

CENTER for YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

REPORT FROM LIBERIA October 2009

The Center for Youth Empowerment officially and finally transited from Ghana to Liberia on 13th October 2008 with a ten class room building already leased for the operation of an elementary school, but spacious enough to temporarily house the central office.

The 2008/2009 school year started with 258 students. Of these 138 were females and 120 males. Due to other problems, 243 successfully ended the school year. Of the 258 students there were 22 on the Dick Clifford scholarship, 42 students completed full payment of fees, while 194 vulnerable kids could not afford the low school fees at all. **We appeal for more scholarships to cater to these and many other vulnerable kids. We also appeal for a school bus to take kids and staffs to and fro.**

From the test of a three days School feeding exercise carried on by the center for youth empowerment, a continuation of this program would have meant a lot for the pupils. Many kids usually come to school on empty bellies and are unable to end the five hours duration of school time. This resulted to them boycotting classes and even the school year. This is the direct effect of the high unemployment rate as a result of the 15 years of Civil war. **We appeal for funds to continue the school feeding program.**

Presently there are five central staffs with the Chairman of the Board of Directors. CYE being unable to functionally absorb all her staff from Ghana for now, There are others who are on standby until all others project are completely functional. The living condition is very much pathetic. Having being away for some decades, most returnees appear to be foreigners in their own country. The CYE staff is of no exception to this plight. In fact the lowest rental fee charge for a single room is at least \$20.0 per month, hardly affordable for any one with little or no income. Therefore most of the CYE staffs are accommodated by friends and family members.

With little or no regular stipend the CYE staffs are working under a very strenuous atmosphere. For example staff must walk about ten to twenty kilometers every working day to come to the office. In fact one hardly gets an available transportation. This makes it more difficult for other staff living beyond working distance. As a consequence, there is always irregular attendance to duties at the office. Also regular daily meal is hardly affordable as there is little or no regular stipend for the staff. For example a twenty-five kilos sack of rice, our stable food cost twenty united stated dollars. **We appeal for any assistance to motivate our staffs and give assurance for a stipend every month.**

Now we have gone in more than one month of the

2009/2010 school year and the statistics of enrollment are as follows:

ABC	K1	K2	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th
77	44	29	32	25	27	19	23	24
Total	300 as at October 2009							

This number is likely to be increased as students are still knocking on the door of the CYE School because of the lower fees charged, but unfortunately most of them are the vulnerable kids and just can not afford these low fees. This condition always places us in a tight financial corner as we are unable to generate, from tuition, the yearly salary amount of \$4,500 for ten teachers. Unlike the refugee camp where teachers could sacrifice and accept any stipend, teachers in Liberia are exposed to lots of opportunities with many high tuition private schools offering to pay them at least 150 US\$ a month. There is a need to ensure that CYE attracts the best teachers so as to also give our unfortunate and vulnerable kids the quality education they deserve. In addition to the minimum tuition fees which constitutes less than 20% of the yearly salary, the only subsidy and/or supplement is the Dick Clifford Scholarship. Last school year (2008/2009) this scholarship value a little over \$700 and was able to sponsor 22 kids.

Since our transition to Liberia, Activities like Gender base violence and HIV/AIDS, are intermittent due to financial constraints. With a donation of \$113 from Ingrid Scherer of AWC we were able to construct ten sitting stools with ten tables for a preliminary starting of the sewing school. Currently the sewing school has one teacher with 12 students under going a three months theoretical training to be followed by three months practical training and additional three months advance courses to be done outside of the Center. This makes the total of 9 months duration for one training cycle of the sewing school. The Center has 18 manual or hand machines and 4 embroidery machines brought from Ghana. But unfortunately the hands machines are currently outdated and rarely used by any training center nowadays. Again this places us under a demanding pressure to either buy stands for the machines or buy altogether some new modern machines before the end of the three months theory in early December.

Until September this year when peace education is regularly thought of at the CYE School with a peace club established, the peace and reconciliation program was also intermittent due to lack of financial support. Presently we have negotiated with two other high

schools in the vicinity of Gardnersville where the CYE office is located for the implementation of the Peace education program. Meanwhile other activities like community peace forum, peace and reconciliation workshops etc are also intermittent with plans under way to regularize them as soon as possible.

The school does not have a library running currently. Although we already identify a room for the library, we need to carry out minor renovation and making of shelves, tables and chairs for the library. The minor renovation is estimated at 120 US\$ and the shelves, tables and chairs estimated at 1,300 US\$ bringing the total to 1,420 USD.

SUMMARY OF NEEDS:

More Scholarships: The number of kids that just can not afford even the low cost fees we charge continue to increase. There is a need to keep them in school and even take most of them from the streets into the classrooms.

Teacher Salary: The teachers of the CYE Elementary School are really sacrificing their time and energy for little or nothing. Even the monthly salary of \$40 each, which is just the price of a bag of rice in Liberia, is not timely and/uncertain as CYE find it very difficult to raise such an amount monthly with no subsidy for the school because of the condition mentioned above.

Instructional Materials: The CYE School also lacks instructional materials. This also is a very serious problem for efficient teaching. Moreover, some of the students are finding it very difficult to buy their own copybooks and pens.

Student Desks/Armchairs: Additional chairs/desks are still needed in this for the classrooms.

School Feeding Program: with the categories of kids involved, and Liberia being a post war country, many of the kids come to school with empty stomachs as their parents/guardians can hardly afford their daily meal. As a result, they boycott classes most often. This also results to poor academic performance for most of them.

Transportation: (School bus) The CYE Elementary School attracts many students from far and near in the whole of Gardnersville and many parts of Monrovia because of the less fee Charged. In fact about half of the pupils presently in the CYE School come from far. Imagine a nine-year-old kid walking every day to school on such distance. It is in this direction that we are considering a school bus to help our students and also teachers and staffs.

Renovation of the CYE School Building : The CYE School is a ten-class room building with two offices and a big auditorium. It is leased by the organization for ten years upon the fulfillment of the stipulation of the financial obligation. The process of transition being very costly, just a minor renovation and/or renewal was done on the building. Most is still to be done with it cracks and faded walls, and rusted roof with many leakages. Notwithstanding, we greatly prioritize the construction of

our own school building in the near future.

CYE School Library: The school seriously needs a library. Its does not have a place where students take up their time to read or do research. Students should not only depend on teacher lesson but must also do research from text books and other supporting materials to increase their intellectual abilities.

Linus Gedeo
CYE Board Chairman

Comment from Australia.

This report deserves to be read by all Parliaments, Charities, Industries, Peoples, including you because it shows up the poor situation inflicted not only on Liberia, but on all the poorest countries which will reflect back on all countries however prosperous.

Liberia is a poor country with 80% unemployment. It is one of the 33 least developed countries in Africa as declared by the United Nations, being in third place from the bottom.

194 children can not afford the fees and were admitted free, i.e. they are subsidised by the fees paid for 64 students.

There are no other subsidies, they have problems paying their teachers, and most children are not well fed so are unable to take in much education. Equipment, stationary and books are very inadequate.

While it is easy to blame Africans, you must also take into account the warning issued by the IMF on March 3, 2009 which states that the third wave of the economic crisis is hitting the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries. Of 71 countries classified as eligible for concessional IMF loans many will see their per capita incomes shrink and their commodity exporters will be hit hard, facing lower export volumes and prices. The IMF expects global recovery will not occur until 2010. It should also be clear that the world trading system is designed to profit the larger countries at the expense of the poorer countries.

The worlds Bankers and Financiers are responsible for the financial crash, which has made it almost impossible for the larger nations to achieve the millennium resolution by 2015. . Global warming and Peak Oil will result in reduced supplies within five years. The combined effects will cause insurrection in many countries and gives reason why the Centre for Youth Empowerment should be supported. You see, when they were in Buduburam they ran Peace and Reconciliation Courses which they took to 6 schools in the camp as well as their own, sending two teachers twice a week to circulate these schools. They also held workshops for adults using material from the Conflict Resolution Network, Sydney Australia.

Such dedicated work deserves support, unfortunately they are getting less support in Liberia than they got in Buduburam due to the poor financial position of the Liberian government.

There are two things you can do:

- 1) Make a donation, to CYE c/o address below.*
- 2) Write to your representative or government requesting they increase their donation to the U.N. up to the 0.7% of GDP in order to reduce starvation, insurrection and improve comprehensive education across the world.*

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