

**CAMP FOR PEACE LIBERIA
FLOWER PARK, DUPORT ROAD, PAYNESVILLE
2016 ANNUAL SUMMARY REPORT**

I want to extend my thanks to Cfp-Liberia United Steel Workers for giving our youth skills and knowledge to become better people for our society. Had it not being their support, our youth wouldn't have reached this far. Maybe we would be running again with our loads on our heads looking for places to take refuge. But your support has brought us peace and stability because our youth are no long taking in drugs and alcohol that will make them hostile and violent. Moreover, they are helping to build our houses and fixing our roads” (Pewee Molewoi).

INTRODUCTION

In February 2015, the SHF and the Lutheran Church in Liberia Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Program (LCL-THRP) in collaboration with the Firestone Agriculture Workers Union (FAWUL) entered into an agreement to run a two year vocational and rehabilitation program aimed at empowering vulnerable youth of Liberia, especially former child soldiers, ex-combatants.

This project initially targeted 50 youth, but graduated 55 from various vocational training disciplines. In additional to this number, eight students are still doing an accelerated vocational and academic program at the Bowker Washington Institute as part of the program. These eight students are expected to graduate in the coming year.

During the period under review, a SHF monitoring delegation visited Liberia, reviewed the project, and pledges their commitment for its continuation.



Abel posed with students after graduation

In December, all the 30 students that were enrolled in 2016 successfully graduated in various vocational disciplines from the Lutheran Vocational Training Institute in Salayea District, Lofa County. The ceremony was the conclusion of a nine month vocational training aimed at providing residential vocational skills Training opportunity to war affected youth in the country to improve their socio-economic status for job opportunities and livelihood sustainability.

The training also provided psychosocial support to students to help with their successful reintegration back into society.

DETAILS REPORT

1. Have the planned activities been completed?

The first phase of the project which started February 15, 2015 successfully ended on December 31, 2016. The beneficiaries acquired skills in Agriculture, Carpentry, Masonry, Plumbing and Electricity. Most of them are effectively utilizing their skills offered by contributing meaningfully into their communities.

2. How many participants entered, and completed training?

Sixty three participants entered the program at the Lutheran Training Institute (LTI) and the Bowker Washington Institute (BWI). 55 successfully completed their studies from the Lutheran Vocational Institute. Eight students under the sponsorship of FAWUL are continuing their studies at the Bowker Washington and expected to graduate in the coming year.

3. Were opportunities provided to both men and women? (Breakdown of participants by gender, age, and type of training). If women are underrepresented, why is that?

Equal opportunity was provided with 25 females and 30 males participating. Special attention was given to females to enable them complete with their males' counterparts. As a result of this, the second phase of the program recruited more females so as to strike the balances of males to female participation.

About 50% of those who participated were between the age of 22-28 years, while 25% constituted the age range of 29-30 years and 25% was mostly 33 and above.

4. What on-going support and follow-up was offered to participants?

There were several visitations made during the period under review. During these visits, we interacted with both students and teachers, giving them the moral support and showing our appreciation for the level of enthusiasm and effort exerted. In addition to these visits, a moderate transportation subsidies were provided to enable them visit their families and friends in the communities. During one of our visits, a community elder made this assertion:

“Thank God for our friends, for giving our children opportunities to go to school and learn skills. My son was a big drugs smoker and a notorious robber on the gold mine. I never ever wanted to associate myself with him because of his behavior. But with the change I have seeing in him since he returned from the school, I am happy that he can become my son again. I am proud of him!” (Yarmah Lorpu of Zorzor)

5. In general, what has been the impact of the training on the lives of participants and their families and communities?

Results so far have proven that participants/trainees are showing good posture for transformation. Evident of transformation is based on their involvement in various communities' activities and the success stories from the community dwellers.

As a result of the training, participants are gradually rediscovering their values, knowing that their energies and the skills acquired can be utilized as force for good. Their self-esteem has been enhanced to undertake self-initiative. They are now utilizing their skills to get job that can earn them money to support their families. Their perception of self-worthlessness and hopelessness has changed into positive thinking. Most of them are now demonstrating to friends and communities through their actions that change is possible. Through the counseling and other follow-up activities, trainees have developed a better understanding of how to control their emotion whenever faced with challenges and constraints



Former graduates designing house plan

Community violence is becoming minimized; and negative perception towards trainees is gradually reducing. A tide of friendship and receptiveness among trainees, their family members and the communities are getting stronger once again and reconciliation is rapidly taking place. The communities can now boast of technicians with locally driven expertise in construction, mechanical and agricultural production. The cost of local products such as cassava, eddoes, potatoes, peppers, etc. are getting relatively cheap in some communities as a result of trainees involvement in agriculture and food production.



Site visit at a former graduate woodwork shop in Zorzor



Former graduates spraying Agriculture Farm

6. What evidence is there that communities of the participants have changed their perceptions of ex-combatants, and that participants are perceived as productive, peaceful members of the community?

Several evidences can be listed to measure the level of change in perception towards ex-combatants as productive and peaceful members of the community, but for brevity to this report, the following can be captured:

- The number of success stories from community members and beneficiaries
- The hiring of trainees (number of jobs) acquired and implemented by trainees in the community
- The provision of a building to trainees by the local government also shows a milestone in the change of perception. (Please note that the local government has given trainees a three-room building to be used as a meeting hall where they can converge, plan and share their success stories with each other)
- The involvement of trainees in community meetings and communion activities

7. What changes have been noted in the behaviors, attitudes, and skills of participants?

We have noted an increase in coping mechanism and positive behavior pattern which are useful in all aspects of life, e.g., goal setting, problem solving, self-awareness, self-confidence, interpersonal skill development, becoming more self-sufficient, etc.; These changes are evident by the reduced number of violence and robberies in the community as well as the number of building constructed by participants and number of praises and success stories and testimonies received and the different enterprises established by trainees in the communities.

8. How many of the participants been successful in finding employment or creating income generating opportunities for themselves? Six months after completion of training? 12 months after completion of training

A new batch of 30 graduates joined the cohort of alumni in December to engaged in establishing started projects that will require support in the second phase of the 2017 proposal. Since the graduation of the first batch in 2016, we are aware of only three students that got employment outside of the project community. These graduates are serving as construction maintenance agents at a local hospital in Tapita, Nimba County, one of Liberia's political sub-division. The rest are yet to find job, but are engage in small ventures in Agriculture and the other areas of disciplines in the project community.

9. For those that were not successful in finding employment or creating income-generating opportunities, what were the principal reasons?

The most frequent reason for them not engaged in any activities is the lack of support to get started. It is evidently clear that some of them want to establish some mini projects, but there have been no initial fund. In January this year, the SHF through their local gave a grant to set up

a tool library that will enable them form a cooperative and support their personal project. Another reason is that some of them have moved to other places outside of the project community and we do not have information regarding them.

8. What has CfP- Liberia learned as a result of this project?

From the feedback we received from participants and the communities, it is possible to identify the following lessons learned:

- That building the capacities of youth (ex-combatants) through vocation is an effective approach of reducing community tension and improving dispute and reconciliation among community members in post conflict society;
- This year enrollment suggests that there is an increased awareness and acknowledgement of communities on the program to empower young people through vocational skills;
- That war affected youth have energies and these energies can be transformed into force for good if given the opportunities;
- That war affected young, if properly guided, care for and loved with the necessary support to acquired knowledge and skills; they can serve as the cradles of sustainable peace and development in Liberia.
- Inclusive participation of war affected youth is essential to ensuring the sustainability of peace and development in the County
- Recognizing and paying more attention to war affected youth (ex-combatants) enhances their strength and restores their hope for the future
- This incredible progress has made many of our partners happy. In one partner remarks, she said

What is the next plan for 2017 and beyond?

The SHF has pledged commitment to continue support to the project into 2017 and beyond. A first phase of 2017 proposal was approved by the SHF project committee which is expected to commence at the end of February 2017. This year program hopes to enroll 28 students. We have also launched a research to explore what post training activities can complement Program beneficiaries. The aim is to explore possibilities for more youths of the WAY to benefit from employment opportunities or take advantage of other development programs offered by larger organizations, government of Liberia agencies and other local establishments that are working to accelerate reintegration and development initiatives, be it (social, economic, environmental, infrastructure, religious, agriculture, etc.) in Liberia.

The result from this research will help us to develop the next phase of 2017 project proposal that aim to support post training activities of WAY graduates.

What are your concluding comments and remarks?

On behalf of CFP-Liberia, we want to extend our profound thanks to the Steel Workers Humanity Fund for their financial support over the past three years. We are also grateful to the local community people for their acceptance and support towards our effort. Special thanks also go to the War Affected Youth for their resilience and willingness in changing the status quo.

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Abel Learwellie', written over a horizontal line.

B. Abel Learwellie
Executive Director