PROVIDING PROTECTION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIBERIA’S VULNERABLE YOUTH

Liberia is focused on creating jobs for their youth. The government has allocated US$ 75 million to the Liberia Youth Employment Program (LYEP), with the goal of creating 20,000 new jobs annually over the next five years. RSR supported analytical work that enabled an efficient use of resources and helped ensure that the program reaches those most in need.

CHALLENGE

In a country where 75 percent of the population is under 35 years old,1 stability and growth hinge on opportunities given to young people. This is imperative in Liberia where the challenges not only lie in the sheer size of the youth population but also in their vulnerability; most grew up during the civil war in childhoods marked by violence and insecurity, and deprived of access to education and health.

The government is committed to developing a social protection and labor system and improving opportunities for youth so that the country can heal its wounds and grow into the middle-income country it aspires to be. The short-term priority is to generate employment for young people, while also working towards rebuilding the country’s human capital and concertedly focusing on those aged 15 and younger. The challenges are many, not least including government institutional capacity and the absence of a strategy to coordinate and monitor the targeting and impact of the many fragmented and mostly donor-driven programs for youth that already exist.

APPROACH

With RSR support, the World Bank task team has built an evidence base that informs the choice, design and sequencing of interventions under LYEP. These policy recommendations were fed into a multi-sectoral framework led by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and will help guide the policies for youth over the next five years.

RSR was a vital instrument to jump start an important and emerging priority issue for the government, providing balance between a structured and flexible framework and meeting the on-the-ground needs in a timely manner.

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“I left school in 7th grade because of the war, but I liked school very much and had good teachers. I got married and had seven children, but my husband died in the war. We were forced to move to a camp for internally displaced people near the border of Guinea. We lived there for three years. We didn’t have enough food and could not get any medical attention so two of my youngest children died. Since the war things have been difficult, but we have a place to live now and I have enough money to buy food, but if anyone were to get sick I would not be able to pay for their treatment. I taught myself how to build kitchens and I also fish for other people. Despite all that I have gone through, I feel that people listen to me in my community and come to me for advice and help. I taught myself how to build kitchens and I also fish for other people. Despite all that I have gone through, I feel that people listen to me in my community and come to me for advice and help. I taught myself how to build kitchens and I also fish for other people. Despite all that I have gone through, I feel that people listen to me in my community and come to me for advice and help. I taught myself how to build kitchens and I also fish for other people. Despite all that I have gone through, I feel that people listen to me in my community and come to me for advice and help. I taught myself how to build kitchens and I also fish for other people. Despite all that I have gone through, I feel that people listen to me in my community and come to me for advice and help. I taught myself how to build kitchens and I also fish for other people. Despite all that I have gone through, I feel that people listen to me in my community and come to me for advice and help. I taught myself how to build kitchens and I also fish for other people. Despite all that I have gone through, I feel that people listen to me in my community and come to me for advice and help.

Lulu, 35

“I moved several times during the war and ended up here [in Klay outside Monrovia]. I had to stop school when I was in the 7th grade because my parents were worried about me when I walked back and forth to school, then we were forced to leave our home and got separated somehow... I ended up in a refugee camp in Guinea by myself. My family suffered a lot of violence. My older brother was killed, and my grandfather was beaten so badly he was paralyzed. I was also beaten several times by soldiers and one time I nearly died. After the war, I went back to look for the rest of my family, but I have not been able to find them.

I live with my boyfriend and we have two children. Currently, I braid hair and although I don’t earn much we make enough for our family to eat and we have a place to live. If anyone gets sick though, it would be difficult to pay for treatment. I would find a way though. I have a lot of hope. I am excited about the YES Project and hope I can learn a skill that will help me find a job so I can send my children to school when they are old enough.”

Bendy, 27

VOICES: Lulu’s and Bendy’s Stories

To assist the Government of Liberia in its policy reform for youth employment, RSR supported the development of profiles of vulnerable youth based on national surveys and census data. As part of this work, several series of interviews were conducted to identify the people behind the statistics and paint a better picture of who the youth really are.

Here are the stories of Lulu and Bendy who were about to begin skills training under the IDA-supported Youth, Skills and Employment (YES) Project at the time of the interviews. The YES Project provides jobs for poor, unemployed Liberian youth by providing them with training in a skill or trade, or giving them access to temporary employment through public works in their community.