
Promoting Gender Equity Through Land Rehabilitation and Stewardship

**Peace Diamonds
Restoration Initiative**



**International Women's Day
March 8, 2022**

Overview

The Peace Diamonds[™] Restoration Initiative endeavors to support post-mining land restoration in communities impacted by artisanal diamond mining. The initiative responds to the legacy of abandoned diamond pits in Africa, which contribute to environmental degradation, health hazards, and lost economic opportunities. At its core, Peace Diamonds seeks to reverse land degradation while rehabilitating those sites for sustainable use. RESOLVE field staff partner with national and regional governments, local leaders, and other community members to turn abandoned pits into arable land for farming, reforestation, and small fisheries while improving public health.

This model for environmental and socioeconomic development contributes to several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5: Gender Equality. On this International Women's Day, we're recognizing the invaluable role women fulfill in the reclamation process and their drive and determination to acquire new skills along the way – skills that they apply to the benefit of their households and communities long after each restoration is complete.

Women of Peace Diamonds

Community participation takes place during each stage of the Peace Diamonds reclamation model, beginning with consultations during the scoping phase. After securing initial approval from the local Chief and any landowners, our team holds a series of Town Halls to inform and seek consent from key stakeholders living near the selected site. These meetings welcome all impacted community members to express their views with equal standing. Local women attend to share their preferences on post-restoration land use and present questions about proposed logistics and outcomes. They also designate a Mamie Queen, or spokesperson, to advocate on their behalf during smaller planning discussions.

Farmer-Based Organizations (FBO), small-scale cooperatives registered with the Ministry of Agriculture, are a cornerstone of the Initiative. These groups consist of 75-80% women and girls who assign and assume organizational leadership roles, make collective land management decisions, and, ultimately, cultivate the land and oversee food production on the reclaimed sites. To date, 702 members from 117 households across the Kono District of Sierra Leone have joined FBOs formed as part of the Peace Diamonds restoration model. Members also participate in a series of entrepreneurial workshops to establish the necessary knowledge and practices to fairly sell surplus crop yields at local markets.



FBO members attend an entrepreneurship training session.

Isata Sandi, a member of the Sundondo (or, One Family) FBO, stated, "Cultivating these farmlands has repositioned women and redefined our roles in the home. Now we are contributing to household income and improving our livelihoods." Women engaged in these FBOs have shared that a sense of solidarity quickly emerges within these groups, offering members a sense of added strength.

Beyond the time and energy women dedicate to the FBO formalization process and training sessions, they also lend their support to the physical reclamation process. Some contribute manual labor to this undertaking, while others choose to extend auxiliary services such as work supervision, water retrieval, and food provisions. Those who prepare and deliver meals to the worksite save the

laborers the time and physical effort that traveling back and forth from the neighboring community hubs would require, and time is a precious commodity considering Sierra Leone's rainy season can last for up to 7 months and completely halt operations during the heaviest downfalls.

Spotlight: Sia Mboyah

Sia Mbayoh, or Mamie Sia as community members affectionately call her, is a single mother of six. After the 1991-2002 Sierra Leone Civil War displaced her from her home, she turned to scraping (the practice of searching previously-mined lands by hand for leftover mineral deposits) as a source of income. The earth was unstable near the edge of the crater she mined, and injuries and bodily harm were common at this site.

This was Sia's daily reality when Peace Diamonds Restoration Initiative team leaders approached to conduct preliminary site scoping and engage local community members on the prospect of a land reclamation project. The intervention rehabilitated nearly a hectare of land to support farming by nine households, including Sia's, whose personal plot of arable land doubled in size. Sia soon began cultivating rice, legumes, and vegetables, for her and her family. With a modest surplus in seasonal yields, she has supported her children's education. She shared, "I will be forever grateful to the Peace Diamonds Restoration Initiative. Now, my entire household has food to eat, and we have new income from selling the excess. Finally, we know the meaning of food security." Although Sia's personal story is unique, the journey through seemingly insurmountable challenges to renewed hope is one that hundreds of women who have engaged with Peace Diamonds know well.



Sia and family members stand close to a freshly planted rice farm.

Continued Commitment to Gender Equity

As the Peace Diamonds Restoration Initiative enters a period of new scale, gender equity remains at the forefront of the program's objectives. The model has enabled women and girls in remote, rural geographies to positively contribute to their communities while becoming economic agents and leaders for change. We plan to expand the program throughout Sierra Leone and to other African countries contending with similar, lasting consequences of unreclaimed artisanal diamond mines. Opportunities to break the cycle can be limited in these regions. As Peace Diamonds grows, we seek to increase and enhance the impacts of each site restoration so every participant holds the power to engage in new, sustainable livelihoods.

The women involved in the Peace Diamonds Restoration Initiative have been integral to each project's success. They are a consistent source of inspiration to their communities, especially to one another. FBO Chairperson Rebecca Kamarmoe reflected on the impact that land restoration and collective organization has had on her cohort. "We have found a common purpose for self-empowerment. This shared drive reassures us that we can rise from the ashes."

We look forward to new possibilities in the year ahead and to working with and learning from the resilient women and girls who commit themselves to healing the land while charting a promising path forward for both themselves and the generations to follow.



PEACE[™]

DIAMONDS

RESTORATION INITIATIVE

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RESOLVE

RESOLVE forges sustainable solutions to critical social, health, and environmental challenges by creating innovative partnerships where they are least likely and most needed. We envision a less polarized world with a shared commitment to transforming ambitious ideas into real benefits for people, communities, and ecosystems.
