



STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2031

***BUILDING PEACE, STRENGTHENING
GOVERNANCE AND EMPOWERMENT
TOGETHER WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND
THEIR COMMUNITIES.***



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Executive summary

Peacelinks stands at a pivotal moment. For over three decades, the organization has been a pioneer in youth-led, arts-based peacebuilding—transforming the lives of former child soldiers, healing communities torn by civil war, and proving that young people are not merely victims of conflict but its most powerful peacebuilders. Today, as Sierra Leone navigates new challenges—youth unemployment, inter-generational tensions, the impacts of climate change, and the need to sustain peace beyond the post-war era, we remain committed to amplifying our collective impacts.

This 5-Year Strategic Plan charts an ambitious yet achievable course for the organization. Developed through a participatory process involving staff, board members, youth participants, community partners, and international supporters, the plan reflects a commitment to honoring Peacelinks’ legacy while adapting to a rapidly changing context. At its core, the plan organizes Peacelinks’ future around four interconnected strategic goals:

1. Deepen and Scale the Arts-Based Peacebuilding Model

Expand the creative arts program to all 16 districts, develop a replicable “Arts for Peace Toolkit,” establish regional Peace Arts Hubs, and leverage digital media to reach youth in remote areas. The aim is to reach 50,000 additional youth and community members by 2031, embedding the arts as a recognized tool for reconciliation and prevention.

2. Strengthen Youth Economic Empowerment and Resilience

Triple the number of youths receiving vocational and digital skills training, launch a Youth Enterprise Fund to seed 200 youth-led businesses, and integrate climate-smart livelihoods. This goal directly addresses the economic drivers of conflict and gives young people viable alternatives to violence.

3. Institutionalize Youth Participation in Peace and Governance

Build a sustainable “Youth Peace Ambassadors” network, establish youth-led community dialogue platforms in 10 chiefdoms, and advocate for young people’s inclusion in local governance structures. By institutionalizing youth voices, Peacelinks will help shift Sierra Leone’s peace infrastructure toward greater inclusivity.

4. Build a Resilient, Learning Organization

Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEAL) systems, diversify funding to achieve 40% core support by 2031, invest in staff and board capacity, and upgrade infrastructure to support expanded programming. A resilient organization is essential to sustain impact over the long term.

These goals are underpinned by cross-cutting commitments to gender equity, safeguarding, environmental sustainability, and the meaningful inclusion of marginalized youth, including young women, youth with disabilities, and those in rural communities.

Over the next five years, we will transition from a project-based organization to a programmatic, nationally scaled institution. It will deepen its partnerships with government, the private sector, and civil society, while remaining rooted in the communities it serves. Success will be measured not only by the number of youths trained or performances held, but by lasting changes in the communities, economic opportunities, and young people’s ability to shape decisions that affect their lives. This strategic plan is both a roadmap and an invitation. It calls on staff, board members, partners, and donors to join us in building a Sierra Leone where every young person, regardless of their past, can be an architect of peace. With a clear vision, a tested methodology, and a dedicated team, we are





ready to lead the next chapter of our journey; empowering a new generation to transform conflict into creativity, and trauma into hope.

2. Introduction and Context

This section provides the foundation for Peacelinks' strategic direction. It reviews the organization's history and core competencies, analyzes the current operating environment, assesses internal capacities, and summarizes the perspectives of key stakeholders. Together, these elements justify the strategic priorities outlined in this plan.

2.1 Organizational Background

Peacelinks was founded in 1990 by a group of Sierra Leonean teenagers who had experienced the early tremors of civil war. Inspired by an international children's peace conference, they returned home with a conviction: young people must lead the work of peace. By 1991, the organization was formally registered, operating from a small meeting space in Freetown with just ten members.

As Sierra Leone's decade-long conflict escalated, Peacelinks distinguished itself through an unconventional approach. While many humanitarian actors focused on material assistance, Peacelinks placed creative expression—music, dance, drama, and visual arts—at the center of healing and reintegration. Its members, many of them former child soldiers, used songs and performances to “deglamorize” war, open community dialogues, and advocate against child recruitment.

Over the past thirty years, Peacelinks has achieved:

- **Reintegration of over 3,000 former child soldiers** and war-affected youth through psychosocial support, skills training, and community-based reintegration.
- **Nationwide civic education and outreach** reaching an estimated 500,000 people through concerts, art exhibitions, and public dialogues.
- **Policy influence** including campaigns that contributed to the demobilization and disarmament processes, and ongoing advocacy for child protection.
- **International recognition** with support from UNICEF, Amnesty International, the Milagro Foundation, National Endowment for Democracy, National Democratic Initiative, the Youth Partnership for Peace and Development, and academic institutions that have documented its arts-based and youth-centric methodology.

Today, Peacelinks is governed by a Board of Directors and operates with a lean team of 12 full-time staff, supported by a network of volunteer youth facilitators. Its headquarters are in Freetown, with field presence in Bo, Kenema, and Makeni, Western Area Rural

2.2 Situational Analysis

To develop a relevant and responsive strategic plan, Peacelinks examined both its external environment and its internal capacities. The following analysis synthesizes findings from staff workshops, partner consultations, and a review of secondary data.





2.2.1 External Environment

Sierra Leone's Peace and Development Landscape

Sierra Leone is widely regarded as a post-conflict success story, having maintained relative stability since the end of the civil war in 2002. However, peace remains fragile. Key challenges include:

- **Youth Unemployment:** Over 60% of youth are underemployed or unemployed, creating frustration and vulnerability to manipulation by political actors.
- **Land and Resource Conflicts:** Tensions over land, mining, and customary authority frequently erupt into violence, especially in rural areas.
- **Political Polarization:** Electoral periods are marked by heightened rhetoric and occasional violence; young people are often mobilized as agents of unrest.
- **Climate Vulnerability:** Environmental degradation and erratic weather patterns affect livelihoods, particularly in agriculture-dependent communities, and can exacerbate competition over resources.
- **Legacy of Trauma:** Inter-generational wounds from the civil war persist, with many communities still lacking structured mechanisms for reconciliation.

2.2.2 Internal Assessment

Peacelinks conducted a self-assessment using a SWOT framework to identify strengths to build upon and weaknesses to address.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Strong brand recognition and trust in communities ◆ Proven arts-based methodology with documented impact ◆ Deep network of alumni and community facilitators ◆ Youth-led governance and culture ◆ Established partnerships with relevant government Ministries, Departments, Agencies, and Local Councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Limited monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEAL) systems ◆ Heavy reliance on short-term, project-based funding ◆ Inconsistent documentation of program outcomes ◆ Staff capacity gaps in financial management and fundraising ◆ Outdated infrastructure and limited digital tools
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ UNSCR 2250 and subsequent resolutions provide a global framework that national institutions are increasingly adopting. ◆ The Government of Sierra Leone has shown interest in youth empowerment and peace infrastructure, including through the National Youth Commission (NAYCOM) and the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA). ◆ Expanding mobile connectivity offers new channels for reaching youth with peace messages and skills training. ◆ Diversification into social enterprise (e.g., selling art, training fees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Development assistance is increasingly competitive, and some traditional donors are reducing their presence in Sierra Leone. ◆ Any resurgence of electoral violence or national unrest could disrupt programming and threaten staff safety. ◆ Ambitious youth may emigrate in search of opportunities, reducing the pool of local leaders and risk through dangerous journeys. ◆ External shocks could divert government and donor attention away from peacebuilding.

Key internal gaps identified include the need for a robust MEAL framework to capture long-term outcomes, a more diversified funding base, and expanded staff capacity. At the same time, Peacelinks' strengths; its grassroots credibility, innovative methodology, and committed youth network—provide a solid foundation for growth.



2.3 Stakeholder Expectations

The strategic planning process included consultations with a range of stakeholders to ensure that the plan reflects diverse perspectives and builds on existing partnerships.

Youth Participants and Alumni

Young people expressed pride in Peacelinks' history and a strong desire to see the organization grow. They emphasized the importance of:

- **Economic opportunities** (skills training, start-up capital) as a pathway to stability and dignity.
- **Continued creative spaces** where they can express themselves and engage with peers.
- **Mentorship and leadership roles** to transition from beneficiaries to program leaders.

Staff and Facilitators

Staff highlighted the need for:

- **Organizational stability** through multi-year funding and improved infrastructure.
- **Professional development** to strengthen technical skills in MEAL, advocacy, and finance.
- **Clear career pathways** to retain experienced personnel.

Government Partners (NAYCOM, NaCSA, Ministry of Youth Affairs)

Government counterparts expressed support for Peacelinks' work and encouraged:

- **Alignment with the National Youth Policy, the Big Five Game Changer** and other relevant frameworks such as the Sustainable development Goals. Particularly Goal number 16 on inclusive, peaceful and just societies.
- **Data sharing and co-implementation** to maximize reach.
- **Youth participation in district and chiefdom peace committees as integral Community-Based Dispute Resolution (CBDR) service providers** and local governance.

Donors and Partners

Current and potential donors communicated interest in:

- **Evidence of impact**, including rigorous monitoring and outcome data.
- **Cost-effectiveness** and sustainability beyond grant cycles.
- **Replicable models** that can be adapted by other organizations or government.

Community Leaders (Chiefs, Religious Leaders, Women's Groups)

Community stakeholders valued Peacelinks' ability to bridge divides and called for:

- **Continued engagement of elders** alongside youth.
- **Conflict prevention activities** before tensions escalate.
- **Visibility of Peacelinks' work** in rural areas where access is limited.

2.4 Rationale for the Strategic Plan

The confluence of internal aspirations and external opportunities makes this a critical moment for Peacelinks to formalize a long-term vision. The organization has reached a scale where ad-hoc, project-based implementation is no longer sufficient. At the same time, the evolving peace and development landscape demands that Peacelinks adapt—shifting from a post-war recovery focus to a proactive role in preventing future violence and equipping youth with 21st-century skills.

This strategic plan responds to these realities. It is designed to:

- **Build on Peacelinks’ unique methodology** while scaling it responsibly.
- **Address persistent challenges** such as youth unemployment and weak youth participation in governance.
- **Strengthen organizational systems** to ensure sustainability and accountability.
- **Align with national and international frameworks** to maximize partnerships and influence.

3. Strategic Direction

This section articulates the foundational elements that guide Peacelinks’s work over the next five years: the long-term vision toward which the organization strives, the mission that defines its core purpose, and the core values that shape its culture and decision-making. Together, these elements provide a clear compass for strategic choices and daily operations.

3.1 Vision

Peacelinks envisions a future where every young person; regardless of their past, gender, or geographic location, is an empowered agent of peace, leading inclusive communities and shaping a just society.

This vision reflects the organization’s founding belief that young people are not merely beneficiaries of peacebuilding but its architects. It imagines a Sierra Leone where youth are equipped with the skills, opportunities, and platforms to transform conflict into creativity, where communities are united by shared experiences of healing, and where the next generation inherits a society free from violence and exclusion.

3.2 Mission

To build peaceful, inclusive, and resilient communities by empowering young people and local actors to prevent conflict, strengthen social cohesion, and actively participate in shaping their development and governance systems.

In practice, this mission translates into three interconnected commitments:

- **Creative Arts:** Harnessing music, dance, drama, and visual arts as tools for trauma healing, community dialogue, and the deglamorization of violence.
- **Skills Development:** Providing vocational training, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship support that equip youth with viable economic alternatives.
- **Advocacy:** Amplifying youth voices in local governance, peace structures, and national policy, ensuring that young people influence decisions that affect their lives.

3.3 Core Values





Peacelinks' work is grounded in a set of core values that define its identity, guide its relationships, and ensure accountability to the communities it serves.

Youth Leadership and Participation

Young people are at the center of everything Peacelinks does—from program design and implementation to governance and advocacy. The organization is committed to creating meaningful opportunities for youth to lead, ensuring that their voices are not only heard but acted upon.

Creativity as Healing and Transformation

The arts are not merely a method but a philosophy. Peacelinks believes that creative expression can unlock trauma, bridge divides, and inspire new ways of being. It values imagination and innovation as essential tools for peace.

Community Ownership and Accountability

Peacelinks works in partnership with communities—elders, religious leaders, women's groups, and local authorities—recognizing that sustainable change requires local investment and ownership. The organization holds itself accountable to the people it serves, listening deeply and adapting to their needs.

Non-Violence and Inclusive Dialogue

Peacelinks is committed to peaceful conflict resolution and rejects all forms of violence, including the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. It fosters spaces where diverse perspectives can be expressed safely and respectfully, promoting dialogue over division.

Integrity and Transparency

As a steward of donor funds and community trust, Peacelinks operates with honesty, openness, and accountability. It strives for excellence in governance, financial management, and program delivery, ensuring that resources are used effectively to achieve lasting impact.

3.4 Theory of Change Overview

While a detailed Theory of Change will be developed as part of the implementation framework, the strategic direction is underpinned by a core logic:

If young women and men, including the most vulnerable and war-affected and marginalized gain access to creative arts for healing, acquire market-relevant skills for economic stability, and are supported to participate in decision-making processes, then they will transform from victims or perpetrators of violence into active peacebuilders, contributing to resilient, peaceful communities.

Peacelinks' unique contribution lies in integrating these three dimensions through a youth-led, arts-based approach that is deeply rooted in Sierra Leonean culture and context, backed by participatory dialogues capable of bridging gaps between young people, their communities and duty-bearers.

3.5 Strategic Goals





Building on this vision, mission, values, and theory of change, Peacelinks will pursue **four interconnected strategic goals** over the 2027–2031 period. These goals are designed to be mutually reinforcing scaling the arts model creates platforms for youth participation, economic empowerment addresses root causes of conflict, and organizational resilience ensures that gains are sustained.

GOAL	DESCRIPTION
1. Deepen and Scale the Arts-Based Peacebuilding Model	Expand the reach and depth of Peacelinks' creative arts programs, develop replicable tools, and establish regional hubs to embed the arts as a recognized peacebuilding methodology.
2. Strengthen Youth Economic Empowerment and Resilience	Increase access to vocational training, digital skills, and entrepreneurship support, with a focus on marginalized youth and climate-smart livelihoods.
3. Institutionalize Youth Participation in Peace and Governance	Build sustainable platforms for youth leadership, advocacy, and engagement in local and national decision-making structures.
4. Build a Resilient, Learning Organization	Strengthen internal systems, diversify funding, invest in staff and infrastructure, and embed a culture of learning and accountability.

These goals, along with their associated objectives and strategies, are elaborated in Section 4: Strategic Goals and Objectives.

3.6 Guiding Principles for Implementation

In addition to the core values, the following principles will guide the implementation of the strategic plan:

- **Evidence-Based Practice:** Decisions will be informed by data, monitoring, evaluation, and learning, ensuring that programs are effective and adaptive.
- **Partnership and Collaboration:** Peacelinks will seek strategic alliances with government, civil society, private sector, and academic institutions to amplify impact.
- **Sustainability:** From the outset, programs will be designed with an eye toward long-term viability, including local resource mobilization and capacity transfer.
- **Inclusion:** Special attention will be paid to reaching the most marginalized; young women, youth with disabilities, rural populations, and those who remain affected by conflict.

The following four goals form the core of Peacelinks' 5-Year Strategic Plan. Each goal is accompanied by a set of specific objectives and indicative strategies that will guide annual work planning and resource allocation. The goals are designed to reinforce one another: scaling the arts model creates platforms for youth participation; economic empowerment addresses root causes of conflict; and organizational resilience ensures that gains are sustained over time.

Goal 1: Deepen and Scale the Arts-Based Peacebuilding Model

Peacelinks' creative arts methodology is its signature contribution to peacebuilding. Over the next five years, the organization will expand the reach and depth of its arts programs, develop tools for replication, and establish infrastructure that embeds the arts as a recognized approach to healing and reconciliation across Sierra Leone.

Objective 1.1: Expand the creative arts program to all 16 districts, reaching 50,000 additional youth and community members by 2031.





Indicative Strategies:

- Conduct district-level mapping to identify communities with unmet peacebuilding needs and existing cultural assets.
- Train and deploy regional arts facilitators (youth volunteers) to lead music, dance, drama, and visual arts activities in new locations.
- Organize annual “Peace Tours” that bring performances and community dialogues to remote and underserved areas.
- Partner with local radio stations to broadcast recorded performances and peace messages, extending reach beyond physical events.

Objective 1.2: Develop and disseminate a replicable “Peacelinks Arts for Peace Toolkit” for use by other organizations and government institutions.

Indicative Strategies:

- Document Peacelinks’ arts methodologies, including facilitation guides, sample curricula, and case studies of impact.
- Pilot the toolkit with 5–10 partner organizations (youth groups, community-based organizations) and refine based on feedback.
- Publish the toolkit in accessible formats (print, digital) and conduct orientation workshops for interested institutions.
- Engage with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Ministry of Education to explore integration of arts-for-peace modules in non-formal education programs.

Objective 1.3: Establish a national network of “Peace Arts Hubs”, community centers equipped with music, drama, and visual arts facilities.

Indicative Strategies:

- Identify and secure underutilized community spaces (e.g., former youth centers, chiefdom halls) for conversion into Peace Arts Hubs.
- Equip each hub with basic instruments, art supplies, recording equipment, and safe gathering spaces.
- Assign trained youth facilitators to manage hub activities, ensuring ongoing programming and community access.
- Link hubs to local schools, religious institutions, and women’s groups to broaden participation.

Objective 1.4: Digitize and disseminate key peace messages through modern media platforms, reaching youth in remote areas.

Indicative Strategies:

- Create a series of short videos, animations, and audio dramas that convey peace themes (reconciliation, non-violence, gender equality).
- Leverage social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok) and mobile platforms to share content, particularly targeting youth aged 15–30.
- Establish a “Peacelinks Digital Studio” at headquarters to produce and archive content.
- Train youth members in digital storytelling and content creation to ensure authentic, youth-led messaging.





Goal 2: Strengthen Youth Economic Empowerment and Resilience

Economic marginalization is a key driver of conflict and a barrier to sustainable reintegration. Peacelinks will expand its livelihoods programming to equip youth with market-relevant skills, access to capital, and pathways to dignified work.

Objective 2.1: Triple the number of youth receiving vocational and digital skills training; from 50 to at least 100 per year, with a focus on former child soldiers, out-of-school youth, and young women.

Indicative Strategies:

- Expand training offerings to include high-demand sectors: information technology, renewable energy, agribusiness, creative industries (music, videography), and sustainable construction.
- Partner with technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions.
- Establish mobile training units to reach rural communities where formal training centers are scarce.
- Integrate financial literacy and entrepreneurship modules into all training programs.

Objective 2.2: Establish a Youth Enterprise Fund to provide seed grants and mentorship for at least 200 youth-led businesses by 2031.

Indicative Strategies:

- Secure seed capital from donors, corporate partners, and diaspora contributions to establish a revolving loan or grant fund.
- Develop clear application criteria, with priority for youth who have completed Peacelinks training and demonstrate viable business plans.
- Pair each grant recipient with a business mentor (drawn from local entrepreneurs or alumni) for at least 12 months.
- Track business survival rates, job creation, and repayment (for loan components) to inform fund sustainability.

Objective 2.3: Integrate climate-smart livelihoods into skills training to address environmental pressures and create green jobs.

Indicative Strategies:

- Incorporate modules on sustainable agriculture (climate-resilient crops, agroecology), waste management and recycling, and eco-tourism.
- Partner with the Environment Protection Agency and local conservation organizations to provide technical inputs.
- Support youth-led tree-planting and land restoration projects that combine environmental action with income generation (e.g., fruit trees, moringa cultivation).
- Advocate for youth inclusion in national green economy initiatives.

Objective 2.4: Forge partnerships with the private sector to create internship and apprenticeship pathways for trained youth.

Indicative Strategies:

- Map private sector companies (construction, hospitality, manufacturing, services) interested in youth employment.





- Establish formal internship/apprenticeship agreements that include structured training, fair stipends, and hiring commitments where feasible.
- Develop a “Youth Employability” certification that signals Peacelinks graduates’ skills and readiness to employers.
- Organize annual job fairs connecting graduates with employers.

Goal 3: Institutionalize Youth Participation in Peace and Governance

Peacelinks was founded on the principle that young people must lead peacebuilding. This goal aims to create sustainable structures that embed youth voices in community decision-making, local governance, and national peace processes.

Objective 3.1: Create a sustainable “Youth Peace Ambassadors” program, training 500 young leaders in conflict mediation, advocacy, and policy engagement.

Indicative Strategies:

- Recruit diverse cohorts of youth (including former combatants, women, persons with disabilities) from all districts.
- Deliver a blended training curriculum (in-person workshops, online modules, mentored field practice) covering conflict analysis, mediation skills, advocacy strategies, and policy engagement.
- Assign Ambassadors to serve as community peace monitors and early warning focal points.
- Establish an alumni network that provides ongoing capacity building and peer support.

Objective 3.2: Institutionalize youth-led community dialogue platforms in 10 chiefdoms, facilitating intergenerational conversations on land disputes, political tolerance, and gender equality.

Indicative Strategies:

- Work with chiefdom authorities to establish “Youth-Elder Dialogue Forums” where young people and traditional leaders meet regularly to address local tensions.
- Train youth facilitators to lead structured dialogues using participatory methods (e.g., community theater, talking circles).
- Document outcomes and feed lessons into district peace committees.
- Link dialogues to concrete action plans that address identified issues (e.g., land use agreements, youth representation in local committees).

Objective 3.3: Advocate for the inclusion of youth representatives in local councils and district peace committees, building on UNSCR 2250.

Indicative Strategies:

- Map existing local governance and peace structures (district councils, chiefdom committees, security sector bodies) and identify entry points for youth inclusion.
- Develop advocacy briefs and engage with the Ministry of Local Government and relevant parliamentary committees.
- Support youth candidates to run for positions in local councils, and accompany them with capacity building on governance and accountability.
- Monitor and report on progress toward youth representation targets.





Objective 3.4: Develop a national campaign to end all forms of violence against children and youth, leveraging Peacelinks' alumni network and creative assets.

Indicative Strategies:

- Design a multi-year campaign that combines advocacy, awareness-raising, and community mobilization.
- Produce campaign materials (songs, dramas, radio spots, posters) that highlight the impacts of violence and promote reporting mechanisms.
- Partner with child protection agencies (e.g., Child Helpline 116) to strengthen referral pathways.
- Engage traditional and religious leaders as campaign allies to shift social norms around corporal punishment, early marriage, and youth exploitation.

Goal 4: Build a Resilient, Learning Organization

To deliver on its programmatic ambitions, Peacelinks must strengthen its internal systems, diversify its funding base, and cultivate a culture of learning and accountability. This goal focuses on organizational sustainability and effectiveness.

Objective 4.1: Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEAL) systems to capture long-term outcomes, including a digital database for beneficiary tracking.

Indicative Strategies:

- Develop a comprehensive MEAL framework with clear indicators, data collection tools, and periodic evaluation schedules.
- Deploy a digital beneficiary management system to track participation, outcomes, and alumni engagement.
- Conduct baseline, mid-term, and end-line evaluations for all major programs.
- Institutionalize regular learning sessions (quarterly reflections, after-action reviews) to adapt strategies based on evidence.

Objective 4.2: Diversify funding sources to achieve 40% core funding by 2031 (from current <10%), through multi-year partnerships, local fundraising, and social enterprise.

Indicative Strategies:

- Develop a fundraising strategy that targets diverse sources: multi-year institutional donors, local corporate sponsors, individual giving (diaspora, domestic), and earned income.
- Build capacity of a dedicated fundraising team (or consultant) to cultivate and manage donor relationships.
- Launch a “Friends of Peacelinks” membership program with tiered benefits to encourage recurring local donations.
- Explore social enterprise models, such as selling art products, offering paid training services to other organizations, or hosting fee-based cultural events.

Objective 4.3: Enhance staff and board capacities through targeted training in financial management, safeguarding, and adaptive leadership.

Indicative Strategies:





- Conduct annual skills gap assessments and develop individualized and group training plans.
- Provide training for board members on governance, fiduciary responsibility, and strategic oversight.
- Strengthen safeguarding policies and ensure all staff, volunteers, and partners undergo regular training on child protection and adult safeguarding.
- Promote leadership development pathways for junior staff and youth facilitators.

Objective 4.4: Upgrade infrastructure to support expanded programming, including a central resource center and regional office facilities.

Indicative Strategies:

- Assess infrastructure needs for headquarters (office space, storage, meeting rooms, digital studio) and field offices.
- Develop a phased infrastructure improvement plan, prioritizing critical upgrades and accessibility.
- Explore partnerships with local authorities or private sector for shared space arrangements.
- Equip field offices with reliable internet, transportation, and communication tools to facilitate program implementation.

4.1 Interconnections Among Goals

While each goal is articulated separately, their success is interdependent:

- **Goal 1 (Arts Model)** provides platforms for **Goal 3 (Youth Participation)** by creating safe spaces where young people build confidence and articulate their concerns.
- **Goal 2 (Economic Empowerment)** addresses the material drivers of conflict, making peacebuilding more sustainable and reducing the risk that youth will be drawn into violence.
- **Goal 3 (Youth Participation)** ensures that young people have a stake in governance and peace structures, creating accountability and long-term ownership.
- **Goal 4 (Organizational Resilience)** underpins all other goals, ensuring that Peacelinks has the systems, funding, and staff capacity to deliver effectively and adapt to changing circumstances.

Peacelinks recognizes that sustainable peace cannot be achieved through isolated interventions. The complex realities of conflict, marginalization, and development require an approach that systematically addresses intersecting dimensions of inequality, vulnerability, and risk. To this end, four cross-cutting themes will be integrated into all goals, objectives, and activities throughout the 2027–2031 strategic period. These themes are not standalone programs but rather lenses through which Peacelinks designs, implements, monitors, and evaluates its work.

5.1 Gender Equity

Sierra Leone's civil war and its aftermath have had profoundly gendered impacts. Women and girls faced systematic sexual violence, displacement, and exclusion from post-war decision-making. Today, gender inequality persists in economic participation, political representation, and access to education and justice. Peacelinks is committed to actively addressing these disparities.

Integration Across Goals:





- **Goal 1 (Arts Model):** Ensure that creative arts activities are accessible to young women and girls, addressing barriers such as mobility restrictions, cultural norms, and safety concerns. Develop gender-sensitive facilitation techniques and create women-only spaces where participants feel safe to express themselves. Highlight themes of gender-based violence prevention and women's leadership in performances and dialogues.
- **Goal 2 (Economic Empowerment):** Target at least 50% of vocational training and enterprise fund beneficiaries to be young women. Design training schedules and locations that accommodate caregiving responsibilities. Partner with women-led businesses and associations to provide mentorship and market linkages.
- **Goal 3 (Youth Participation):** Advocate for the inclusion of young women in local governance and peace structures. Support young women to take on leadership roles within the Youth Peace Ambassadors program. Conduct community dialogues that challenge harmful gender norms and promote shared decision-making.
- **Goal 4 (Organizational Resilience):** Maintain a gender-balanced staff and board, with policies that promote equal opportunity and prevent discrimination. Ensure that safeguarding policies explicitly address sexual harassment and gender-based violence, with clear reporting and response mechanisms.

Indicative Measures:

- Percentage of female participants across all programs.
- Number of gender-sensitive adaptations made to arts and training curricula.
- Proportion of female Youth Peace Ambassadors and grant recipients.
- Staff and board gender composition.

5.2 Safeguarding

Peacelinks works with children, youth, and communities that have experienced profound trauma. The organization has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that all its activities are safe, and that no harm comes to participants through its work. Safeguarding encompasses the protection of children and vulnerable adults from abuse, exploitation, and harassment by staff, volunteers, partners, or other participants.

Integration Across Goals:

- **All Goals:** A unified safeguarding policy will be adopted, covering child protection, adult safeguarding, and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. All staff, board members, volunteers, and partners will undergo mandatory training and sign codes of conduct.
- **Goal 1 (Arts Model):** Ensure that Peace Arts Hubs and performance venues are physically safe and supervised by trained facilitators. Establish clear protocols for reporting and responding to any safeguarding concerns that arise during arts activities.
- **Goal 2 (Economic Empowerment):** Screen trainers and mentors for suitability to work with youth. Ensure that internship and apprenticeship placements are with organizations that have their own safeguarding policies and are vetted by Peacelinks.
- **Goal 3 (Youth Participation):** Train Youth Peace Ambassadors in safeguarding principles so they can serve as first responders and referral points in their communities. Integrate safeguarding awareness into community dialogues.
- **Goal 4 (Organizational Resilience):** Designate a Safeguarding Focal Point at senior management level. Establish a confidential reporting mechanism (e.g., hotline, third-party service) accessible to all participants. Conduct regular safeguarding audits and ensure insurance coverage for liabilities.





Indicative Measures:

- Percentage of staff, volunteers, and partners trained in safeguarding.
- Number of safeguarding reports received and resolved within established timelines.
- Existence of a functional, confidential reporting mechanism.
- Annual safeguarding audit results.

5.3 Environmental Sustainability

Sierra Leone is increasingly vulnerable to climate change, erratic rainfall, deforestation, and land degradation threaten livelihoods and can exacerbate resource-based conflicts. Peacelinks recognizes that sustainable peace depends on a healthy environment and that young people have a critical role to play in environmental stewardship.

Integration Across Goals:

- **Goal 1 (Arts Model):** Incorporate environmental themes into creative arts activities—using drama, music, and art to raise awareness about deforestation, waste management, and climate resilience. Promote the use of recycled and sustainable materials in art production.
- **Goal 2 (Economic Empowerment):** Embed climate-smart livelihoods across all vocational training, including sustainable agriculture, agroforestry, renewable energy installation, and recycling enterprises. Support youth to develop green businesses that contribute to environmental restoration while generating income.
- **Goal 3 (Youth Participation):** Train Youth Peace Ambassadors to address environmental conflicts (e.g., land use, mining, water access) using mediation and dialogue. Advocate for youth inclusion in local environmental governance and natural resource management committees.
- **Goal 4 (Organizational Resilience):** Adopt environmentally responsible practices in Peacelinks' operations—reducing paper use, managing waste, minimizing energy consumption, and promoting sustainable procurement. Explore options for renewable energy at Peace Arts Hubs and office facilities.

Indicative Measures:

- Number of youth trained in climate-smart livelihoods.
- Percentage of participants reporting adoption of sustainable practices.
- Number of environmental awareness activities conducted.
- Organizational carbon footprint reduction targets.

5.4 Inclusion (Disability, Rural, and Marginalized Groups)

Youth are not a homogeneous group. The most marginalized young people—including those with disabilities, those living in remote rural areas, youth from minority ethnic or religious backgrounds, and those who remain affected by the legacy of war—are often the furthest from peacebuilding opportunities. Peacelinks is committed to intentional outreach and adaptation to ensure that no one is left behind.

Integration Across Goals:

- **Goal 1 (Arts Model):** Design arts activities that are accessible to youth with disabilities (e.g., sign language interpretation, tactile art materials, inclusive performance formats). Prioritize





outreach to remote chiefdoms that have historically been underserved. Use mobile art units to reach communities without dedicated facilities.

- **Goal 2 (Economic Empowerment):** Adapt vocational training to be inclusive of youth with disabilities, including accessible facilities, assistive technologies, and tailored curricula. Ensure that the Youth Enterprise Fund includes accessible application processes and considers the specific barriers faced by marginalized groups.
- **Goal 3 (Youth Participation):** Actively recruit Youth Peace Ambassadors from underrepresented groups, including youth with disabilities and those from minority backgrounds. Ensure that dialogue platforms are physically accessible and conducted in local languages with appropriate accommodations.
- **Goal 4 (Organizational Resilience):** Develop and implement an inclusion policy that guides recruitment, program design, and partnerships. Train staff on disability inclusion, gender inclusion, and culturally sensitive engagement. Ensure that monitoring tools disaggregate data by disability, location, and other relevant factors to track equitable participation.

Indicative Measures:

- Disaggregated participation data (by gender, disability, district, age, etc.).
- Number of accessibility adaptations made to facilities and programs.
- Proportion of Youth Peace Ambassadors from marginalized groups.
- Inclusion policy adopted and staff trained.

5.5 Integration and Accountability

These cross-cutting themes will not be treated as add-ons but as fundamental to Peacelinks' programming and organizational culture. Accountability mechanisms will ensure that commitments are realized:

- **Strategic Plan Reviews:** Annual reviews will assess progress on cross-cutting themes alongside programmatic goals.
- **Budgets:** Resources will be allocated to support inclusion, safeguarding, gender equity, and environmental sustainability (e.g., accessibility modifications, training, gender-responsive materials).
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Indicators for each theme will be integrated into the MEAL framework, with data disaggregated to track differential impacts.
- **Community Feedback:** Regular community consultations will gather input on how well Peacelinks is addressing these themes and where improvements are needed.
- **Reporting:** Donor and public reports will transparently document progress, challenges, and lessons learned related to cross-cutting commitments.

Embedding these themes across all aspects of its work, Peacelinks aims to model an approach to peacebuilding that is equitable, safe, environmentally responsible, and genuinely inclusive, ensuring that the young people most affected by conflict and marginalization are at the forefront of building a lasting peace.

A strategic plan is only as effective as its implementation. This section outlines the practical structures, processes, and mechanisms that will translate Peacelinks' strategic goals and objectives into tangible results. The implementation framework encompasses governance and management structures, annual planning cycles, partnership strategies, human resources,





technology, and risk management. Together, these elements ensure that the organization has the capacity, accountability, and flexibility to deliver on its commitments over the next five years.

6.1 Governance and Management Structure

Effective implementation requires clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms. Peacelinks' governance and management structures are designed to provide strategic oversight while enabling operational agility.

6.1.1 Board of Directors

The Board of Directors provides strategic guidance, fiduciary oversight, and ensures that Peacelinks remains true to its mission and values. During the strategic plan period, the Board will:

- **Review and Approve:** Endorse annual work plans and budgets aligned with the strategic plan.
- **Monitor Progress:** Receive quarterly performance reports and conduct an annual strategic review.
- **Ensure Compliance:** Oversee financial audits, safeguarding compliance, and legal obligations.
- **Support Resource Mobilization:** Leverage board members' networks to cultivate donor relationships and partnerships.
- **Strengthen Governance:** Undergo annual board development sessions, with a focus on strategic planning, risk management, and diversity. The Board will aim to increase its composition to include youth representation, gender balance, and expertise in finance, peacebuilding, and private sector engagement.

6.1.2 Executive Management

The Executive Director (ED) is responsible for the day-to-day leadership and management of the organization. The ED will:

- **Lead Strategy Implementation:** Ensure that annual plans are executed effectively and that resources are allocated in line with strategic priorities.
- **Build and Manage Teams:** Oversee staff recruitment, development, and performance management.
- **Cultivate Partnerships:** Represent Peacelinks to government, donors, and civil society partners.
- **Ensure Accountability:** Maintain robust financial management, reporting, and safeguarding systems.

6.1.3 Organizational Structure

To support the strategic goals, Peacelinks will adopt a programmatic structure that aligns staff roles with key functional areas. The proposed structure (to be finalized in Year 1) includes:

Position	Key Responsibilities
Executive Director	Overall leadership, strategy, external relations, fundraising





Program Manager	Oversee implementation across all goals; coordinate field offices
Arts for Peace Coordinator	Lead Goal 1 activities: arts programs, Peace Arts Hubs, digital content
Livelihoods and Empowerment Coordinator	Lead Goal 2 activities: vocational training, Youth Enterprise Fund, private sector partnerships
Advocacy and Participation Coordinator	Lead Goal 3 activities: Youth Peace Ambassadors, community dialogues, policy advocacy
MEAL Officer	Oversee monitoring, evaluation, learning, and beneficiary data systems
Finance and Administration Officer	Manage finances, procurement, HR, and infrastructure
Field Coordinators (Bo, Kenema, Makeni)	Manage regional implementation, supervise facilitators, maintain community relationships
Youth Facilitators (volunteer network)	Deliver activities at community level; serve as peer mentors

This structure will be reviewed annually and adjusted as programs scale.

6.2 Annual Planning and Budgeting Cycle

The strategic plan will be operationalized through detailed annual work plans and budgets. The annual cycle will follow these steps:

1. **Quarter 4 (Year N):** Review progress against current annual plan; conduct participatory reflection with staff, board, and community representatives.
2. **Quarter 4 (Year N):** Develop draft annual work plan and budget for Year N+1, aligned with strategic goals and available resources.
3. **Board Approval:** Submit draft to Board for review and approval at first board meeting of the year.
4. **Implementation:** Execute activities; conduct quarterly reviews to track progress, adjust plans, and address challenges.
5. **Reporting:** Produce quarterly internal reports and annual donor reports; submit audited financial statements to Board and funders.

Each annual work plan will specify:

- Objectives and activities derived from the strategic goals.
- Key performance indicators and targets.
- Responsible staff and timelines.
- Budget allocations by activity and funding source.

6.3 Partnership Strategy



Peacelinks recognizes that it cannot achieve its ambitions alone. Strategic partnerships will be essential for scaling impact, leveraging resources, and ensuring sustainability. Partnerships will be developed and managed according to the following principles:

- **Mutual Accountability:** Clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations documented in memoranda of understanding.
- **Complementarity:** Partners are selected based on alignment with Peacelinks' mission and the value each brings (e.g., technical expertise, access, funding).
- **Local Ownership:** Preference for partnerships with Sierra Leonean organizations and institutions wherever feasible.

6.3.1 Categories of Partners

Partner Type	Examples	Purpose
Government	Ministry of Youth Affairs, NAYCOM, NaCSA, Ministry of Education	Policy alignment, co-implementation, access to public systems
International Donors	UNICEF, NED, NDI, UNDP, bilateral agencies, foundations	Funding, technical support, advocacy platforms
Civil Society	Youth networks, women's organizations, disability organizations	Community reach, specialized expertise, joint advocacy
Private Sector	Local businesses, corporate foundations, diaspora enterprises	Internships, apprenticeships, sponsorship, Youth Enterprise Fund
Academic/Research	Universities, peace research institutes	Evidence generation, evaluation, learning
Media	Radio stations, digital platforms	Messaging, outreach, public engagement

6.3.2 Partnership Management

- A **Partnerships Database** will track existing and potential partners, including contact details, agreement status, and engagement history.
- **Quarterly partner coordination meetings** will be convened to align activities and share learning.
- **Capacity strengthening** will be offered to local community-based partners (e.g., in financial management, safeguarding) to ensure quality and accountability.

6.4 Human Resources and Capacity Development

Peacelinks' staff and volunteers are its greatest asset. The organization will invest in recruiting, developing, and retaining a motivated and skilled team.

6.4.1 Staffing

- **Recruitment:** Transparent processes that prioritize diversity, including gender balance and inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- **Competitive Compensation:** Where resources permit, ensure salaries and benefits are fair and aligned with the local NGO sector to reduce turnover.



- **Staff Well-Being:** Provide access to psychosocial support, flexible work arrangements, and a safe, respectful workplace.

6.4.2 Capacity Development

- **Individual Development Plans:** Each staff member will have an annual development plan linked to organizational needs and personal aspirations.
- **Training Priorities:** Safeguarding, MEAL, financial management, advocacy, and adaptive leadership.
- **Succession Planning:** Identify and mentor junior staff and youth facilitators to prepare for future leadership roles.

6.4.3 Volunteer Network

The network of youth facilitators and community volunteers is central to Peacelinks' reach and cost-effectiveness. Support for volunteers will include:

- **Orientation and Training:** Initial and ongoing training in facilitation, safeguarding, and Peacelinks methodologies.
- **Recognition:** Certificates, public acknowledgment, and opportunities for advancement to paid roles.
- **Reimbursement:** Where feasible, cover transportation and communication costs to enable consistent participation.

6.5 Technology and Infrastructure

To support expanded programming and organizational effectiveness, Peacelinks will invest in appropriate technology and infrastructure.

6.5.1 Digital Systems

- **Beneficiary Management System:** Deploy a digital database (e.g., Salesforce, CommCare, or a simpler cloud-based solution) to track participant demographics, training attendance, outcomes, and alumni engagement. This will enable disaggregated analysis by gender, disability, location, and other factors.
- **Financial Management:** Maintain or upgrade accounting software (e.g., QuickBooks) to ensure accurate, transparent financial reporting.
- **Communications:** Develop a professional website, social media presence, and email systems to enhance visibility and stakeholder engagement.

6.6 Risk Management

Peacelinks operates in a context where political, security, financial, and operational risks are ever-present. A proactive risk management approach will safeguard staff, participants, and organizational assets.





6.6.1 Risk Identification and Mitigation

The following table outlines key risks and mitigation measures:

Risk Category	Specific Risk	Mitigation Measures
Political/Security	Electoral violence; resurgence of local conflicts; instability affecting staff and participants	Maintain non-partisan stance; develop security protocols and evacuation plans; strengthen community early warning networks; maintain low profile during heightened tensions
Financial	Donor funding shifts; currency fluctuation; funding gaps	Diversify funding sources (Goal 4); build cash reserves; maintain lean operating model; explore earned income
Operational	Program quality dilution during scale; staff turnover; weak M&E systems	Phased expansion; maintain facilitator-to-participant ratios; invest in MEAL; succession planning; competitive compensation systems
Safeguarding	Abuse or exploitation by staff, volunteers, or partners	Comprehensive safeguarding policy; mandatory training; confidential reporting mechanism; regular audits
Reputational	Misconduct by staff; political missteps; negative media	Code of conduct; crisis communication plan; transparent reporting; active stakeholder engagement

6.6.2 Risk Management Processes

- **Risk Register:** Maintain a live risk register reviewed quarterly by the management team and annually by the Board.
- **Contingency Planning:** For high-impact risks (e.g., security incident, funding shortfall), develop specific contingency plans.
- **Insurance:** Ensure adequate coverage for staff, assets, and liability.

6.7 Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

Transparent, consistent communication with stakeholders builds trust, enables collaboration, and ensures accountability.

- **Internal Communication:** Regular staff meetings, quarterly all-staff retreats, and shared digital platforms (e.g., WhatsApp groups, shared drives) to facilitate information flow.
- **Community Engagement:** Annual community feedback meetings in each operational area to share progress, gather input, and respond to concerns.
- **Donor and Partner Communication:** Quarterly updates, annual reports, and timely responses to requests for information.
- **Public Communication:** Regular updates via website and social media; press releases for major milestones; participation in national forums and networks.



6.8 Implementation Timeline Overview

The following table provides a high-level timeline for key implementation milestones over the five-year period. Detailed timelines will be developed in annual work plans.

Year	Key Focus Areas
Year 1 (2027)	Finalize organizational structure; recruit key staff; develop MEAL framework; launch Peace Arts Hubs in 2 regions; begin Youth Peace Ambassadors training; strengthen fundraising systems
Year 2 (2028)	Expand arts program to 5 additional districts; establish remaining 3 Peace Arts Hubs; scale vocational training to 500 youth; launch Youth Enterprise Fund; pilot community dialogue platforms
Year 3 (2029)	Expand to all 16 districts; digitize Arts for Peace Toolkit; scale training to 900 youth; establish 10 dialogue platforms; advocate for youth inclusion in governance
Year 4 (2030)	Consolidate programs; deepen youth participation structures; strengthen alumni network; focus on sustainability and local resource mobilization
Year 5 (2031)	Achieve all strategic targets; conduct final evaluation; document lessons; develop next strategic plan

SUMMARY BUDGET BY STRATEGIC GOAL

Strategic Goal	Year 1 (2026)	Year 2 (2027)	Year 3 (2028)	Year 4 (2029)	Year 5 (2030–31)	Total (USD)
Goal 1: Arts-Based Peacebuilding	220,000	250,000	320,000	250,000	210,000	1,250,000
Goal 2: Economic Empowerment	260,000	300,000	400,000	320,000	270,000	1,550,000
Goal 3: Youth Participation & Governance	160,000	180,000	300,000	200,000	160,000	1,000,000
Goal 4: Organizational Development	120,000	150,000	180,000	150,000	120,000	720,000
MEAL & Learning	40,000	50,000	70,000	60,000	50,000	270,000
Operations & Administration	120,000	130,000	150,000	140,000	140,000	680,000
TOTAL	920,000	1,060,000	1,420,000	1,120,000	950,000	5,470,000

