

Strengthening Young Women's Participation in Local and National Peace Processes in South Sudan

Project Amendment Request in light of COVID-19 Pandemic

Juba, May 2020

Background

The world is undergoing a turmoil of an invisible enemy, the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic that started in the Chinese City of Wuhan in December 2019 and quickly spread around the world – killing tens of thousands and counting at unimaginable speed. South Sudan registered its first COVID-19 positive case on Sunday 5th April 2020 and cases increased afterwards. This was followed by aggressive hate speech on social media directed to expatriates coming into the country for their normal humanitarian duties. In a matter of weeks, the pandemic has paralyzed normal business in the country.

The pandemic has hit at a very bad timing for South Sudan that has just emerged out of a devastating six year-long civil war, into a fragile peace process that is yet to bear fruits and instill hopes in the hearts of the war affected people. The country is implementing a revitalized peace Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), signed in September 2018 by all parties to the conflict. The establishment of the revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) recently started and yet to be finalized before peace and reconciliation mechanisms kick off to promote peaceful coexistence in the country.

The current COVID-19 pandemic poses a big setback to the peace process and might create room for opportunistic new conflicts to emerge or set constraints to peace implementation. With these challenges in mind, it requires consolidated efforts to help the country fight the pandemic. Search for Common Ground (Search) and its partners implementing the “*Strengthening Young Women's Participation in Local and National Peace Processes in South Sudan*” project funded by the United Nations' Peacebuilding Fund propose to join the fight to raise awareness to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in South Sudan and minimize its impact on peace. Search is also working with its partners on ways to promote peaceful coexistence during the pandemic.

Objectives of the Proposed Amendment

Search and its partners propose to leverage the existing project to respond to the challenges of the pandemic, while continuing to contribute to the overall outcomes of the project by putting women leaders front and center in COVID-19 response in their communities.

As such, the proposed amendment aims to continue pursuing the three project objectives: (1) To strengthen the ability of young women leaders and groups to collaboratively lead local and national-level peace efforts; (2) To transform attitudes and behaviors about women and youth (and young women in particular) and their role in peace and security; and (3) To contribute guidance, best practices, and lessons learned to the global field of youth engagement in peace and security. Yet, it will propose to adjust specific project activities in order to: raise awareness and prevent rumors on COVID-19, including prevention, symptoms and when to

contact designated emergency number; help combat stigma and counter hate messages and minimize negative impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable communities already affected by conflict; and empower young women leaders to provide water points in key locations in Juba to facilitate the washing of hands and inform the population of COVID-19 prevention measures.

Revised Activities

While certain activities that require gathering people will be postponed, other key project activities can be adjusted and carried forward. Among the proposed changes are the production of **radio programming** and a **social media campaign** to spread messages of awareness on COVID-19, prevent rumors and create safe spaces for discussion around how the COVID-19 situation is impacting social cohesion. Search and its partners will also leverage their **peacebuilding initiatives** and **rural outreach** activities to support hand-washing and hygiene initiatives led by young women leaders in their communities. Finally, the project team will use information, education and communication (**IEC**) **materials** with messages in various local languages, for display in communities by targeted women leaders to remind communities of Covid-19 prevention measures.

Activities contributing to Outcome 1:

While the inter-relational analysis had already been completed, and the mentorship activities initiated, all other in-person activities under the first objective have currently been postponed. Should the movement and gathering restriction measures still be in place then, we will reassess and decide on a new course of action, to either push back the timing again or completely transform the nature of the activity in a way that can be implemented and is safe to participants and staff.

Activities contributing to Outcome 2:

A number of activities under this stream can go forward in the coming months, while observing social distancing precautions. The production of the *Sergeant Esther* radio drama continues, together with the broadcast of profiles of new peace leaders on the airwaves. The first peace festival was held by AnaTaban at the end of February, and the second one remains planned later in the year. Below is an outline of the proposed modifications to repurpose some of the other activities under this objective to respond to the COVID-19 crisis.

Activity 2.1.1. Radio Programming: The talk show-style radio programs will be adjusted to incorporate specific discussion topics addressing COVID-19. Leveraging its studio facility in Juba, Search and its partners will develop messages aimed at adjusting attitudes and behaviours to COVID-19-related measures. In addition to giving hope, messages will also promote positive narratives, explain how social distancing can be applied in the local context, prevent stigmatization of individuals and groups infected by COVID-19, and encourage mutual support and collaboration. Search's working relationships with key government stakeholders will also enable us to produce spots on messages provided by the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the World Health Organization. The PSAs will be approved by the Director of Health Education in the Ministry of Health who is already working closely with Search on COVID-19 awareness raising. Finally, leveraging its radio production studio facility, Search will produce between 5 to 15 minutes in-depth programs on COVID-19, which will be broadcast on loudspeakers mounted on "boda-boda's" - motorcycles, bicycles, rickshaws - that will circulate among communities. The boda-boda's will stop in one place for the audio program to play to the end before moving to another location.

Activity 2.2.1 Young Women-led Mediation and Peacebuilding Initiatives & Activity 2.2.2 Rural Outreach: The positive role young women can play in local efforts to prevent the COVID-19 spread will be leveraged by supporting mentored participants as they lead handwashing and other hygiene initiatives in

Procurement of hygiene material																			
Implementation of initiatives in the communities																			
Activity 2.2.4 Social Media Campaign																			AnaTaban, CTW, Search
Social media coverage of COVID-19 activities				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
(New Activity) IEC Material																			Search
Development and printing of IEC materials on COVID-19		X	X	X															
Distribution of IEC materials to target locations				X	X														

Budget

All of the proposed activities will be implemented within the budget allocated by the United Peacebuilding Fund for the project.