors (tourists).

The most prominent and valued aspect of the Koinadugu environment was nature and natural resources, in particular the numerous mountains, minerals and fertile soil for agriculture. Other empirical studies have found that nature and the natural remains a distinct feature of rurality (Bell, 1992; Rye 2006). The second projecting quality that young people favored was the ethnic diversity. While a small number of respondents mentioned issues related to tribalism, most young people highly valued the ethnic diversity found in their district. This socio-cultural quality of rural communities tended to have significance for sense of community (Matthews, Taylor, Sherwood, Tucker & Limb, 2000). Additionally, the advent of new infrastructural

development such as the installment of street lamps, and water pumps by the government was of significant importance to young people as it had direct bearings on their daily livelihood. For young people, it symbolized development and equality, as their place was beginning to share in the national resources and opportunities, becoming “the city”

Person-Environmental congruence researchers have explored the bidirectional relationship between a person’s needs and available environmental resources and opportunities, as well as environmental demands and the person’s abilities (Wallenius, 1999). Similar to Wallenius (1999) study, this research found different features of the environment served different functions in young people’s lives. Analyses indicate that young people most valued Koinadugu’s natural conditions and resources, (mountains, minerals, good weather, favorable soil for agriculture), diverse ethnic groups and new infrastructural developments (street lamps, water pumps). Many youth proudly referred to their place as the “Land of Powerful Mixtures,” emphasizing that such richness could not be found anywhere else in the country. Koinadugu’s unique natural environmental resources and cultural diversity contributed to young people’s sense of place and place attachment. Recall that sense of place refers to a person or people’s connection to a place, which constitutes cognitions, affective sentiments, meanings and values, attributed to it (Farnum, Hall & Kruger, 2005).

Contributing to this sense of place were evidences of growing place satisfaction. Researchers have found that perceived supportiveness (perceived opportunities) of the environment in relation to personal projects has influences on place attachment and satisfaction (Wallenius 1999; Ramkissoon, Weiler & Smith, 2013). Both the natural and built environment, particularly new infrastructural developments were perceived as increasingly though not

sufficiently matching personal and community needs. As Ittelson (1973) succinctly notes, “living means perceiving,” as such young people’s experience of person-environment congruence influences the perceived quality of their place (Horelli, 2007). The installation of street lamps and water pumps were evaluated in direct link to environmental strains and stresses. For example, students’ environmental appreciation of new development such as street lamps was directly related to their ability to study and gain an education, which is considered essential for gaining meaningful employment. Other participants expressed delight with the installation of water pumps, which they anticipated will reduce daily time and energy spent to fetch water. Participants coming from near and far villages hoped the construction of good roads will reduce transport cost. The current study showed that improvements in the built environment contributed positive affect towards place which influenced young people’s future goals and intentions. A large number of young people revealed intentions to return to Koinadugu after their studies, illuminating a noteworthy level of place attachment.

Furthermore, community social and ethnic based experiences also influenced young people’s sense of community and belonging. Hunter and Riney-Kehrberg (2002) posit that action and performance have significance for the identity development. The study show young people’s sense of place and community is nurtured through participation in yearly community organized recreational activities (New Year mountain climbing), ethnic and agricultural events, which though attracts outside audiences, primarily serves as spaces community building and cultural heritage retention. This finding is in line with Tuan’s (1977) argument that sense of place goes beyond aesthetic appreciation. Other scholars agree with Tuan, underscoring people’s environments are endowed with meaning (Davis, Huang & Liu, 2008). What these results show

is that young people place identity is an outcome of cultural and geographical elements. Rosenthal and Bogner (2009) advance, as similarly found in this study, that ethnicity can play an important role in collective belonging.

It is important to note the influence of the “tourist gaze” on young people’s positive perceptions of place. Youth narratives revealed a high orientation of what Massey (1994) describes as extraverted sense of place. Expressed strong sentiment of and towards their place showed a mental image constructed in relation to and influenced by the ‘outside/outsider’. For example, study findings show that young people’s strong emphasis of Koiandugu’s ethnic diversity was often compared to “other districts”. Additionally, while local landscape was highlighted for its aesthetic functions, it was also often discussed within the context of tourism. This observation is not to diminish such perception but to acknowledge the existing relationship and also Koinadugu’s unique position nationally and globally, for both its contributions as well as influences. This finding challenges more prevalent singular, often deficit view of Koinadugu as the “least developed district.” It underlines the need for a more asset-based, multi-dimensional narrative of place. However, such reading of findings does not obliterate factual evidence that the region is in fact lacking behind in some areas of development. It does mean, as youth assert that Koinadugu has unique resources and opportunities that could make it an enviable place to live.

Critical and Deficit Perspectives: Young people’s narratives about environmental dislikes revealed elaborate knowledge and understanding of environmental, infrastructural and social issues which affect quality of life in a variety of ways. It evidenced that both daily experiences of lack and an extraverted oriented sense of place contributed to negative

perceptions of their locale. Youth's everyday environmental transactions often placed them in positions of lack and want, contributing to a perception of their environment as lacking and "backwards". Such criticism of structural disadvantages and the desires for city life, "urban escape," is not unique to young Koinadugans or even Sierra Leoneans. Other studies in both Minority (Schäfer, 2010) and Majority (Mmari et al, 2014) worlds have found that young people living in disadvantaged environment whether urban or rural desire certain facilities such as constant electricity and good roads found in more developed places. In their study in Bolivia, Andersen (2002) makes the connection between lacks of these basic facilities which impacts productivity and increases in youth rural-urban migration. Similarly in their study, Mmari et al. (2014) found young people in Baltimore, USA and New Delhi, India perceived lack of water and electricity related infrastructure to have an impact on their health. Through their everyday experiences, young people in this study developed sophisticated bodies of knowledge regarding the linkages between social and environmental issues such as the relations between lack of water availability, school tardiness/ attendance, and health; un-tarred roads, water quality, health, and schooling poor local leadership, resource exploitation and community development.

"They destroy trees without replacing them." Processes of natural resources commodification and environmental deterioration had a strong effect on young people. This study found rural youth are cognizant of transnational economics, which often do not favor rural people. Natural resource destruction and mismanagement were major environmental concerns for young people, with mining prominently featured. Youth in Koinadugu are aware of environmental activities in their district and have formed views regarding the lack of returns for local people. Their narratives reveal the imbalanced impact of globalization and

commodification at the local level. For example youth highlighted the exploitation of Koinadugu's natural resources by foreign countries who do little in return for community from which the resources are extracted. Although little empirical research has been done in Koinadugu district on the consequences of mining, young people's concern regarding local natural resource exploitation by international organizations is echoed by Akiwumi (2014) who found similar sentiments in diamond-rich Kono district located in eastern Sierra Leone. Akiwumi's (2014) work underscored power imbalances in mining policies, contracts and mineral accrument that favored 'strangers'-mining multinational corporations of non-Sierra Leonean nationality over indigenous people and their rulers, given lack of relevant skills and appropriate technology within the country. Similarly, their study showed concerns among community members regarding local resource exploitation and lack of benefits local communities. Hillcoat and Forge (1995) found similar concerns and sentiments among Australian youth aged 15-17 years. Their study participants' believed mining industries were causing environmental issues and that local governments and higher authorities "were complacent", 'don't listen to people,' gave approval for unsound developments and "spend money inappropriately." (Hillcoat et al. 1995).

Though adult stakeholders respondents were not as concerned about commodification, they shared young people's concern regarding stress on the natural landscape, hazards and disruptions to community produced by mining activities. Both young people and stakeholders highlighted that companies are not fulfilling their promised corporate social responsibilities of rehabilitating mined areas. In another study, Mason (2014) acknowledges unfulfilled responsibility to the community and lack of environmental consciousness and action on the part of mining companies exist. He further notes that a weak environmental governing structure in

Sierra Leone and inadequate monitoring contributes to the situation. Mason states that Sierra Leone's relatively young Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) *"does not have the mandate to regulate the behavior of mining companies before an environmental license is issued. The laws and regulations only make reference to monitoring of a project after a license is awarded."*

Deforestation was another issue underscored by both young people and stakeholders, citing its negative impact on the weather, biodiversity, wild life and soil quality. Once well forested, Koinadugu and Sierra Leone in general is rapidly being deforested. Alieu (2011) notes that Sierra Leone's *"forest cover has been reduced from about 70% of the total land area in about 7 decades period to only 5% of land area in 1990. It is even lesser today assuming a deforestation rate of about 1% which had increased the forest re-growth type to 3,774,000ha out of 6,305,000 ha of total area of all types of forests in the country in 1990."* Unlike mining-related concerns, where multi-national corporations carried more blame, responsibility for deforestation was extended to locals who *"destroy trees without replacing them"* (KEO). Study findings support others that have found local usage of forest resources a major contributor to deforestation. Hoffman (2007) notes in his ethnographic visual study the impacts of war on forest cover particularly in urban cities like Freetown where reconstruction of destroyed and new homes took place. Munro (2009) and other researchers argue that deforestation is rarely a localized environmental issue as it is often influenced by external social, political and economic factors. While Munro (2009) states that urbanization is one of the greatest causes of deforestation and not rural poverty as popular discourses often asserts, Provost and McClanahan (2012) highlights the destruction of forest and the environment as the government strives to attract foreign investors after the decade long war through the country's mining sector.

The links between rural infrastructure and agricultural development was evident in youth's place analysis. Young people were concerned about Koinadugu's unharnessed agricultural potential and its implication on rural livelihood. Respondents observed that while farmers produce substantial amount of crops, lack of appropriate technology and poor environmental conditions (bad roads, lack of electricity) prevented the majority of it from reaching the markets. These challenges are duly noted in national discourse, which acknowledges the importance of agriculture for poverty alleviation (GoSL, 2013). What this study elucidates are impacts at the family and individual levels. Many youth came from agricultural backgrounds and are thus were familiar with the hardship of rural agriculture underdevelopment on daily life. Participant's relayed that poor infrastructural support, diminished farmer's gains affecting ability to, amongst many things, support their families and send their children to school. Stakeholder interviews buttressed this point while stating that government is putting in place business centers to support farmers. Cartier and Bürge (2011) in their study on farming and mining found similarly that farmers faced several issues affecting productivity and substantial income generation for sustainable livelihood including lack of mechanization and storage infrastructure, transport difficulties, insufficient land security and improvement of the soil quality.

“We want to be like the city.” Koinadugu district is experiencing what Katz (2004) describes as *“Rural Cosmopolitanism”* characterized but not limited to changing consumer practices, monetization of everyday life and expanded culture of education. Personal everyday experiences coupled with changing lifestyles and consumption patterns, a consequence of globalization, contributed to changing images of rurality and desires for “urban” amenities. Katz

(2004) and other researchers (Evans, 2008; Farrugia et al., 2014; Liechty, 1995) have documented similar desires for urban existence among youth in developing environments. While young people's positive environmental perception evidenced aesthetic appreciation and high value to the natural environment, they were also sensitive to its broader functionality to daily life, productivity and well-being. In line with other studies in developing rural environments, this work showed that inadequate infrastructures affected young people's health, education, and ability to be economically productive. Infrastructure related environmental concerns found in this work are considered age-old issues for rural communities in Sierra Leone. Findings in this study support Pushak and Foster's (2011) Sierra Leone infrastructure country diagnostic report which show that while some infrastructural advances have been made, more needs to be done to address changing local and national needs.

Interestingly while infrastructural disadvantages have been shown to be strong push factors for out-migration, such was not the case in young people's narrative. Although they were concerned about developing the built environment, migration was strongly linked to education. Rather, respondents were more concerned about the development of local place to meet young people's and community needs in order to decrease migration rates. Many believed infrastructural development would provide more engagements for young people especially employment for boys. Associated with these narratives is a strong sense of efficacy. Young people hold strong believes that provided the right resources, they can bring about change in their communities. This belief was coupled with future actions as many respondents planned to return after their education and help "develop" Koinadugu. These findings speaks not only youth place attachment but empowerment. Kalu et al. (2014) noted in their study of imbalances of

infrastructure accessibility between rural and urban areas that, “if infrastructure facilities are provided, the people are capable of self-generation.”

Social Issues Brunswik’s theory of probabilistic functionalism postulates that humans tend to focus on particular aspects of their environment that is of most relevance and usefulness to their goals (Brooker & Weinthal, 2013). Such *Modus operandi* was evident in young people’s analysis of their environment, particularly when asked about environmental dislikes. Though several social issues including, local leadership, unemployment and health care concerned participants, education was most prominent and cross-cutting among all groups.

Findings confirmed high value accorded education as necessary for skills development, gaining societal respect and opportunities. Similarly well documented sentiments of historical dissatisfaction with the education system echoed in the current work (Keen 2005, Wright 1997). Recall that lack of educational opportunities and poor quality of education was found to be one of the primary reasons for young people’s plight and involvement in the civil conflict particularly rural youth who were most marginalized (Pratt, 1999; Richards, 1996). Current study findings in fact parallel pre-war sentiments of frustrations and discontent.

Despite general discontent, some young people believe there has been positive progress and attitudinal change as regards to education. Participants observed that attitudes are changing within rural communities and more parents are sending their daughters to school. This finding shows that government’s post-conflict commitments to increase school attendance are taking root at the local levels and more so in rural communities. Whether attendance is actually leading to learning remains questionable per this study. Some young people perceived that the quality of education has plummeted compared to their parents’ era especially after primary school. This

study found that school related factors such as lack of trained and qualified teachers, monetization of exams and sexual harassment affected quality of education. Not only is the pedagogy poor but teacher conduct affects students' moral more so for girls. Corrupt teacher conduct was revealed to be problematic, as students were forced to pay for exams and test, while male teachers engaged sexual encounters with female students was prevalent. Other studies in Sierra Leone have documented the problematic behavior of sexual advances from male teachers towards young girls (UNICEF, 2008). The monetization of tests and exams forces boys to engage in petit stealing, or Okada which sometimes became a major distraction from school. Stakeholders were particularly concerned that this exposes young people to the pursuit of money in ways that can be detrimental to their future. Adenle and Kayode's (2013) study in Nigeria confirms this concern noting that desire for quick cash led many young men to commercial bike riding derailing them from academic pursuits.

Additionally, young people believe that the lack of a university or alternative training institutions, coupled with unfavorable policies and modes of policy implementation posed great challenges to Koinadugans who desire to post-secondary education. Not only were participants' concerned the lack of qualified teachers hindered their ability to pass the university entrance exams for the country's few competitive universities but that the lack of a local university or alternative training institutions impeded young Koinadugans from acquiring competitive labor force skills. Furthermore this study showed that certain well-intended government policies inadequately served its target populations. For example while Sierra Leone's free education for all policy enabled many girls to attend primary and even secondary school, many dropped out once the government funding stopped. This finding is supported by other studies that have shown

dropout rates increase after primary school particularly for girls with only one-third of primary school enrollments moving on to secondary school (UNESCO, 2008).

This study revealed inconsistent policies implementation posed a threat for school completion. Both interviews and field observational data revealed that Koinadugu experienced a spike in school dropout rates as a result of late implementation of a national education policy. The sudden enforcement of a national policy that prohibited advancement in class without a passing mark at the national exams led to many dropouts who had no clear alternatives. While poor implementation of the tuition-free education policy has been well documented (UNICEF, 2008), consequences of others such as the no promotion rule has not been studied.

While school related issues formed the crux of educational concerns, growing negative impacts of globalization and modernization processes were evident. Social activities were cited as becoming a major distraction to educational commitments. Increasing youth participation in the nightlife scene, changing consumption habits and desires for modern technologies were considered deterrence by both youth and adult stakeholders. This changing landscape can be attributed to changing post-conflict demographics as discussed in chapter one as well as increasing tourism in the region. Koinadugu has become a touristic center in the country and as Nkurayija (2011) similarly found in Rwanda, communities sought to attract more tourists by increasing provision of various experiences. “Discotheques and clubs” are one such services.

Both stakeholder interviews and field notes evidenced changes in local material consumption habits, which had direct or indirect impact on the prioritization of education. Stakeholder interviews revealed that a growing number of young students use their economic resources on non-scholastic products such as the latest smart phones and hair extensions despite

not have necessary school materials. Researcher's field observations substantiate this viewpoint. During short-term visits spanning three years, researcher also observed some of these lifestyle changes particularly in schoolgirls' hairstyles. In 2011, during school visits research noted that many girls wore their natural hair in cornrows (less expensive), however by 2013, there had been a marked shift to more wearing imported weaves and wigs which to cost more economically.

Young People in a Post-Conflict Globalizing Environment

Although young people's place identity was closely tied to traditional aspects of rurality, i.e nature, strong cultural and community identity, they also desired a local environment that met basic livelihood needs. Hence, while boasting of its unique natural resources, young people also wanted Koinadugu to become more like a "city", having the infrastructure enjoyed by those in urban places. The driving concern was to make it more livable. Young Koinadugans concerns with regards to infrastructural disadvantage is supported by national statistics. For example, Latest estimates for water supply coverage indicate 49% of the population have access to clean water. The majority of reported coverage is in urban areas with 86% coverage as opposed to only 26% in rural areas (AMCOW, 2011). Similarly less than 10% of the population have access to electricity, 90% of it consumed by the countries four main cities, Freetown (83%), Bo (3%), Kenema (3%) and Makeni (3%) (UNDP, 2012).

Young people's observation of their rural disadvantage suggests changing notions of rurality and sub cultures in the experiences. They are developing a different way of existence, new ways of doing, and new ways of knowing from their parents. These sub-cultures each comes with its own "stamp of behaviors, dress, manners and moral territories" requiring different structures (Matthews & Tucker, 2007). Observing similar shifts in her work in Sudan, Katz

(2004) notes that such changes come with a level of heightened commodification as more money begins to circulate in such environments. Koinadugu can be considered a transient place experiencing glimmers of modernities. The study shows that young people desire to enjoy more of these modernities, which they are aware their counterparts in the city have access to. In conclusion findings show that young people indeed perceive globalization process as a “series of powerful processes that provide both opportunities and threats,” (Gidley, 2001).

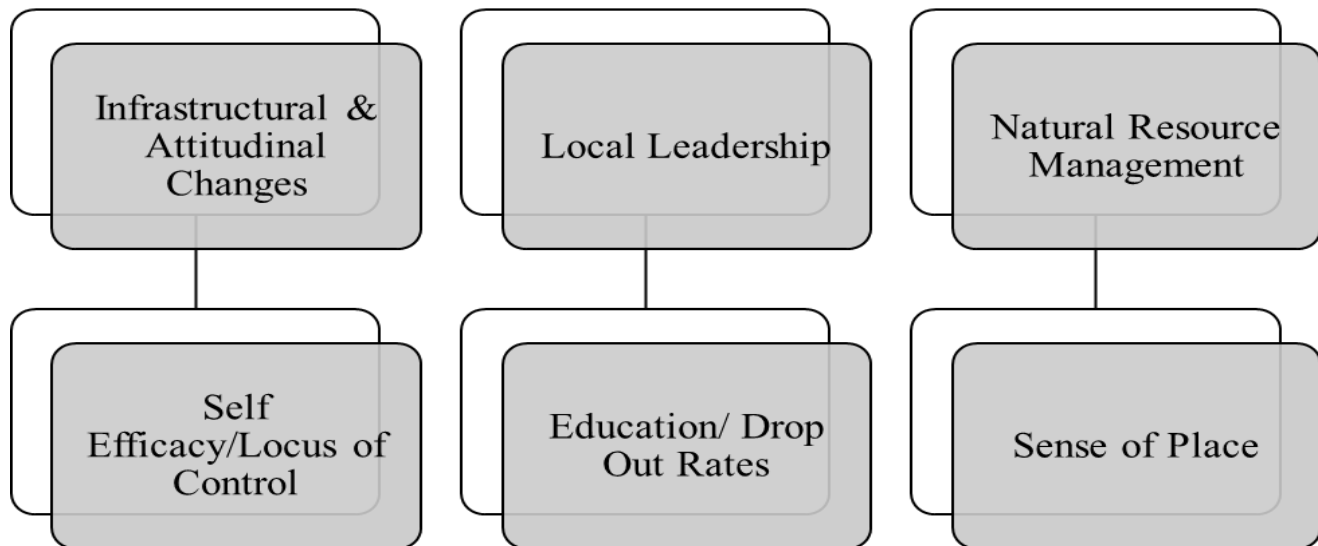
Research Aim 2: Young People’s Future Orientation for Self and Community

Researchers posit that a person’s decisions and actions are influenced by their intentions, goals and desires for the future (Gidley & Inayatullah, 2002). In a study of Hungarian youth future orientation during its years of transformation, Hideg and Novaky (2002) underscored that how young people view the future was vital to shaping the future the country itself. This research was conducted with similar vantage point. Young people not only make up the majority of the population, they are depended on to help transform Sierra Leone from post-conflict to sustainability. Analysis of youth complex environmental experiences, perceptions and expectations thus far perhaps already provide foresight to the diversity of future visions they hold. Overall, the majority of young Koinadugans regarded both their personal and community’s future positively though stronger sense of confidence was associated with personal futures. The main discriminating factor between community and personal futures was sense of efficacy. Self-efficacy which has been linked to both positive and negative goals, behaviors and outcomes (Bandura, 2006; Bolland et al., 2007; Nurmi, 1989) reflects the degree of control young people perceive they have over different aspects of their lives. Future orientation and self-efficacy are influenced by both individual characteristics and structural factors (Bandura, 1997; Dubow,

Arnett, Smith & Ippolito; 2001). External structural factors influence both personal and community futures, however it was strongly coupled with community's future. Factors influencing both personal and community futures included, perceptions of infrastructural and community attitudinal changes, quality of local leadership and education, management of local natural resources, self-efficacy and sense of place. In general positive experiences or perceptions related to those factors positively influenced future visions. If young people held negative perceptions related to stated factors, then they perceived it would negatively influence the future.

Figure 8: Factors Influencing Young People's Community and Personal Future

Visions



Community Future. Young people's community future orientation ranged from optimistic, conditionally optimistic to pessimistic. The majority of participants believed Koinadugu would change positively in the near future. Factors influencing optimistic orientation included recent infrastructural developments, presence of community role models and self - confidence in their ability as future community leaders. Sociologists have long emphasized the

influenced of socio-structural context on a person's future orientation. As evident in young people optimistic future orientation, studies have linked the presence of resources and opportunities to positive future expectations. Numi (1993) found in their studies that lack of resources and options contributed to more pessimism among rural youth. On the other hand Malone (2013) found that presenting children with opportunities for engagement provided sense of agency in their future orientation. This study showed that community infrastructural developments had a positive effect on young people's community future orientation. The availability of resources that met community needs even if limited served as a symbol of future possibilities. Additionally, personal experiences had a strong influence positive orientation; those who had used the street lights, or had seen the pumps were much more confident that the community is developing and will continue to improve.

On the other hand, perceived persistent rural infrastructural disadvantage contributed to conditional optimistic and pessimistic views of the future. Historical knowledge and long term experience within the community contributed to uncertain and pessimistic orientations. Those who were uncertain about Koinadugu's future recalled unfinished projects (e.g. road network) and unfulfilled promises by local leaders (e.g. construction of a university). Spreng and Levine's (2006) advances that a dynamic interaction exists between past and future which has implications for behavior. Although this study was not focused on behavior, it revealed that the past influenced how the future was perceived and as earlier stated future orientation has implications for goal setting and action. Similar to Spreng and colleague's (2006) work, the current study found that older young adults (all Okada riders in late 20s) tended to apply distant retrospective gaze in future thinking. This is likely because they have lived longer, experienced

different tides of leadership and “development” phases, hence have more incidence upon which to base their evaluations.

The presence positive community role models and supportive local leadership influenced young people’s perception of both community and personal futures. Findings show that having positive leadership and role models whether nationally or locally influenced how participants felt about the community’s future. Those with an optimistic orientation pointed to a small selected number of individuals both government officials and stakeholders who were perceived as non-corrupt, and caring about the community. More importantly, young people could name and identify tangible community development efforts facilitated by these individuals to improved people’s quality of life. On the other hand, those with a less optimism and pessimistic orientation felt the prevalence of corrupt leaders would stifle the district’s development. While they acknowledged the few “good ones”, this group believed the majority did not care about improving community livelihood.

Conditionally optimistic youth were more cautious of extending recent changes (light, water) to future possibilities, for them, the link between present and future was not linear (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002). They were more concerned about sustainability and the balance of all components of the environment, social, political and ecological. For this group four critical issues needed to be addressed for a better community including, high unemployment rates for young men and women, poor education system and lack of returns, need for good leaders and mismanagement of the district’s resources.

Personal Futures. Young people were generally optimistic about their personal future. Findings show that personal future optimism was closely related high self-efficacy. Respondents

believed their future success was depended on individual choices and behavior as well as structural opportunities. The majority of study participants' possessed an internal locus of control. They envisioned their personal futures outcomes depended as personal choices and behavior, such as studying hard, and being focus in school. Those with a more external locus of control felt their future was largely dependent on external forces, opportunities and resources such as the availability of qualified teachers, university, vocational institutes and finances. Regardless of the orientation all youth participants in this study held strong beliefs that education and skills training was necessary for employment, income generation and better quality of life.

Despite concerns regarding quality of education and its problematic relationship to employment and other life opportunities, youth's futures discourse centered on education particularly post-secondary and non-traditional educational opportunities. Most youth desired or planned to acquire some form of post-primary and post-secondary education. Findings show some gendered differences and socio-economic influences on planned behavior to achieve educational goals. While some reported having the economic backing to pursue their educational goal, others disproportionately girls, saw marriage as the predictable route in the absences of financial support. Fewer numbers of boys provided alternatives plans to not pursuing higher education. There are a few possible explanations for this. The first and well documented are historical cultural attitudes disfavored girls going to school. One can speculate that some girls have internalized some of these beliefs. Another possible consideration is the socio-economic background of girls in the study given that complaints about poor implementation of the tuition free policy was prominent among participants particularly girls. Perhaps most of the girls in this study are in school as a result of the free education for all policy and know of no such

opportunities for further studies. Further study is needed to better understand gendered differences found in this study.

The expanded culture of education is closely linked to youth rural-urban migration. Data analysis reveal that limited sites for post-secondary education or vocational training institutions was a major push factor for planned rural-urban migration among Koinadugan youth. Such trends of education migration have been documented in rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond (Katz, 2004; Baylee, 1974; Barnum & Sabot, 1977). Many young people in this study hope to migrate to the capital city, Freetown or other countries such as England, Australia and the United States of America to further their education at the university level. Migration out of their rural environment was considered the gateway to gaining new skills, attaining desired careers and bettering themselves and the community. Notable in this work is that the sentiment of escapism sometimes associated youth rural-urban migration is not salient in this work. Rather, place attachment is evident as young people express intentions to return to their community hence migration is perceived as a means to improve not only the self but the community.

A key finding as briefly aforementioned is the relationship between personal futures, place attachment and psychological empowerment. Young people not only demonstrated intricate understanding of issues in the environment but showed a sense ownership and desire to contribute in problem solving. Zimmermann (1995) describes this process where by an individual not only gains mastery over things that concern them, but is proactive in responding to it, as psychological empowerment. Young people's personal futures embodied a strong sense of responsibility towards developing their community. Many personal future narratives revealed intentions and desires to return and improve quality of life for others in the district. This

understanding of youth's sense of empowerment is unpopular within Sierra Leone's rural youth literature. The finding provides a glimmer of hope for rural communities in Sierra Leone which have been plagued by high migration rates, often losing large populations of their able bodied workforce to the cities (Peeters, 2009).

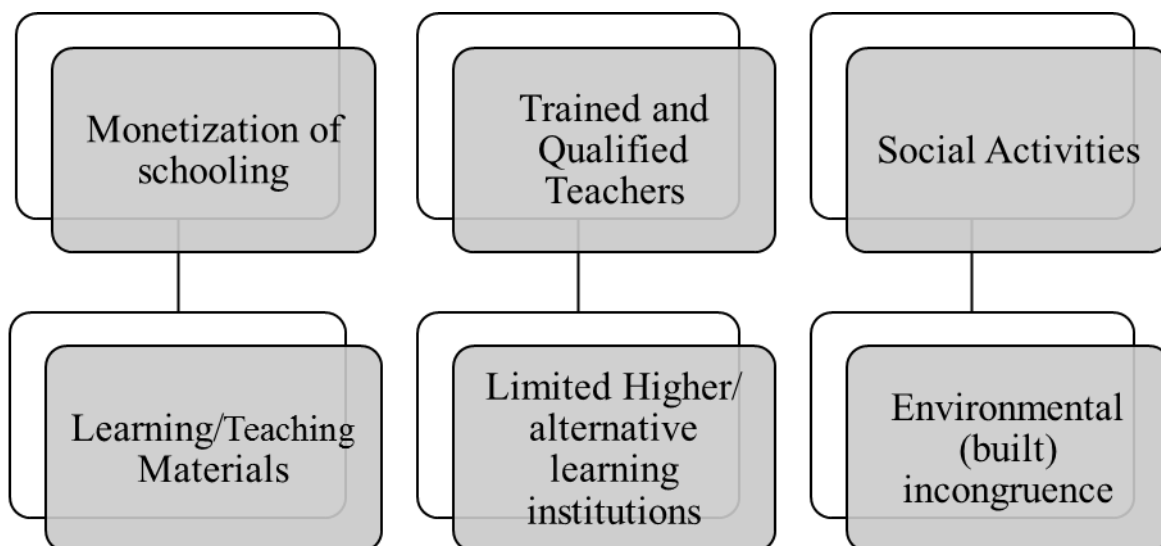
Research Aim 3: Education for Personal and Community Development

The education question posed to young people in this study was to uncover from their perspective, the education system effectiveness in preparing them to be able to engage in perceived environmental issues as well as achieving personal goals. This question stemmed from concerns regarding popularized western education system's ability to prepare young people particularly those in the Majority World for the future (Bloom, Canning & Chan, 2006; Banutu-Gomez, 2006, van Dyk, 2001). Sierra Leone's tumultuous educational history shows that it has been inadequate in preparing young people to enter the labor force and effectively engage in citizenship. The current study thus was interested in hearing from young people themselves, to understand how their experiences and views of this highly emphasized medium for capacity building. Overall, findings show that young people indeed see education, particularly formal education as key to achieving success and developing the community and nation. This perception stems from both their personal experiences of opportunities afforded those with formal schooling, as well as the national discourse that promotes the importance of formal schooling as evidenced in a number of national policies.

Findings show that young people are generally satisfied with the education system's ability to provide basic education although a small number perceive a decline as many school-going youth are leave school without strong reading and writing skills. This finding is supported

by a recent study van Fleet and colleagues (2012) which shows that out of Africa's 111 million in school children "37 million children will learn so little while in they are in school that they will not be much better off than those kids who never attend school." Furthermore young people see the education system as inadequate for developing necessary capacity for envisioned future changes. A wide range of factors influenced respondents' educational experiences and viewpoints. See Figure 9:

Figure 9: Young Perceptions of Factors Influencing Education in Koinadugu District



School-related infrastructural and operations challenges found in this study have long historical legacy, well established by both the government and post-conflict scholars (Betancourt, 2008; Hanlon, 2005). Similar to other studies, this work found that educational rural disadvantages such as lack of learning and teaching materials, trained and qualified teachers and higher or alternative (vocational) learning institutions, limited educational opportunities and made learning an arduous activity. These limitations further coupled with pervasive monetization of various aspects of schooling, such as illegal required paid after school classes, and bribery for test and exams the strong basis for young people's educational concerns.

Study findings show while most participants were discontented with their educational experience, levels of dissatisfaction varied by area of study (stream) and type of education (formal/non-formal). It was commonly agreed by students in all streams (Arts, Commerce and Sciences) and educational backgrounds, that sciences students were the most disadvantaged. The stream suffered from lack of teachers in some subjects (Physics), adequate qualified teachers for others (chemistry), and limited to no lab and science equipment. Youth attributed these lacks to poor national exams outcomes for the district. Participant's criticisms and challenges with pursuing the sciences mirrored Gbamaja's (1980) findings regarding science education in Sierra Leone. Similar to the current study, Gbamaja found that poor teaching methods, lack of learning materials, irregularities between what teachers taught and the national curriculum (hence national exams) deterred students from the sciences.

In addition to dissatisfaction levels by study area, this work found contrast by education types, i.e. formal vs. non-formal. Those attending FAWE (vocational institution) were more content than their school-going counterparts. Several factors accounted for this difference. A main difference between the two sectors was the lack of reported monetization at the vocational institute as oppose to several complains about unlawful extra charges at the formal schools. Another distinct difference was in perceived relationships between learning, employment and general quality of life. All vocational students spoke more explicitly about gaining employment or starting their own businesses post-graduation whereas formal school students were more uncertain about post-secondary plans. As other researchers (Blaak, Openjuru & Zeelen, 2012) have noted non-formal vocational education can be appealing because it is flexible, participatory, learner-centered, accelerated learning and locally relevant. Lastly, the tuition free vocational

education void of corruption and bribery enhanced FAWE attendees' positive educational experience. This discovery is not surprising given high poverty rates in Koinadugu district which affects many parents ability to afford school/education expenses. It was the recognition of high levels of poverty that an affirmative action was initiated in 2003 to provide free secondary school education for girls the Northern (Koinadugu district located here) and Easter parts of Sierra Leone (Alghali et.al, 2005). Note that this was in addition to the already established national free and compulsory primary education.

Concluding Commentaries: Youth in a Post-Colonial, Developmental State

While this work did not set out to strictly critique the education apparatus but rather to understand young people's experience of and within it, it is however important to acknowledge that predominant assumed notions of education (western based structured) as the tool for development as found in this study is flawed. As this study findings show, young people strongly correlate the attainment of education to various life outcomes. Their perceptions are no doubt formed from personal experiences and narratives perpetuated by the state, through emphasizes on education as established in chapter one. Many researchers observe that while countries in Sub-Sahara Africa have made improvements in the education system, improvement in student learning has not significantly increased (Wechtler, Annika; Michaelowa, Katharina; Fehrler, & Sebastian 2007). Furthermore assumed linkages between education to gaining employment and other life opportunities does not hold true for many. However, it can be argued that in the environment in which young people find themselves, education (western-based) increases their life choices. What Africanist and Pan Africanist scholars, theorist and philosophers such as Ali Mazrui, Julius Nyerere and others have proposed is the Africanization and d Indigenization of

schooling and education in general (Hoppers, 2000; Mazrui, 2011). It is evident from this study that young Koinadugans, and one may generalize to young Sierra Leoneans' perception of education as their gateway to participation and better quality of life will not change anytime soon. Hence, it is best that the system be reformed and innovatively expanded to earnestly reflect local needs and livelihood.

Implications:

This section presents main implications derived from study findings as related to young people's development, within their particular physical and socio-cultural environment. Reflection on major findings indicates a number of factors that should be considered for policies, community development efforts and education reform plans. Five broad areas should be considered 1) reworking place narratives to reflect asset based perspective found in this study in addition to the popular deficit perceptions, 2) maintaining and protecting Koinadugu's unique ecological assets which is a major pull factor for many young people to stay in rural areas, 3) increase the pull factors by addressing infrastructural gaps to enhance livelihood and facilitate goals achievement, 4) prepare and engage young people in community development matters generally and environmental issues specifically, and 5) better align the education pedagogy to young people's needs particularly for the sciences.

Broadly, study findings indicate that popular narratives on and about Koinadugu district needs to incorporate young people's complex perspectives that highlights both place assets and deficits. Currently this narrative is dominated by the deficit viewpoint. Telling representative narratives are important because they have implications for young people's sense of place and worth.

In relation to the above point, Koinadugu's natural environmental and resources need to be protected and maintained. Environmental protection and conservation is not only important to mitigate some of the issues Koinadugu is already facing, the natural landscape is a key component of young people's place identity. Findings show that the affordances of the natural environment are a key pull factor for young people who are often tempted to migrate to the city. However, young people's perceptions reveal that these resources are being mismanaged. As one interviewee stated, "*if they don't stop it, Koinadugu will become a desert and everyone will leave for Freetown.*" Freetown however is already facing multiple challenges due overpopulation, and life is not always better for the rural youth who enters the city under-equipped (Sam, 2011; Maconachie, Binns, & Tengbe, 2012). Current research findings of young people's desire to reside in their rural community presents an opportunity for government and stakeholders to ensure that the pull factors to stay are stronger than push factors to out-migrate.

This study shows that young people are willing to take on active roles in their community's development. While they are deeply concerned about various issues within their environment they also acknowledged they lack adequate skills and trainings to facilitate their active engagement in community problem solving. Given national prioritization to building human capacity for 21st century problems, it is critical that any and all forms of education and capacity building programs be relevant to young people and the issues they face. Furthermore, study findings show that positive role models are important for young people's development. As future leaders, stakeholders should authentically engage young people community development and decision-making processes.

Given national priorities to develop human resource capacity particularly in rural areas, having an infrastructural environment that facilitates related activities is critical. This study shows that young people's built environment insufficiently supports their personal future goals. Basic amenities such as electricity, good roads and accessible portable water are all important in the attempt to not only maintain a healthy population but a thriving one able to pursue goals and desires. Without noted basic amenities, young people's health will continue to be affected, and students' quality of learning will continue to be below full potential. Other education related implications relates to the tuition-free policy implementation. As findings show while this policy has enabled many girls to complete primary school and some secondary school, the complete cessation of funding after secondary school prevents many from furthering their education even if they desire to. Given increasing impressions and pressure for further education, it would be important to set up some support mechanisms to support those interested in further studies.

Finally the need for post-secondary tertiary institutions in the region cannot be overstated. While the need is high for all youth, both female and male participants felt it was particularly important higher for boys, who without adequate certification and skills training feel somehow trapped. As oppose to girls, who listed marriage as an alternative, boys seemed to have no tangible alternatives. At the time of this study, there was no vocational institute such as FAWE that catered for male. And though served young women, it was limited in its capacity to accommodate those with varied career goals to become doctors, lawyers, engineers and other professions. Finally, given findings of satisfactory educational experiences, both current and future educational institutions should consider learning from and incorporating components of non-formal vocational institutes' pedagogy such as FAWE that meets learners' needs.

Research Limitations:

The purpose of this study was to examine young rural youth's environmental perceptions, it's relation to their future orientation and the implication for education as a tool for personal and community development. As with any study, the current work was subject to certain limitations. In this section I discuss those limitations.

Methodologically, although purposeful sampling and in-depth interviews satisfied the purpose of this study, they presented a number of limitations. Purposeful sampling technique was used for this work within one town in Koinadugu district hence further research is important to confirm and expand findings on rural youth's environmental perceptions, views of the future and experiences with the education system. This is imperative when thinking of young people in more remote areas who have not experienced new infrastructural developments happening in Kabala town. In fact, a few participants who migrated from some of these far off villages commented that community development endeavors needs to go beyond Kabala (the capital of Koinadugu district). Furthermore, this research relied heavily on in-depth interviews to understand young people's environmental experiences. While in-depth interviews are commonly used in this line of research, other methods such as participant observations within their natural environments over an extended period of time could have provided more insight on the topic.

A few challenges arose during some focus group interviews; one being participant fatigue, particularly for the larger groups and the other researcher's socially privileged demographic profile and positionality within the community. During large focus groups, researcher observed that some participants' appeared to be less energetic towards the third section of the interview questions. Understandably, given the group had over 30 participants. To

reduce waiting, researcher distributed sheets of paper and pens for participants to write down their responses to the questions while they wait for their turn to provide a verbal response. After the first experience, researcher made conscious effort to keep focus groups to a smaller number.

During interviews, it was evident that researcher's profile as a western-educated African woman, coming from a developed country had some impact on participants, although the nature of it is not easily identified. One such evidence occurred when participants were asked about their personal futures. Many responded that they did like to be as educated as the researcher or "even surpass" her. Furthermore, researcher's position as the program director for an education focus community based organization in Koinadugu had some influence on participants' perception of her positionality. A few interviewees felt that the researcher could bring their concerns directly to stakeholders and the government. To address this, after each focus group researcher debriefed with students, explaining again that this was an academic related research, and provided examples of how findings from the research may be disseminated including conferences, paper publications, education related workshops in Sierra Leone and globally. Questions were answered and participants seemed to leave with clearer understanding.

As with studies done in one language and written in another translation presented some challenges. The major challenge for this study was ensuring that the emotive aspect of young people's narratives was reflected. Certain topics triggered strong emotions for some participants, which was not easy to display in data reporting. For example several girls cried during the interview as they described sexual harassment from teachers, or difficulties they faced in desperate attempts to get an education. Similarly, some science stream male students were highly frustrated with the educational systems. Some of these emotions were challenging to translate

both from Creole to English and from oral to written. Nevertheless, researcher ensured that the core of interviewees' experiences was documented, consulting with the native Sierra Leonean creole speaking dissertation committee member when necessary.

Future Research

Empirical studies on rural youth experiences and future orientation in the Majority World are still quite limited and more so for post-conflict environments. Hence the need for studies that explore the diversity of youth experiences particularly in rural post conflict environments. Future research could replicate the current study with different populations with varying levels of rurality. For example it would be interesting to compare environmental perceptions of a transitioning place as Kabala with others in smaller villages in Koinadugu district. Moreover, this would be important to ensure that concerns and needs of these less visible communities are acknowledged and considered in development plans.

As previously noted, future research that engages in direct long-term observation of young peoples' environmental interactions and negotiations could shed more insight to their experiences and perceptions. Furthermore, researchers should consider employing some of the new innovative participatory research methodologies such as photography and videography that situates young people as co-researchers. Such methodologies have the potential to produce interesting body of knowledge

As proposed by one of the stakeholders in my study, it would be beneficial to gain educators and community members' perspectives when it comes to the issue of education. In particular, teachers' perspective could be very valuable with regards to quality of education, young people's relationship with the system and how it can be enhanced. Some interviewed

stakeholders and students offered some insight into the topic, but a stand-alone research could provide more insights. Additionally, empirical work is needed to understand impacts and implications of national policies and their implementations on students and the school systems.

Finally, a replication of the current study is needed post the 2014 Ebola outbreak. Given that this research work was conducted before the outbreak, it would be interesting to examine if and how young people's perceptions and future orientation change. Such a study juxtaposed with findings from the current study may provide interesting insights per environmental concerns particularly as the role of deforestation became prominent in national discourse during the outbreak.

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Appendix A: Pre-formulated Focus Group/ One-on-one Interview Questions

Typical Day

- Tell me about your typical day. Describe what you do from when you wake up to when you go to bed at night.

Youth Conceptualization of Environmental and Environmental Perceptions

- How would you describe the environment in which you live in Koinadugu?
- What do you think about the state of this community, where you live?
- What do you like about it? Are there any things you don't like about it or would like for it to be different?
- How do the problems you mention affect life that you and other people you know live?
 - Food Security: How many meals do they have per day?
 - Water Quality: Do they have access to clean running or portable water?
 - Road Network: What is the distance to school? Do they have transportation to school?
 - Electricity: Do they have access to electricity?
- What do you think are the causes of these problems?

Visions of the Future: Perceived & Preferred future

What you think of your future, what are your thoughts? What are some of your future goals?

- What would be your ideal way of life be years from now?
- How do you think you can achieve this ideal life?
- What kind of resources or training do you think to need to achieve your goals

What are your thoughts when you think about the future of Koinadugu district?

- What kind of life do you think some of your age mates will be living?

How do you see your community being in 5 years? Do you think some things will change 5 years from now? If so, what do you think will change? What makes you think that will change or not change?

What are some important things you would like to be in your ideal future (Hicks, 1996)?

How about the future of your community?

Education as a Tool for Personal and Community Development

You have identified some key issues that you see in your environment and community and have described the type of future that you would like for yourself and your community.

- Do you feel that the education you are receiving is preparing you to be able to help tackle some of these issues?
- Do you feel the education is preparing for the goals you have for yourself?

At school, you talked about some of the needs in your community; do you talk about these problems in school?

Do things you learn help you think about some of the community issues you described before?

How will the education you are getting now help you with future career and life goals?

How is the classroom atmosphere?

What do you hope to get from school? Are you getting it? How do you think this education will help you and your community?

If you could change anything in the education you are getting now in order for to you to be more interested, what would you change?

Probes:

Can you describe what you mean?

Can you give an example?

Is there anything else?

Appendix B: Interview Request Letter

To Whom It May Concern

My name is Linda Vakunta. I am a doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I am writing to ask your school's support and join for this approved qualitative research study on young people's views of issues in their environment, the future and the role of education for development. This is part of my graduate degree at the university. I hope you will support and join in this important work

Joining in this study will include:

An interview that last 45-60 minutes and will be conducted after school hours in a in your school building. I will provide my study questions to you for your responses before the study. I will tape record the interviews, and I will also take notes.

Partaking in this study is completely volunteer-based and there is no punishment for not joining or leaving in the middle of the study. Students' information in this study will be kept very private. Names and school will not appear in the study. All study notes will be kept in a private place at the university.

Please contact me by email at lvakunta@wisc.edu or by mail to

_____. Or you may also contact me by phone at (608) 692-5405.

Sincerely,

Linda Vakunta

Appendix C: Demographic Information Form- Participants

ID # _____

Date _____

Site (School) ID _____

Gender Female _____, Male _____

Date of Birth _____ Age: _____ years

Occupation _____

Class or Highest Level of Education _____

Your Parents Education Background _____

Appendix D: Adult Participant Oral Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Title of the Study: Exploring the interface between Youth Conceptualization of Environmental Issues, Future Orientation and Education for Sustainable Development

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

You are asked to join in this study because you are a young person in your community. I want to understand how you feel about your town, issues in your environment, the future and the role of education in improving it. This study will try to find out how education can help you reach your goals.

This study will include young people with aged 12-35.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate in this study you will be asked questions about your views of your living environment, visions of the future and the role of education in developing the community. The study will take 45-60 minutes of your time. Other people will not be able to hear what you say to me. Our talk will be tape-recorded. These questions will let you to talk your thoughts, and your goals and hopes.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

There are no risks associated with this study.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

We don't expect any direct benefits to you from participation in this study

WILL I BE PAID FOR MY PARTICIPATION?

You will receive a lunch or money for lunch. If you withdraw before the end of the study, nothing bad will happen to you for leaving early.

HOW WILL MY PRIVACY BE PROTECTED?

While I share the result of this study, your name will not be used. Only group information will be written. Also, only group results will be given to your school or institution if they request. Therefore, they won't be able to identify you in this study or have any information about your answers.

WHO CAN I TALK TO IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about the study after you leave today you can call Dr. David Rosenthal at (608) 262-4776. You may reach me through email at lvakunta@wisc.edu.

If you have more questions, you can contact my university at 608-263-2320.

You don't have to be in this study. You can agree to be in the study now and change your mind later.

Saying yes to join this study means that you understand everything I have said and that I have answered your questions.

Do you still want to join this study?

Appendix E: Parental/Guardian Oral Consent Form
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Title of the Study: Exploring the interface between Youth Conceptualization of Environmental Issues, Future Orientation and Education for Sustainable Development

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Your child has been asked to join in this study because they are a young person in Koinadugu district. I want to understand how your child feels about issues in their environment, the future and the role of education in improving it. This study will try to find out how education can help your child reach their goals.

This study will include young people aged 12-35.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If your child decides to join in this study, they will be asked questions about how they see their living environment, and the role of education in developing the community. The study will take 45-60 minutes of your child's time. Other people will not be able to hear what your child says to me. Our talk will be tape-recorded. These questions will let your child talk about their thoughts, goals and hopes.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

There are no risks associated with this study.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

We don't expect any direct benefits to your child from participation in this study

WILL I BE PAID FOR MY PARTICIPATION?

Your child will receive a lunch or money for lunch. They can withdraw before the end of the study, nothing bad will happen to them for leaving early.

HOW WILL MY PRIVACY BE PROTECTED?

While I share the result of this study, your child's name will not be used. Only group information will be written. Also, only group results will be given to their school or institution if they request. Therefore, they won't be able to identify your child in this study or have any information about their answers.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you or your child have questions about the study, you can call Dr. David Rosenthal at (608) 262-4776. Your child may reach me through email at lvakunta@wisc.edu.

If you have more questions, you can contact my university at 608-263-2320.

Your child doesn't have to be in this study. Your child can agree to be in the study now and change their mind later.

Saying yes for your child to join this study means that you understand everything I have said and that I have answered all of your questions.

Do you still want your child to join this study?

Appendix F: Minor Oral Consent Form

Title of the Study: Exploring the interface between Youth Conceptualization of Environmental Issues, Future Orientation and Education for Sustainable Development

You are asked to join in this study because you are a young person in your town. I want to understand how you feel about your town and school. This study will try to find out how school can help you reach your goals.

The study will take 45-60 minutes of your time. Other people will not be able to hear what you say to me. Our talk will be tape-recorded. You will be asked some questions. These questions will let you to talk your thoughts, and your goals and hopes.

Our talk may be a bit long and may be a little boring. Being in the study will help me to better understand how school can be better. I will not use your name when I talk about what you say. I may write about other students' ideas or talk about them at meetings, but your name will not be used.

I will also ask your mother and/or father if you can join this study. Please talk to them before you tell me whether or not you will join.

WHO CAN I TALK TO IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have questions about the study after you leave today you can call Dr. David Rosenthal at (608) 262-4776. You may reach Ms. Vakunta through email at lvakunta@wisc.edu. If you have more questions, you can contact my school's office at 608-263-2320.

You don't have to be in this study. You can agree to be in the study now and change your mind later.

Saying yes to join this study means that you understand everything I have said and that I have answered your questions.

Do you still want to join this study?