For us, the future of these kids matter the most!

Final Pilot Project Report on Career Counseling and Leadership Development training (CCLD) organized for children between ages (8-15) in Liberia.

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Implemented for: Children in Stephen A. Tolbert Estate, Gardnersville, Liberia

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Our deepest appreciation goes to our Field Coordinators:
Mr. Ishaka Sheriff
Mr. William Sulonkemelee
Ms. Toni Jarbo &
Mr. Nathan Pyne

Their tireless commitment for change and development made the project possible.

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Executive summary

In today's development practice, the global push for child rights protection and promotion has taken a dynamic trend-a phenomenon that is providing a strategic concern for development institutions and massively shaping government's development plans in nations around the world. In Liberia, the 2010 child development report by the Ministry of Health & Social Welfare (MOHSW), amongst other things stressed as a key goal the need for building young leaders at community level to impact lives, create lasting change and support sustainable development.

However, key challenges such as disintegrated community development efforts, undemocratic institutions, social exclusion on the basis of age and expertise, inequalities in program benefits distribution across rural and urban cities in Liberia, amongst other things, remain critical in the fight for children's right protection and early human resource development.

This report describes minimum but significant steps taken to address some the above challenges and highlights some of the critical issues affecting child development in communities across Liberia. It reveals a strategic link which combined community-motivation with a well-integrated approach and utilized existing strengths of local community leaders to provide counseling and leadership training for Fifty (50) children between ages (8-15) in the Stephen A. Tolbert Estate Community. The project implementation strategy was designed to enable both participants and community leaders take ownership of the initiative and focus on adding value to the child development process. The following are the key outcomes of the project:

- Identified, recruited and trained 50 young leaders between ages 8-15 on early and future career choice(s);
- Implemented practical leadership mentoring sessions for 10 children with focus on improving both career potential and individual leadership capacity;
- Trained twenty-one (21) young leaders into becoming early professionals and effective community leaders

The overall project was implementation in two phases: phase one included: participant's identification, training and testing while phase two covered: career assessment, career classification & Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing. The report, highlights the strategic context, analyzing both the child development situation that existed in the Stephen A. Tolbert Estate community and provides a clear rationale for our intervention.

Finally, the report explains the project focus area, target group, development objectives and outcomes as well as the results and analysis of each stage of the project implementation. We strongly believe that with the continuous support of communities, organizations and individuals, this project can be consistently modified and creatively implemented across communities in Liberia, thus helping to fight poverty and create opportunities for both privileged and underprivileged children anytime, anywhere.

Introduction

Amidst our diverse work initiatives, **Leading Change** as an institution seeks to promote strategic partnerships with individuals and organizations in the fight to address the many challenges facing children.

Our long term vision is to see a Liberia where both children and adults are fully valued and given equal opportunities to engage in and to lead critical initiatives for community and national development. **Leading Change** also envisions a society that is more integrated and where democracy thrives–a world where children enjoy basic freedom, participate meaningfully in civic and political life, inequalities are minimized, exclusion gives way to greater appreciation for pluralism, and governments and public institutions are fully accountable for children's protection and development.

At Leading Change, Child development is a strategic focus and the organization shares strong values on rights protection and promotion for children locally and globally. This report is a fruitful follow up on our community engagement strategy for grassroots organization capacity development. The project was implemented between May and July 26, 2014 after a team review and strategy modification to our initial Young **Leaders Development Program** (YLDP). The YLDP major focus was to engage young leaders between ages (8-15) and train them in steps of career choices and individual capacity development-a focus that has only been expanded through this pilot project.

During the implementation of this project, the organization worked very hard to broaden the project concept based on the needs of beneficiaries as well as their skills level. We applied a multi-phase approach in helping the participants with basic skills for the understanding of structural leadership. The counseling sessions included presentations and practical engagements with various professionals in diverse fields of life.

Through this project, we were able to understand the primary sources of some unwanted consequences which turns up in leadership at both communities and national levels. The lessons learned confirmed our belief that all societies are in constant need of strong, accountable, collaborative, innovative, transformational and highly developmental leadership. Also, during the project implementation we recognized the slow adaptation process by many of our beneficiaries. This was due to the fact that there has never been a community leadership program organized for children in that community-something that is not unique to the Stephen Tolbert Estate community alone but prevalent throughout communities across Liberia.

As you read this report, we hope it stimulates your desire to support the future (Children). The strategic context of the report highlights key background situations which we hope can challenge your motivation for Children development. Finally, at Leading Change, we treat one support for every child as a big success and we encourage every child supporter to turn up at our Annual Child Support event where we discuss and share opportunities for children development each year.

Overview of Leading Change

Leading Change is Liberian organization founded 2011 in response to the global call to intensify efforts for youth development and to promote full youth participation in national and global development processes. We focus on working collaboratively with communities, partners, governments, youth groups and individuals to develop sustainable solutions that can transform communities and greatly impact lives. We have completed youth trainings and capacity development projects in four communities and two counties in Liberia respectively.

Our Vision at Leading Change which is focused on identifying, recruiting and training leaders for the purpose of establishing and sustaining an agenda for change is a major motivation in all our works.
Our team members are from diverse backgrounds and have rich experiences in economics, business, finance, management, leadership development, research and analysis etc. Our members come to work with solid development capabilities and distinct qualities having worked with several national and international development organizations to include **USAID**, **MONURENT**, **Child Fund,** West **African Youth Conference Coordinating Committee (WAYCC), Advancing Youth Project (AYP)**, **African Youth Alumni Association (AYAA), Government of Liberia (Gold)** etc.

We leverage modern technology at all time to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the quality of programs and projects development and always add value to our service delivery. Our vision is to establish and sustain an agenda for change that promotes growth and development of individuals, communities and the society based on inclusion and empowerment of all. The organization works to achieve its development results in the following capacities: Research & Policy Analysis, Youth Capacity Development, Strategy & Operations, Information Technology and Monitoring & Evaluation.

Strategic Context and Rationale

Stephen Tolbert Estate is certainly one of the communities in Liberia that needed an urgent response to the global call for child rights protection and promotion. The development condition for Children in the community accounts for some of the harsh situations as expressed in the Liberian 2010 child development report by the Health Ministry. Our understanding at Leading Change is that, children development is no doubt a major strategy for reducing poverty and promoting national development. Therefore, for this report below are two key issues that were carefully analyzed before our intervention in the community:

A. The Community and Child Development Context

Stephen A. Tolbert Estate is located in Gardnerville. The community is considered to be one of the oldest and probably most established in the Gardnerville area. The community is made up of Housing Units constructed by the government as a project to enable low income earners afford decent accommodation. According to the 2010 Census report, the community has an estimated population of 10,000 inhabitants. The children (1-15) population is estimated to be 30% of the total population while the youth ages (15-35) constitute majority. The community has four major high schools, three private and one public school as well as several other daycare schools. There exists a dilapidated community center which is believed to have been constructed probably in the early 70s. Other than that, the community has no established public facility for interaction and community development purposes.

Community development is ongoing, the community has the motivation and drive to develop future plans that can promote the development of its inhabitants. In 2013, the community elected its first leadership after a long period of acting leadership. There is a structure for community engagement established by said leadership. The challenges facing the community are not only directed to Children. However, for this report our analysis is focused on children. The community also has no public library and there is no recreation facility. Children are often found in the streets after school hours and sometimes most of them are forced to stay at home by their parents during leisure hours since there is no major playground or any public education facility for kid's interaction and development exchange.

The absence of development infrastructures is not the only challenge. On the other hand, there are no prudent community development programs and the community is mostly considered disengaged. Few people support community development efforts while most people prefer the idea of doing it alone. Unity is relative since most of the times community members from different blocks are often seen exchanging pleasantries. The child development condition is terrible and there are reports of children staying home during school hours since the community is dominated by private schools which are too expensive for most parents. There are also reports of increased teenage pregnancy and a mounting challenge of drug abuse among the youth. All these conditions plus many more, established the background context for our intervention as an organization.

B. **Rationale for Intervention**

At Leading Change because we have a clear scope of understanding when it comes to humanity protection and development, our experiences in working with kids in different communities, schools and at the individual levels, have given us a fundamental believe that child development is a primary focus.

Our major rationale for intervention in the Stephen a Tolbert Estate community was based on two cardinal facts:
- That the existing problems poised to children in the community were the exact opportunities for which the organization was founded;
- That the community history on Child development was poor-something that truly motivated our team to act

After the community condition review and analysis, we worked collaboratively with community leaders as well as the project participants to develop a set of creative intervention strategies that kept all the parties lively and very active throughout the three months' period of the project.

Our intervention logic was tailored towards addressing major challenges aimed at giving the community the needed uplift to redefine itself and to subsequently develop a creative work relationship between parents and community leaders that could lead to protecting the next generation of inhabitants from the severe challenges and critical opportunity gaps currently existing.

Finally, through working with community leaders, parents and participants, we were able to implement our central project goal as stated below:

- **Engaged and trained young leaders who will combine the best attributes of hard work and innovation in developing solutions to impact other individuals, communities and to sustainably transform lives.**

Project Description

Leading Change has a creative work approach which includes engagement, research & analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Our work approach is designed to include clients and beneficiaries at almost every level in the implementation of our projects. For this project, we worked with the target group as follows:

A. Project Area and Target Group

The career counseling and leadership development project was basically tailored in the area of education and leadership development. The organization used community desk reviews, focus groups meetings, role playing, individual and group presentations to develop prudent implementation strategies and to also analyze and classify participants for the final leadership program. The project included primary and secondary target groups respectively. The primary group were the participants, Children between ages (8-15) and the secondary target group were the parents and community leaders.

At the beginning of the project, the organization defined and grouped participants into three categories-namely: **Pre-Level, Starter Level** and **Readiness Level**

Pre-Level

For the kids in the Pre-Level category, one coordinator was assigned to every ten (10) children and a total of forty (40) participants fell in this category. The first job of the coordinator was to define the entire program in scope and context and work to explain it in a very simple manner to children in this group. The goal was to help them develop project understanding and be subsequently transferred to the next stage.

Starter-Level

The Starter-Level were children who understood significant aspects of the program from the first meeting. Significant aspects of the project included understanding the following: the need to be an effective leader, skillful communicator and a good planner and presenter. At the beginning of the project only Seven (7) of the fifty (50) kids made it to this category. The major work of the coordinator for this category was to give instruction on project actions while monitoring participant's growth and reporting to the project team on each participant's progress level. Another major task for the coordinator here was to keep the participants enthusiastic and focus on the project resource materials.

Readiness Level

For the Readiness-Level, the kids in this category were considered smart. At the inception of the program, they immediately understood the program concept and took the lead in coordinating training sessions along with the project team. A total of Three (3) kids were placed in this category. On many occasions, they worked with the project team and community leaders as well as parents to promote the project objectives across the community. The kids in this category only needed guidance from the project team.

B. Development Objective Outcomes

The organization carried out the following activities geared towards achieving the overall project objectives:

- Identified, recruited and trained 50 young leaders between ages 8-15 on early and future career choice(s);
- Implemented practical leadership mentoring sessions for 50 participants aimed at both career counseling and individual leadership capacity development;
- Trained fifty (50) young leaders into becoming early professionals and effective community leaders

The activities were carried out as follows:

No	Activity	Objectives	Outcomes
1.	Engagement and Focus group discussion	To Recruit and assess leadership skills needs	Fifty (50) kids recruited and program needs identified
2.	Training and Testing	To build Leadership and public speaking capacity	Public speaking and career potential developed for (30) kids
3.	Training and Career Counseling	To identify Early Career and leadership potential for participants	Early career potential enhanced and practical knowledge received by participants on various careers
4.	Participants Classification and participation rate analysis	To determine effective program participation	Quality and effective performances achieved during the national independence day leadership program

C. Lessons Learned

The following were the major lessons learned by the organization during the project implementation:

- That conventional approaches in the application of development projects needs sufficient community collaboration and clarification in order to give complete community ownership to development projects;
- Project implementers can learn a lot about project localization and effective implementation if they remain open minded during project implementation process;

- That communities can only developed if they carry on historical fact-finding to assess both their environmental resources as well as the human resource potentials available to them;
- That child development is possible and there are unique and committed kids willing to take due advantage of learning opportunities once the chance is provided as oppose the general myth that Liberian kids are not serious

Project Implementation

A. Implementation Framework

The overall project was implemented as follows:

Phase one included: trainee's identification and recruitment, training of participants and administering a Leadership test while phase two included: career assessment survey, career classification & Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing with professionals.

B. Results and Analysis
Phase One:

Trainees Identification:
The organization worked with community members and recruited   one hundred (100) kids for the program. However, due to the project target and resource constraints, only fifty (50) kids were able to participate in this program. Our team used two major criteria to identify potential beneficiaries: (1) Active participation in community development works and (2) Academic status and performances. Adjustments were made to accommodate some kids since the community had no available program for children. After the adjustment exercise, the names of selected beneficiaries were forwarded to the project coordinating team for review and processing. A total of Fifty (50) kids were recruited and a formal engagement letter was written to the parents/guardians of the participants. The letter communicated the project duration, overall objective and the expected role of the participants and the parents/guardians.
Training:
The organization trained fifty participants on the basic foundation of leadership. The training ran for three weeks and covered the following areas:

- Understanding Leadership,
- Vision Development &

- Planning and Implementation

The participants engaged in practical leadership exercises after every session and each of the kids had the opportunity to experience practical leadership activities. They worked in groups and each group had members designated for research and presentation respectively. The roles were interchangeably played based on the facilitator's instruction.

Program Participation Test:
At the end of the training, the trainees were assessed based on the materials presented. The results were analyzed and classified according to basic leadership skills, training needs and potential career. The organization used the data collected at this stage to develop the career survey for phase two of the project. Based on our results, we found out that 18 of the 50 participants wanted to be Lawyers, 12 wanted to be Medical Doctors, 8 said they will be Politicians while 12 weren't sure of what they wanted to become.

Phase Two:

Assess ▸ Develop ▸ Evaluate

Career Assessment Survey:
A survey was conducted to determine early career potential for thirty (30) of the fifty (50) participants. The results were used to developed a basic career training guide for the participants. A career development training was conducted for four (4) weeks in the areas of Law, Medical Science, Public Policy and Business Administration. However, only twenty-one (21) of the thirty (30) participants attended and completed the full one-month training. Other kids were relocated by their parents, and on various occasion some parents forgot to send their kids for the training.

Career Classification & MoU Signing:
After The career counseling training, ten (10) participants were selected for practical mentorship sessions with various professionals. The organization signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the professionals to help mentor the kids in various fields of career choices. The practical mentorship sessions lasted for three (3) weeks with each kid learning hands on new experiences in the area of their future career.

C. Timetable and Project Photos

No	Activity	Timeline	Outcome
1.	**Participants Recruitment**	May 3-17, 2014	● 100 Participants recruited
2.	**Focus group meeting**	May 19, 2014	● Project cycle and objectives explained to participants ● Participants classified according to levels ● Letter written to parents
3.	**Leadership Training**	May 21-June 15, 2014	● 50 Participants received basic training on how to become effective leaders
4.	**Career Counseling Training**	June 17-July 8, 2014	● 21 Participants received basic career training in the areas of Law, Public Policy and Medical Science
5.	**Presentation Exchange**	July 19, 2014	● Presentation on youth development activities delivered by participants
6.	**Final Presentation**	July 26, 2014	● Presentation on styles and uniqueness of various cultures in Liberia delivered by participants

Partial View of Participants at the Leadership Training Program

Participants gathered for a Photo after the training

In the middle is William, Secretary of Leading Change post with participants for a photo.

Participants performing at the July 2014 Independence Leadership Program Celebrations.

In the Blue Suit is Daniel, Executive Director of Leading Change post for a photo with Participants after the July 26 Program.

Participants Paused for round of applause from the audience during a special cultural performance.

D. Participants List & Career choice

No	Name	Sex	Age	Class	Career Choice
1	Christiana Sable	FM	12	8	**Lawyer**
2	Janel Collins	FM	12	6	**Lawyer**
3	Zorial Morris	FM	10	7	**Public Policy,Politician**
4	Christmina Sebleh	FM	12	9	**Medical Doctor**
5	Cherish Daniel	FM	12	4	**Medical Doctor**
6	Angel Parker	FM	9	5	**Public Policy,Politician**
7	Elilien musu	FM	9	7	**Lawyer**
8	Marthlyne Johnson	FM	12	6	**Lawyer**
9	Gifty Dundas	FM	13	3	**Lawyer**
10	Rejoice Kangar	FM	9	4	**Lawyer**
11	Jonesah Beyam	FM	9	6	**Medical Doctor**
12	Sandra Toeque	FM	10	6	**Medical Doctor**
13	Musa Kromah	M	13	9	**Lawyer**
14	James Morris	M	12	6	**Lawyer**
15	Alfred Johnson	M	13	6	**Lawyer**
16	Harris Brown	M	10	5	**Lawyer**
17	James Johnson	M	12	5	**Medical Doctor**
18	Peter Brown	M	13	6	**Medical Doctor**
19	Thomas Pawolo	M	13	8	**Medical Doctor**
20	Sarlue Bartee	M	12	7	**Lawyer**
21	Titus Boakai	M	12	7	**Lawyer**
22	Timothy Boakai	M	12	8	**Lawyer**
23	Ricky Weeks	M	12	5	**Lawyer**
24	Francis Ajavon	M	13	9	**Lawyer**

25	Ben Morris	M	11	4	**Lawyer**
26	William Brown	M	12	5	**Lawyer**
27	Jerry Kenson	M	11	5	**Medical Doctor**
28	Alfred Collins	M	14	6	**Medical Doctor**
29	Jimmy Williams	M	13	7	**Medical Doctor**
30	Peter Bondo	M	10	4	**Lawyer**

Conclusion & Recommendation

The project was a noble development effort. We are grateful to have worked in the Stephen A Tolbert Estate community to pilot this project. The project team is particularly grateful to the community and all our participants. Their enthusiasm towards the project made it possible in so many ways. We thank the community leadership in particular for assisting with venue coordination and also attending important sections of the training as well as the July 26 program. Our desire at Leading Change is to always improve the quality of project implementation and simplify the content of our reports. We hope to focus on the lessons learned from this pilot project and build more collaborative approach in working at community level.

On the issue of quality delivery, we hope to improve our data collection and analysis capacity in subsequent projects, add economic and social values to our data collection process and work to improve our analysis of data for easy understanding and effective communicating. We hope to expand the number of beneficiaries for the next project, diversify implementation across the country and continue to build leaders at community level that can not only take ownership of the project but will also work to sustain the project.

We recommend the following:

1. That the community make this project an annual event for all children in the community and work with parents to mobilize resources to support the project implementation;
2. That the community leadership constantly engage previous participants to develop more creative ways for implementing the project in order to benefit majority of children in the community;
3. That the community through its leadership seek outside sponsorship for support of the program through promoting some of the best kids with outstanding performance during the program