

Project title:

Supporting and promoting young females leadership and political participation in schools & communities in Liberia

1. Summary:

.... "We recognize that the girls of today will tomorrow be leaders in every nation and every sector of the economy.

.... Around the world, the United States is working in communities to help girls know their rights, increase their self-confidence, and motivate them to be leaders in their communities. Ensuring young women have the access, education, and training they need to reach their full potential is critical to ensuring that the power, intellect, and skill of our best and brightest young women is unleashed for the betterment of all."¹

The empowerment of young women cannot be fully achieved without addressing some of the root causes undermining the realization of their potentials of becoming tomorrow's leaders. Some of these factors range from cultural norms, stereotypes, cultural marginalization, forced/arranged and early marriages, sexual and gender-based violence including sexual exploitation and abuse and the lack of opportunities to lifelong sustainable and rejection skills. These negative vices coupled with economic hardship make young women vulnerable to negative coping strategies including survival and commercial sex, early marriage, low self-esteem and bleak future.

One of the key steps to addressing some of these problems is to firstly identify them as problems. In the case of early marriage, a study commissioned by Ford Foundation in 2013 states, "A very interesting observation by informants is that the failure to view early marriage as a problem is chiefly what accounts for its persistence."² Youth Crime Watch of Liberia recognizes issues that undermine the development of young people, including young girls as problems and seeks to work with foreign and national partners in addressing some of these problems. Youth Crime Watch believes that unless some of these issues are addressed significantly in part or whole, the chances of the young girl achieving your full potentials remain illusion. Data collection by Youth Crime Watch of Liberia in 42 schools and communities in Paynesville and parts of Bong County indicates that 88% of student council Governments are headed by males while 100% of community leadership are headed by males. Some of the causes for low participation of young women include but not limited to lack of interest because it is perceived as a man's thing, low self-esteem (low confidence), as well as the lack of opportunities for young women to realize their potentials.

¹ Statement from President Donald J. Trump on International Day of the Girl, Issued on October 11, 2017 (accessed on <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-donald-j-trump-international-day-girl/>)

² Mapping Early Marriage In West Africa: A scan of trends, interventions, what works, best practices and the way forward, September 2013, page 8

Youth Crime Watch of Liberia seeks to recruit, train and mentor 60 young women from selected schools and communities in urban and rural Montserrado and Bong Counties over a period of once year to support and promote their participation in political/leadership activities within their schools and communities. The project will specifically target young women in Paynesville and Sanoyea in Bong County. Participants will be trained in leadership, persuasion, campaign techniques, the power of influence, governance structure of Liberia and the importance of participating to make a difference.

The selection of both rural and urban communities is intended to provide equal opportunity to both rural and urban young girls to discover themselves and strive for self-actualization. Lessons learn from implementation in the two contexts will inform future programming activities of YCWL, the donors and other institutions.