



Liberia Youth Development for Integration and Access (LYDIA Liberia)

3-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN (2022 — 2024)

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION (P/DDA)

The Liberia Youth Development for Integration and Access (LYDIA-Liberia) strategic plan looks to the future, taking the actions necessary to help minimize all kinds of violence and trafficking against women, girls, and children and the youth population of Liberia and create an enabling environment for young people that is full of hope and opportunities.

Looking forward to a rough but successful fight throughout the life of this Strategic Plan (2022-2024) with a vibrant determination, we shall keep our mission and values under the spotlight as a forerunning tool and we invite our local communities, national and international partners, donors, as well as those wishing to volunteer, to join us in this great fight for our youth in general, women, girls and children in particular, to have a space where they can boldly be free to participate in nation building processes without fear of molestation, sexual harassment, gender biases, in person trafficking, and all forms of marginalization.

With your collaboration, this is a worthy initiative that we all will share the appreciation. We therefore foresee the collaboration in the three years ahead as a movement to give our vulnerable youth the opportunity to live their full lives.

Numehn Owen Dunbar
President/DDA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Strategic Plan will guide LYDIA Liberia for the next 3 years as we reach out to at-risk young people (emphasis on women, girls and children) and provide them with protection, solutions and a safe environment where they can gain academic and technical skills, learn, practice, and convey their rights, leadership, and livelihood skills, and focus on ethical decision making.

The plan articulates how LYDIA Liberia will use our mandate to leverage donor funds to implement programs and activities to accomplish maximum victory against violence against women, girls and children, in person trafficking, ignorance, and poverty that our youth face in our country today. It also looks keenly at innovative ideas we wish to explore to help our target population to overcome their inabilities to speak out, rise up, and lead on in their generation.

With its strength in a series of consultations, the plan is organized to be rolled out in stages: some components will be immediately active while other may be gradually rolled out as we receive donations to move them forward. There will be an annual assessment to identify successes and challenges as well as ways to move forward that will allow the organization to adapt to and contextualize unfolding situations and programmatic changes, using integrated approaches.

To ensure we fully deliver out programs, we will strive to receive grants/funds, in kind, volunteer services, and other support systems to help us achieve lasting results and make meaningful impacts.

VISION

An environment where the rights of young people are promoted and the youth have the capacity to influence and control their lives, being free of all forms of violence and are socially and economically empowered to lead in their communities.

MISSION

To support, protect, and develop young people and avail them to livelihood opportunities that empower them to participate in decision-making processes with a collective effort to improve structures and systems that govern them.

THE PROBLEM

Liberia's youth population lives in poverty and are largely ignorant about major laws and other issues surrounding them. They lack basic education and livelihood skills and are thus unable to earn their own livelihood. Teenage pregnancy forces young women and girls out of school and into single parenthood, thus plunging the younger generation into deeper poverty. "Fast Money" leads youth daily life and have them shying away from education to make "quick money". Young women and girls are faced with all forms of violence including trafficking, rape, and sexual coercion in the home, at school, and in the workplace.

Youth need basic livelihood skills and opportunities to survive. They need to raise their voices and speak against issues affecting them and there needs to be structures that support their economic empowerment and provide them protection. Improving youth income in Liberia is an issue that cannot be overemphasized. They need the relevant skills to be involved in micro businesses and income generation activities to help them become self-employed to lead their own lives, thus minimizing their vulnerability.

There is a cross-section of players that are under engaged but must be fully engaged in the youth development process: teachers, family, nurses, judges, traditional leaders, and local organizations, who all play important roles in the lives of the youth.

Solving the youth problem in Liberia is everyone's business – please get involved!

TO OUR DONORS

Your support will see a changed young generation of Liberians that is enjoying their basic rights, are free from gender biases, gender-based violence, human trafficking, and all forms of abuse and marginalization. A community where male and female are equal and free, irrespective of race, tribe, sexual orientation, sex, as well as geographic location.

OUR IMPACT

Our programs are designed to:

- Achieve gender equality and equity where all are equally respected irrespective of race, tribe, sexual orientation, sex, and geographic location.
- Fight gender-based violence and foster women/youth independence and leadership.
- Improve youth literacy and livelihood skills to increase their economic independence and values.
- Provide safety for at-risk or abused women and girls through a residential home where they receive healing, shelter, food, clothing, other basic needs, technical vocational training, and academic education after being abused sexually, morally, or emotionally.
- Minimize trafficking of youth, women, and children
- Promote access to justice for women and children and persecution of perpetrators of gender-based violence

OUR FOCUS

Developing vulnerable young people and empowering them with livelihood and literacy skills to enable them to lead their own lives and fully participate in the decision-making processes of their communities. Our major focus is on youth who have never been to school or are drop-out from any level of school; those who have been or are at risk of being abused or trafficked; those having little or no livelihood skills or means to earn their living.

THE CONTEXT

According to the Liberia National Youth Policy, all youth have the right to participate in the formulation of policies and decisions that affect them, leadership, and development at local and national levels, protection from all forms of abuse, coercion, violence, exploitation, discrimination and degradation. The policy further states that all youth should have access to proper education and training (including opportunities for life-long learning), employment, housing, legal services, health care (including reproductive health), and recreation. In addition, the policy states that disabled youth have the right to be provided with the special treatment as demanded by their condition.

The policy gives youth responsibility to promote, dialogue, reconciliation, peace, and development; to protect, conserve, and preserve the environment; to promote and advance the principles of gender equality; to acquire skills which increase their capacity for self-help, self-respectability, cooperation and community development; and to promote positive lifestyles and behaviors.

However, the only way youth can perform these responsibilities is when there is the enabling environment supported by national, county, district, and community structures that provide them the support to do so.

The vision of the Liberia National Gender Policy is to guide the country towards achieving gender equity and equality, building and utilizing the potential of women and men, boys and girls in pursuing and benefiting from national development goals. Its goal is to mainstream gender in the national development processes, enhance women's and girls' empowerment for sustainable and equitable development; and create and strengthen gender responsive structures and mechanisms in which both women and men can participate and benefit from development programs on equal basis.

However, Liberia remains far from implementation. Perpetrators of rape cases are protected rather than prosecuted – as young as 2 months babies are still being raped, human trafficking remains on the rise, while gender inequality is culturally rooted in the Liberian society, rural Liberian families still prioritize boys' education over girls', men and women in Liberia still have clear gender divisions of labor, unequal remuneration, as well as unequal access to justice still are prevalent. Young women are left as single parents to care for children without any subsidy

from national government, no home/shelter, no income, no access to medical care and no hope, thus creating a more devastating situation for the younger generation. Rural youth are ignorant of laws protecting them and how to access justice, property ownership law, marriage law, and have little or no literacy skills.

Youth who experience multiple forms of discrimination, including based on age, class, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity or migration status have made the least progress and have basically no hope.

LESSONS THAT INFORMED THIS STRATEGIC PLAN

LYDIA Liberia began operation in 2020 with our headquarters in Melekie Town, Bong County and a sub-office in Congo Town, Monrovia. Our independent engagement with women, girls, and other youth in Bong, Nimba, Montserrado, and Margibi counties; exploration of trends during our vulnerability assessment in 2020 and 2021; progress and challenges international and local partners have faced while trying to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment; and consultations held with a cross sector of partners at the community, county, and national levels of Liberia. Below are some key and interesting lessons we have learned:

1. There is a huge opportunity for LYDIA Liberia to pursue and implement its trio programmatic components – *an all-inclusive youth development, youth leadership and economic empowerment, and youth speak out, rise up, and lead on*. We have been very strategic and supportive of girls' educational access and retention. We are perfectly placed at the center of human trafficking in Liberia (Bong County) as a place of rescue and freedom for the at-risk and abused youth. As a result of our vulnerability assessment report (2021), our mandate is most relevant for the protection of the Liberian youth population – especially the women, girls, and children. There exists an avenue for creating structures through which women's voices will be heard and they themselves will have a zero tolerance for speaking against and reporting sexual gender-based violence
2. LYDIA Liberia collaborated with and supported the Lydia House International as our international partner developed an SGBV prevention program entitled, "Speak Out". This model (developed by Lydia House International) is used to train leaders and youth on how to prevent and report on sexual violence and abuse. There is a teen version for youth (girls and boys) to use in a peer-to-peer discussion and training or each other to know how to prevent and speak out about violence against them. Speak Out educates leaders and youth on how to raise their voices against sexual and gender-based violence. From some of our Speak Out trainings, we have seen the eagerness of both boys and girls to end gender disparity in their communities as well as leaders' (NGOs, religious, community, parents) willingness to participate in the minimization of SGBV.
3. Teen age girls remain in school when provided sustainable hygiene pads during their menstruation periods. LYDIA Liberia receives and distributes hundreds of hygiene kits to

girls who are in school but are at risk of dropping during their menstruation. Vessels of Mercy in the United States has been our biggest donor along this line followed Ms. Judith Oki of the USA and other individual partners. Margibi, Bong, Montserrado, and Nimba counties have been the prime beneficiaries of the hygiene kits. A follow-up on the use of the hygiene kits indicates that girls are using the kits hitherto as the kits were made to last for a period of 3 to 4 years.

4. Women-focused organizations around the country are very eager to promote anti-gender biased violence activities and raise their voices against gender violence and in person trafficking but they lack the medium and support to do so collectively. There is a need for the government of Liberia to enhance the work of women-supportive organizations and set up structures that will ensure the implementation of laws and policies that protect women and children in the country as well as fully punish perpetrators of gender-based violence in accordance with the laws instituted.
5. Inter-organizational collaboration provides a key proportional benefit: LYDIA Liberia views partnership as an emphatic model to leverage resources in campaigning for women, girls, and other limited youth. Organizational collaboration and partnership are strong and sustainable mechanisms for a lasting success to youth development. Stronger/larger entities need to convene and support multi-partner advocacy strategies, lay platforms and initiate dialogues between governments, civil society and other stakeholders, and to support the use of a single voice that will build broad-based support for gender equality in Liberia.
6. Donor organizations need to provide grants directly to Liberian local organizations, civil society organizations, as well as community-based organizations to enable them to reach the lowest of the needy. These grassroots organizations are the best mediums for sustainable efforts initiated by donors. Members and leaders of local organizations are directly coexisting with community members, victims, survivals and the perpetrators themselves and are therefore best placed to handle issues that arise and can best serve as indicators for national government.
7. “Save Homes” run by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection are not adequate for solving sexual and gender-based violence. These homes only house the survivals for a very short period and such time is not enough to heal a traumatized survival. LYDIA Liberia introduces the “Lydia House” program which provides a home for vulnerable girls, women, and their children who have experienced or are at risk of human trafficking, sexual violence, homelessness, or extreme poverty. Our home offers these women, girls, and children a safe living and learning environment to reflect, heal, and grow while they receive full provision, counselling, education, rights awareness, and vocational training. This is done to:
 - Fight Gender-Based Violence
 - Foster women’s independence and
 - Empower women to lead and empower others

8. Most of the schools in the villages and towns of rural Liberia are at the primary level so girls passing grade 6 and having no support (which is the usual case) to migrate to the cities in pursuit of their junior secondary education, are left as primary school dropouts and are vulnerable to becoming early mothers and early brides. Equally, there are thousands of families around Liberia that cannot afford to send their kids to school. LYDIA Liberia therefore solicits sponsorship for vulnerable school age children and youth to continue their education up to the completion of the secondary level through requesting scholarship sponsorship from individuals and organizations to meet this goal.

DRIVING FOCUS

The work of LYDIA Liberia is guided by the following principles:

- A. LYDIA Liberia is a human rights-based organization and therefore will apply the human rights-based approach that allows for equal participation by and the equal rights of all. To LYDIA Liberia, everyone is someone.
- B. We hold ourselves accountable for our mandate and we are committed to seeing equality and equity among all living in the perimeters of Liberia. No matter your geographic location, tribe, beliefs, sexual orientation, economic viability or family background, you are as important as anyone else is important.
- C. Lifting the heads and lives of women and girls by creating an enabling environment that keeps them aware economically, morally, legally, socially, and spiritually. We highly value collaboration with CSOs, CBOs, local authorities, as well as individuals and unions to ensure we have a better country that allows all to live their lives to its fullest. One major partner that has long been ignored along this line is the traditional leaders. LYDIA Liberia works with these leaders to foster protection and equality for all youth.

LYDIA LIBERIA STRATEGIC PLAN

LYDIA Liberia Strategic Plan has three thematic areas:

A. An All-Inclusive Youth Development:

LYDIA Liberia works to ensure that all youth are equally participating in decision-making processes and development activities and are serving as each other's

keepers. To achieve this, we work to promote youth gender equality in decision-making processes at the community, district, county, and national levels and ensure that boys, girls, young men and young women are equally adhering to and promoting gender laws and policies and are accountable for each other's wellbeing. LYDIA Liberia serves as a catalyst, creating awareness amongst youth in general about their rights to decision-making, property ownership, education, freedom, equality and equity, justice, freedom from molestation, discrimination, and marginalization, and their rights to finance and economic development.

We provide safety for at-risk girls, young women and their children through a residential home called "Lydia House" where we select, host, and support the most vulnerable women and girls who have been or are at risk of being abused sexually, morally, or emotionally to ensure they are provided with housing, food, clothing and all basic needs. Life at Lydia House is called "Transformation Life". Selected young women and girls will also learn about all their basic rights – namely education, property ownership, marriage, access to justice – and how to access these rights. Young women in Transformation Life will be trained to report violence against women with a zero tolerance, and they will train other women and girls in schools and communities to do the same. Women meeting our criteria but have children that they directly care for are admitted with their children and allowed to fully experience Transformation Life. The idea is to ensure that the next generation is raised differently from their mothers. This keeps the family together and safe. Statistics show that most girls who were assaulted are girls who stayed with others while their parents were away.

We also distribute sustainable feminine hygiene kits to girls who are in school but are at risk of dropping during their menstruation period due to the lack of safe sanitary pads to protect them during their cycle. Keeping girls safe, confident, and happy is a core component of our work. Women and girls in Transformation Life will be trained to sew and sell these hygiene kits to help generate income that will help to upkeep the home.

B. Youth Leadership and Economic Empowerment

LYDIA Liberia will seek funding to improve youth skills to enable them access available income generation opportunities. We help young people, including the most marginalised and disadvantaged, to unlock their potential by providing literacy, livelihood, and work readiness skills that will lift their heads in the world of work by becoming their own bosses and controlling their own lives. Using grants and contracts (donor funds), LYDIA Liberia's youth leadership and economic empowerment program will support young people in Liberia to successfully transition from vulnerability to a life of decency. We will

empower young women and men, girls and boys with the basic academic and livelihood skills and capabilities, and provide them the capacity to lead their own lives and become decision makers and leaders in their world. We want to ensure that youth have the power to make economic decisions and lead the change they want to see in their communities and lives. This will help contribute to the reduction of unemployment the youth. To do this, LYDIA Liberia will:

- Support youth to engage government (locally & nationally) and communities to ensure a safe space for their improvement through participation in decision-making processes. We will organize youth advocacy/engagement groups that will engage local and national leaders constructively.
- Provide youth with smart livelihood and technical skills that will put them in charge of their own lives. Youth will also be taught basic literacy and primary education skills to enable them to transact to the level of their generation.
- Promote safety, gender equality, anti-gender-based violence and anti in person trafficking activities to ensure social protection for all youth, especially women, girls, and the least classes. Presently, LYDIA Liberia is partnering with Lydia House International to implement the Lydia House Program where we have a 60-bed residential complex to host vulnerable girls, women, and their children who have been or are at risk of being victimized by sexual, moral, or emotional violence and are at risk of further abuse. Lydia House is a home for young women, their children, and girls who have experienced or are at risk of human trafficking, sexual violence, homelessness, or extreme poverty. Our home offer these women, girls, and children a safe living and learning environment to reflect, heal, and grow while they receive full provision, counselling, education, rights awareness, and vocational training.

C. Youth Speak Out, Rise Up, and Lead On

LYDIA Liberia will strengthen youth social capacity to speak out against issues that affect them and legally push for the persecution of perpetrators of violence against them. LYDIA Liberia has already worked with its USA partner – Lydia House International – to create a GBV prevention program called **Speak Out**. Our Speak Out program educates youth and local leaders on sexual harassment and abuse, harmful gender norms that lead to social inequalities, and how to create and use an effective reporting system for sexual abuse that protects victims and exposes perpetrators. Leaders and youth will be trained to train others to use the speak out module to both train and prevent gender-based violence and abuse.

Lydia House International also developed a peer youth brochure version of the speak out to be used by youth while they are at the well, waterside, in school, in the community, at sports sites and other places, to create awareness amongst themselves and encourage each other to speak against violence against

themselves. Women and girls at the Lydia House Program will move into the communities and school and organize girls' clubs that will be trained to use the peer-to-peer brochure for interaction with each other in a bid to foster anti gender-based violence campaigns.

Anticipated Programmatic Outcomes

1. Communities adopt behavior-change practices that promote gender equality and women's empowerment, including those that promote positive social norms.
2. Male and female youth regard each other as equal partners. Youth actively participate in decision-making processes in their communities. They participate in leadership in various aspects of the society along with aging leaders.
3. At-risk or abused youth (emphasis on women and girls) are provided safety through a residential home called "Lydia House" where they receive healing, shelter, food, clothing, other basic needs, technical vocational training, academic education.
4. Women and girls become more aware of gender-responsive laws and policies and available structures that promote these laws. They are aware of their role in their personal security and safety, and they practice those roles.
5. Financially challenged girls remain in school during their menstruation by receiving soft hygiene kits that will last them 3 – 4 years of the school life.
6. An enabling environment that is safe for all women and girls and promotes the raising their voices to speak out against their ills and advance gender equality, equal rights, and equal opportunities for all in all aspects of life. Youth are self-confident, having a mastery of their own lives with the power to make decision and raise their voices in their interests.
7. Youth have a sense of responsibility, independence, and individuality that enhances their sense of principles and values.
8. Youth control their own safety, have a sense of belonging, and control their relationships with other people and are raising their voices against violence and injustices against them.

9. Youth are economically empowered to improve their economic status and can act effectively in the best interest of themselves and others. Women and girls have equal access to finance and business opportunities as the men and boys.
10. Youth can conduct effective communication, transacting business using mobile banking and text messages, as well as keeping formal business record to indicate profit and loss

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

To uphold our vision and achieve our goals, LYDIA Liberia will keenly monitor program impact and achievements by tracking our progress against those indicators we set for each project or program. Data will be used for reporting purposes, the improvement of our work and sharing with partners as necessary. We will conduct an ongoing improvement of our monitoring system with keenness on the impact we make and how they will be sustained by the communities and individuals. Donor interest for monitoring will be an integral part of our monitoring plans and practices. As necessary, we will use external evaluation to verify that the instruments and methods applied in our programs or projects are appropriate and viable. This will also provide us an opportunity to initiate or improve dialogue between with beneficiaries, partners, and donors.

Please work with us:

www.lydialiberia.org