

short description of your organization

Youth Crime Watch of Liberia is an accredited youth organization established in 2004 to help address the need for grassroots participation in nation building, following the civil conflict, which nearly decimated the population.

The Youth Crime Watch of Liberia is a non-profit organization dedicated to establishing Youth Crime Watches across Liberia. It was founded to help address the need for grassroots participation in nation building, following the civil conflict which had lasting scar in the lives of the entire citizenry. Youth Crime Watch of Liberia is dedicated to fighting illiteracy and promoting reconciliation, reconstruction, peace, development and better and healthier lifestyles in Liberia through crime prevention, youth empowerment and youth employment. Unlike other programs, where well-intentioned adults attempt to solve youth problems, YCWL gives young people that tools and guidance necessary to actively engage youth led programs in schools and communities.

Youth Crime Watch brings youth of all backgrounds together to identify and correct problems unique to their schools and communities. The YCW program empowers youth to take active roles in addressing the problems around them. Youth take responsibility and ownership of their own Youth Crime Watch Program for the school, neighborhood, recreational center, and wherever youth are participants.

Our Programs

Our program first and foremost, are youth-led and reflect our “Watch Out, Help Out” crime prevention philosophy and goals.

Each school or community youth crime watch site has a core group of youth leaders that assesses problems; decides on a course of action; and promotes and sustains the program.

Most YCW programs implement some combination of our nine basic components in collaboration international and local organizations through a variety of projects such as training in anti-Crime, anti-vandalism, youth empowerment/employment and public education projects to general observance and celebrations which focuses on good citizenship.

Our program components are:

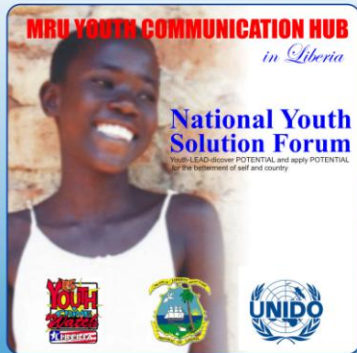
- Basic ICT, Entrepreneurship and Leadership development
- Gender & Capacity Development Initiative
- Crime Reporting
- Drug, crime, and Violence Education
- Mentoring & Mediation
- Community Peace building & Conflict Resolution
- Peer and Cross Age Teaching/Training
- Action Projects
- HIV/AIDS
- Environmental Campaign

Since the formation of the YCW, it has collaborated with Youth Crime Watch of America, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the Liberia National Police, Peace Child International, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Empowerment Squared Canada, Ministry of Youth & Sports Republic of Liberia, in the formulation and

drafting of its program focus. YCWL signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the guidance of the UNMIL/CIVPOL which defines the roles and responsibilities of the YCWL in the fight against crime in March of 2005. Similar Memorandum of Understanding was also signed between the Youth Crime Watch of America and the Youth Crime Watch of Liberia.

Description of your regular activities or running projects

National Youth Solution Forum



Young people constitute an important and significant part of the Liberian population, yet this is not reflected in their level of involvement and inclusion in decision-making processes and public debates. At a time of ever-increasing technological processes and greater access to information, the traditional notion of youth as being apathetic, is being shattered. Nonetheless, young people feel that the government and the rest of Liberian society do not consider them ready to contribute constructively to the design and implementation of policies, especially those affecting them. The stereotype view of youth as apathetic and lazy still prevails among many adults, and there are few genuine opportunities for youth participation. Lack of resources, priorities and youth friendly-access to public services are also pressing issues among the youth. For instance, youth organizations face immense difficulties to access public funds, due to bureaucratic red-tape that requires youth to demonstrate a

track record which many may not have. As a result of this, youth have less interest in showing a sense of partnership in national activities.

The question that needs to be asked is: how can we ensure that young people are engaged in public policy and addressing national issues? There are several ways that can aid in maximizing the participation of young people in decision making. Firstly, politicians need to continually listen to the views of the people who elected them (majority of whom are young people), and not only when they protest or complain. Secondly, it is very important for governments to go beyond tokenism and show that they take youth opinions into account because failure to do so can further disengage young people from many national processes including but not limited to politics, economics, and social activities. Most importantly, supporting the creation of institutionalized national youth platforms and encouraging the development of youth leadership, governments can take a proactive step towards getting young people

This discussion event will motivate and inspire national youth participants by reflecting on applicable solutions which can unleash creativity, and draw out best practices and skills for the benefit of young people and their communities.

The discussion creates new opportunities and new grounds for innovation, and demonstrates a 'think outside of the box' approach where young people can develop confidence from each other's stories and ideas. The cornerstone of this discussion is to generate innovative ideas and practical solutions to problems confronting youth and undermining the actualization of their potential and the re-awakening of their lost vigor.

GOALS OF THE FORUM

The ultimate goals of this forum are as follows:

- a. To challenge youth and Government stakeholders, INGOs, NGOs, CBOs, CSOs, and Foreign Missions in Liberia to use the MRU Youth Communication Platform and to demonstrate how such technology can change development for good.
- b. To create an avenue where the youth and adults can discuss issues under a peaceful and moderated environment, thereby restoring trust and confidence in the youth.
- c. To get young people to produce innovative solutions to problems and issues that affect them and their country without fighting or causing chaos.
- d. To expose youth to the vast and valuable content that could be available to them while using the platform (*This, we believe will keep them using the platform even after the forum*). To gather information and perspectives of young people about different issues that could be used by Government and other stakeholders in Liberia while designing a future development agenda.

The implementation of this forum document is done in two phases: Online and Offline:

Online: In **phase 1**, a topic will be distributed to all youth groups on the MRU Youth Platform to discuss and come up with their view about the topic (or problem). A repertoire will be employed to collate the findings.

Offline: In **Phase 2**, the offline forum shall occur at the physical space of MRU Communication Hub and other designated places and time as set aside by the implementing body. Discussion about the most pressing topic from the online discussion will be held. Findings will be gathered, compiled and published for public consumption. The discussion from the offline youth forum will gradually lead to an annual youth conference where youth will make decisions about their development and empowerment.

OUTCOMES

1. Ongoing reports from these discussions will be developed into useful tools to guide young people within their respective organizations/communities in diversified areas such as programming, goals and priority setting.
2. The Forum initiative will empower young people to have a strong voice in public discussion, and that Government has a framework to listen to and act on the issues and concerns of young Liberians.
3. It is hoped that these discussions will motivate young people within their respective organizations and communities to be innovative in order to achieve maximum impact in the region.

Thematic Areas of (concern) topic selection,

- Governance – domination of one over another, HIV/AIDS, Electoral Processes, Education; Networking; jobs/employment/training, good governance
- Economic – entrepreneurship, self employment
- Social - Gender based violence, Equal Rights,
- Political - constitutional matters, power,
- Geographical – road network, Environmental etc
- And many more to be decided upon by steering committee and youth groups

From these thematic areas shall come pressing topics. Prevailing issues of concern in our society shall also warrant discussion.

YOUTH TECHNOLOGY TRAINING CENTER

There is a major need for young people of Liberia especially in Paynesville/rural and nearby surroundings to freely access communication, information and training centers so they can have a good basic knowledge of computer programmes and related issues. Therefore this project aims at establishing a pilot information-training center for young people in Liberia who would be fully informed, trained and equipped to work with computers and access resources online.

Youth, who are the future of any nation, however have suffered the most. Children have been routinely recruited into the army to fight – about half have lost one or both parents, about all have had their education truncated through school closure and found no jobs because of zero investment. Worst, they suffer early death and reduced life expectancy through lack of health care, information technology and totally inadequate nutrition. Everyone acknowledges this and recognizes that youth have to be educated, trained and equipped otherwise they become point of contact for future conflict.

Now that peace has come, there is great hope for the future – the young people in Liberia are healing, and are determined that war should never spill across its borders again. They have had to grow up so fast that although the lack the formal education others take for granted, in terms of maturity, they are well-equipped to cope with the responsibility that now falls on their shoulders. A renewal and re-ignition which the current ruling elite so desperately need, can only come from the young generation.

Through their energy and fresh ideas, so many young men and women need to be drawn into the decision-making process and be actively engaged in constructive development projects.

Therefore Youth Crime Watch of Liberia, together with the United Nations Industrial Development (UNIDO) has established a Youth Communication Technology Hub in Liberia. Not only as a place where people can learn computer skills, access internet and network with other like-minded people, but also exposing them to all knowledge and experience that we have accumulated over the years on issues such as:

- **job search**
- **environment**
- **human rights**
- **CV writing,**
- **Student research**

and the skills that will help them become active and productive members of society. We also collect information on youth employment, create a database that can be accessed by all and give guidance where needed.

Our basic youth empowerment program is the Information Technology training. In this category of training, we provide different levels of IT training for youth to choose from. Each of them are full career courses that when completed can make youth managers of their own or very marketable assets.

MRU YOUTH COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY HUB PROGRAM

The MRU Youth Communication Hub is one of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO's) latest approach to the Youth Employment and Empowerment Strategy. It is a medium to hear directly from the youth and to provide them with details they need to develop themselves.

Youth Crime Watch of Liberia was selected by the United Nations Industrial Development organization (UNIDO) to run the Mano River Union Youth Employment Communication Hub/Platform in Liberia. This Communication hub is responsible to administrate the additional three communication hubs in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast.

The Communication Hub/Platform is a web-based, open source (using the newly developed crabgrass technology), youth friendly; the communication platform is a powerful tool for youth participation, inclusion in decision making, knowledge sharing, peer-to-peer support, networking and information gathering. The platform's main focus is youth employment and youth-led development; it provides the rare opportunity for youth in the Mano River Union Countries to generate ideas, concrete recommendations, and share visions on youth development in the region. The platform's design provides a mechanism for transparency and full participation, enabling youth to submit their opinions to government officials, the business community, as well as the public at large.

This platform is believed to have the potentials to become a motor for business development in the region, providing youth the change of enriching their network and business horizons.

The Mano River Union Youth Communication Hub is the physical space of a two part program that is working to develop youth collaboration, development and empowerment.

The MRU Youth Communication Hub is a multi-stakeholders program including the Governments of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire; **UNIDO**, **UNDP**, MRU Secretariat, **UNICEF** and **YEN** with funding from the **Japanese Government**.

As you may be aware that Young people constitute an important and significant part of the Liberian population, yet this is not reflected in their level of involvement and inclusion in decision-making processes and public debates. In a time with ever-increasing technological process and relative greater access to information, the traditional impression of apathetic youth is being shattered. Young people feel that the government and the rest of the Liberian society do not consider them ready to contribute constructively to the design and implementation of policies, especially those affecting them.

Still and most importantly, by supporting the creation of institutionalized national youth platforms, such as the MRU Youth Communication Platform and encouraging leadership development, governments can take a proactive step towards involving young people. They want a common platform where they can meet, discuss and advocate their views, making it easier for governments to consult with a large and representative number of young people.

The Hub is divided into parts; the **Physical Space** and the **Virtual Space**. Thus; the Hub not only provide services, but also set to be a professional engine for improved service delivery with cost effectiveness, gradually stands out as an opportunity among the rest to raise additional funds for it running cost.

The Physical Space

The Physical Space, from UNIDO point of view, has many definitions, but below are the most commonly used:

- The Physical Space of the Mano River Union Youth Communication Hub is a cafe like structure where young people meet to interface with the virtual space.

- It is a place where young people meet to discuss issues affecting them and sometimes collaborate to draw out suggestions about the possible solutions to those issues.
- It is also a community centre where youth gather to discuss issues about their employment in particular and development in general, in a very systematic and responsible manner.
- Finally, the physical place is a training centre from where young people can volunteer services in order to gain lucrative training in different professions.

Currently, UNIDO has four centres in the Mano River Union Basin countries; in Liberia, the physical space is located at the headquarters of **Youth Crime Watch of Liberia** in Paynesville.

The centres offer training on how to use the virtual space. They also provide high level training in Information Management System, Web Development, Business Entrepreneurship, and Secretarial Science in exchange for volunteer services or for very minimum fees.

The Virtual Space

The Virtual Space of the MRU Youth Communication Hub is a Web-based Application (or website) that allows interactivity, collaboration and organization of youth groups, government agencies as well as local and international NGOs.

The virtual space requires registration to join and can be accessed through the URL, <http://my.mruyouthplatform.org> and the public space is www.mruyouthplatform.org Once you are registered, you can interact with young people within your network, group or your contacts.

Application to join the virtual space is accepted from youth groups, government agencies, local and international NGOs, as well as individuals. Once you have registered, you can visit the physical space in any of the locations above to get training on how to use the virtual space or you can click on links from the tips section on the right to get the latest tutorials.

SPORTS FOR CHANGE PROGRAM

Sport in the world today is not only for entertainment or business venture; it is today a great unifying element. Such a unifier that fans from all aspects of a nation or a world can gather in one location to celebrate.

Our innovation is in the use of sports and other recreational activities to provide social change and holistic human development with assured participation of all through the sports for all and by all ideas. Youth Crime Watch of Liberia will, according to the limits of our resources, create or assist training programs, leagues, tournaments, camps, and other youth-related projects. The central target area of Youth Crime Watch of Liberia sports program missions will be places where youth and children are at a high risk of danger from drugs, violence and crime. Our philosophy is that kids can succeed in life no matter where they are raised, as long as they have positive outlets to oppose negative ones.

The Idea Behind Our Sport Program

Despite our focus on sports, Youth Crime Watch of Liberia sports program is not meant to build up generations of sports superstars, even though this is not a bad idea. Our goal is to use sports, games of teamwork and fitness, to produce generations of strong young adults, successful community leaders and youth advocates who know that crime, drugs and violence are not solutions to any problem. If one player in our sport programs can pursue his or her dreams at the highest levels of a particular sport, we will certainly be happy and further provide all support within our reach. But if our players can influence the next generations for the improvement of their neighborhoods, we will have achieved a step towards our goal.

The idea of using sport for change can work out well in Liberia since bulk of the youth population, both male and female, have high interest in sports. For example, young people will cover very long distances to emerge at the National Samuel Kanyon Doe Sports Stadium to witness the Liberia National Soccer Team (Lonestar) play. Whether or not the team will win, young people provide their utmost support and love. This spirit of oneness, this energy of direction and sense of purpose are all the motivational factors behind our sports program.

Whenever a young person joins a team, he or she is liable to obeying all of the norms within the team if he/she wishes to stay. This form of volunteer respect for team members, the coach, the referee and even the fans is a worthy exercise to take youth through. After all, they will be dealing with people from different walks of life and if they can handle it, they would handle most scenarios in their lives.

GENDER & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE PROGRAM

Our Women are our priority; therefore, we have a special program dedicated to issues regarding them, their relationship with men and children as it relates to their well-being.

Our Gender Desk Plan provides its outlines on how Youth Crime Watch of Liberia will work in partnership with Community Youth Groups, Schools, United Nations agencies and civil society organizations to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed goals.

Youth Crime Watch of Liberia (YCWL) gender program works to foster women's empowerment and gender equality in schools and communities. YCWL has identified four strategic areas that are of critical concern for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment and which guide our awareness raising activities:

- Reducing gender based torture including rape, forced sexual violence against inmates of both gender, etc.
- Ending Violence Against Women
- Reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls
- Education Promotion programs-mentoring, career development, sexual and reproductive health

Youth Crime Watch of Liberia places the advancement of women's protection at the centre of all its efforts. All our programmes contribute to achieving a society in which young people can think, feel, and live safely. We promote society where all young people, especially women, can realize their potential, contribute to society and respect human rights and dignity. This, we believe, is achievable on when women are placed in the forefront.

Our Fight against Rape in Liberia

Rape is a very essential threat to female safety in Liberia. The government of Liberia led the way in the fight against rape by introducing new and very strong legislations to curtail the act. The United Nations Mission in Liberia also supported the government by creating new clinics to provide free treatment and counseling for rape victims. From our end, Youth Crime Watch of Liberia is working overnight to ensure the safety of women, especially the ones entering our programs. We stage rape awareness campaigns to keep the public aware of the side effect of rape on a woman.

Sometimes, people committing these crimes make requests to have an out-of-court settlement, which entails the perpetrator giving some amount of money to the victim. This is mostly done under the name, "Family Way". YCWL discourages the so-called "Family Way" of solving rape issues not only because such solution does not properly redress the issue, but also leaves the victim with improper counseling, treatment and rehabilitation since the case is kept away from authority.

PUBLIC AWARENESS ON ARM VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL COHESION

A three months Project supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and presently implemented by Youth Crime Watch of Liberia.

Throughout Liberia's difficult and often violent history, small arms have been the favored tool for inflicting violence and defending against it. Whether employed for oppression, resistance, crime or self-defense, these weapons have occupied a prominent place in the lives of its citizens for generations.

The height of Liberia's tragic relationship with firearms came in the 1980s, with the onset of a 14-year civil war that would claim the lives of over 400,000 Liberians, and open the country's borders to a deluge of weaponry from abroad. In 2003, a peace agreement in Ghana brought an end to hostilities. But the war left behind a destructive legacy: thousands of rifles, handguns and hand grenades. Over the past 19 years, these weapons – and the thousands of additional arms that have poured in during the post-war era – have fuelled an epidemic of criminal violence that has killed thousands of Liberians and generated a climate of deepening public insecurity. Arm robbery, weapon-related criminal activities are some of the precarious situations created by these man-made disasters.

The persistent uncontrollable proliferation and possession of SALW continue to constitute a major threat to social and economic development across Liberia. Specifically, they contribute to the continued proliferation of criminal elements and organized crime, which has a negative influence on social and economic development. There is also a similar negative effect on security and confidence building measures during the transitional period of many of the countries

OBJECTIVES

This awareness is intended to highlight and educate the public about the staggeringly high levels of death and injury, which would be much lower if guns were not available, armed violence, which implies enormous costs to all levels of the Liberian society, human as well as economic. To build the capacities noticeable communities and citizens on how avoid the proliferation of small arms and avoid the adverse security social cohesion, resulting in eroding credibility of public institutions.

To significantly facilitate the reduction of circulation rates of small arms and therefore reduce the negative consequences for economic development and performance by curbing community violence resulting from illegal possession of small arms engender the prospects for human development and consolidation of democracy and the peace we now enjoy in Liberia.

- To strengthening local capacities, to understand and address armed violence from a human security and development perspective and
- To promote community led partnerships on armed violence prevention

TARGET COMMUNITIES AND AUDIENCES

Four important communities will be targeted for this awareness including; **Paynesville, New Kru Town, Tubmanburg and Sinje**. Major audiences would be community dwellers (Include: youth, students, institutions and stakeholders). As there will be radio programs, we expect that

lessons of such awareness would also cover a larger part of the entire part of the country, where listeners are regularly encouraged to tune-in.

Brief Description of target communities

Paynesville is the largest commercial district outside Monrovia and due to its population; criminal activities are notably on the increase, best known for arm robberies, theft, and other arm-related criminal activities. Tubmanburg also, a district in Bomi County, which was a strong hold of the one warring faction; LURD, have had serious adverse impact on the lives of residence, especially young people, who as a result remain with the use of arms as an option for seeking their daily bread., while New Kru Town, a slump community infested with lot of criminal activities, a potential threat to national security and community development. Sinje is a border crossing environment bordering Liberia with a-one-time conflict zone country, Sierra Leone.

ACTIVITIES

Given the multiplicity of audiences, base on understanding and conceptualization of issues relating to small arm control and social cohesion, it is our hope to organize:

- Community outreach,
- Road show, distribution of leaflets and other printed information materials
- Media presentation (news papers, radio talk show, gingkoes and drams)
- sports and education events,
- Student debates on topics such as social cohesion, arm violence reduction and equality
- Community forums (with local groupings, leaders and stakeholders)
- Stage Performances

YCW-LIBERIA'S INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME

YCW-LIBERIA's International Volunteer programme encourage persons 18 years and older with no upper age limit for participation. Volunteers range from undergraduate/ college students to professionals, business students, filmmakers and photographers, social workers, teachers and educators.

YCW-LIBERIA welcomes volunteers who may not have previous youth or community development experience. Volunteers receive all necessary orientation from YCW-LIBERIA so that they are able to work effectively and produce quality results on their assignments.

Benefits for Volunteering with YCW-Liberia

Successfully recruited volunteers or intern have the opportunity of:

- Knowing and learning more about host country and communities
- Developing a new career path or improving on their career path
- Enhancing their job-finding network by connecting to a hidden job market

- Having a “plus” to their CV as they can make reference to YCW-LIBERIA on their contribution to the development of Liberia and the world as a whole. On completion of the volunteer program participants are given an internationally recognized certificate of honor;
- Knowing and working with youth and other interest people alike who are committed to making the world a just one;
- Enhancing their educational experience with practical work assignments;
- Having the chance to meet different people from all walks of life through participation in action projects and also through their participation in conferences or other meetings;
- Know much about the work of the United Nations Statement of Purpose since we are working with some of the frameworks of the UN

Duration of Placement: Placement options can be secured for not less than 2 weeks and more.

What do Volunteers Do?

Supported with YCW’s caring staff environment, interns and incoming volunteers are guided, inspired and assisted to take action, help design programs that empower youth and advice them on how to implement action projects successfully.

We also placed volunteers in schools to teach as way of contributing to the education system of Liberia. Youth Crime Watch of Liberia understand Liberian’s population is made up of mostly youths and about 65% of these youths are uneducated and women form the bulk of that number. Government’s effort to expand educational activities to all and especially to the girl child through the some education projects still have some gaps in strengthening the education system. There is an urgent need of trained and qualified teachers/ lecturers in the educational sector, provision of up to date technologies that will meet with present needs of the education curricular.

Conclusively it could be realistically judged that children who form the bulk of the population in this country are seriously deprived of quality educational services.

You can help these young and unfortunate people in Liberia by volunteering in schools in Liberia.

Successfully recruited volunteers will fill up vacancies or will support already existing officers in working on/in these sections or programmes/projects: Newsletter, Website marketing and regular updating, Proposal writing, Youth MDGs Programme, ICT, Leadership and Entrepreneurship programmes, Communication and Information Dissemination, Teaching in Schools, Connecting communities and working with Schools & Youth Groups, computer Literacy programs and support the MRU Communication platform for Liberia. YCW-LIBERIA staff and volunteers will work together to provide support in implementing community service projects. Volunteers are encouraged to be proactive and entrepreneurial to develop their own projects and programs that are in connection with the broad vision and mission of YCW-LIBERIA.

Being sensitive to the time needed to make some cultural adjustments, *YCW-LIBERIA* offers different positions that correspond with volunteer’s studies at school and also your future aspirations. Shorter-term volunteers are normally put in roles where they can add the most value within the shortest possible time to their practical experience. Longer-term volunteers are matched with specific projects or programmes that are also of interest to them.

Beside the task that you will have to accomplish during working hours. You will have weekends and evenings to have fun and explore a new culture.

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Successfully recruited volunteers will fill up vacancies or will support already existing officers in working on/in these sections or programmes/projects: Newsletter, Website marketing and regular updating, Creating networks, Designing projects, Proposal writing, Implementation of Youth Crime Watch Clubs in School and community, Youth and the MDGs, ICT, Leadership and Entrepreneurship programmes, Communication and Information Dissemination, and working with Schools & Youth Groups, Computer Literacy programs and support the MRU Communication platform for Liberia. YCW-LIBERIA staff and volunteers will work together to provide support in implementing community service projects. Volunteers are encouraged to be proactive and entrepreneurial to develop their own projects and programs that are in connection with the broad vision and mission of YCW-LIBERIA.

Example volunteer activities may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Introduce a young people in schools or youth groups to the Millennium Development Goals;
- Assist members of YCW-LIBERIA programmes/Youth Crime Watch Clubs in schools/communities to develop action plans;
- Developing information newsletters;
- Basic ICT, Leadership and Entrepreneurship Training
- Graphic design and web page development;
- Assist young people with Internet research and to prepare them for a better performance in major events;
- Coordinating young teams to produce a tool kit;
- Organize YCW Liberia Annual Retreat for students/youths
- Teaching in schools