



Self Help Initiative for Sustainable Development (SHIFSD), Liberia Inc.

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



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Introduction

The Self-Help Initiative for Sustainable Development – Liberia (SHIFSD-Liberia) Inc. is a refugee inspired nonprofit organization committed to practically empowering needy people express their God given talents in service to their communities. In pursuit of its vision and mission statements, the organization is always committed to the following core values: integrity, justice, participation, diversity, transparency and accountability. SHIFSD works in semi-urban and rural communities based in Montserrado, Nimba, River Gee, and Maryland Counties. Our target beneficiaries include, but not limited to disadvantaged and vulnerable youths, people living with disability, women, and minority groups.

More so, SHIFSD has an inherent drive for self-reliance, wanting to make a difference & leaving a legacy as opposed to promoting the cry of self-pity. For instance, the nonprofit was founded by refugees to help refugees as depicted in its name starting with “Self-Help” at a time of grave desperation in the Liberian Buduburam Refugee Camp in Ghana. The organization rose to the occasion to help fellow refugees keep hope alive. Instead of complaining, we took responsibility for ourselves. The organization has always found peace in helping others help themselves as a way of being of service to society.

SHIFSD developed a five-year strategic plan that has three pillars (Climate Smart Agriculture, Education and Livelihood Skills, and Financial Sustainability) in 2023, and the implementation of that strategic plan started in 2024. The strategic plan outlines our collective aspiration and vision for the development of the Self-Help Initiative for Sustainable Development (SHIFSD) over the next five (5) years. It highlights our vision, mission, values, goal and strategic objectives that will guide the operations of the entity over the next 5yrs.

This annual report serves as a comprehensive overview of our actions, achievements, and financial performance over the past year (2024). Our commitment is to foster sustainable development across communities, and this document is an account of how we've strived to achieve our mission.

Mission: SHIFSD exists to alleviate poverty through access to alternative sources of education and entrepreneurship.

Vision: SHIFSD envisage a society free of illiteracy and poverty.

Executive Summary

During the year under review, we expanded our reach to additional communities, effectively offering support to over 700 beneficiaries across all our program areas (vocational training, adult literacy; primary and secondary education) which aligned with our goals for sustainable development. The financial overview shows increased donor support and responsible management of resources in 2024.

SHIFSD Capacity Assessment

Assessing the capacities of an institution is critical for understanding their effectiveness and informing future strategies. During the year under review, we saw significant improvements across key department in SHIFSD. During the year under review, our partner (Mission Alliance) conducted a vigorous capacity assessment of SHIFSD. There were lot of institutional capacity gaps discovered, and the partner came up with the following recommendations:

1. The board and management should have a close look at the documents, and either change them to align with the current situation or change the organization to align with the documents.
2. Board meetings should be planned and minutes taken, not only on an ad-hoc basis. Management should be bold to involve the board and hold them accountable. Replace the board member that passed away.
3. Sort out and align policies & manuals and start training staff to use these for the benefit of the organization. (Don't rely on documents for donors or consultants, it needs to become your own.)
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6. Based on the decisions that management and board take regarding the structure of the organization, these should be rolled out and staff should be recruited to fill vacant positions. There should be a strong management team representing each department.
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8. Create an overall budget, chart of accounts, accounting system, get annual audits done. Make sure that the updated finance manual clearly describes what is expected with regards to supporting documentation and start following the manual.

Since the submission of these recommendations to SHIFSD, several steps have been taken by SHIFSD to ensure the implementation of the recommendation. Those steps taken include the recruitment of a new program director, and a finance and administration

director. The period under review also witnessed the coming in of the entity's revived By-Law and Constitution and the combined policies document that covered all departments of the organization, amongst others.

PROGRAMS

All We Can/Y-Care Project

This report covers activities implemented in 2024 considering our five years strategic plan which has three strategic focuses: Climate Smart Agriculture, Education and Livelihood Skills and Financial Sustainability. However, the report for 2024 covers work done under the various pillars of the five years plan.

During the period under review (2024) and under these 3 pillars, our implementation of activities focused around: Awareness raising events on climate smart agriculture organized in 25 communities. Community mobilization and awareness raising events were held in addition to SHIFSD conducting training in entrepreneurship for beneficiaries. We also trained women in the VSLA methodologies, purchased additional acres of farmland meant to be used for a farm demonstration site and investment in agriculture in Kpytuo Town, Nimba County. We initially conducted a Baseline Survey in 5 target communities located in Nimba and Montserrado Counties. This report also highlights a seven-day exchange visit to Sierra Leone by three team members of SHIFSD.

Acquired Farmland



Our most significant achievements: During the period under review, SHIFSD purchased additional parcels of farmland thus bringing the total farmland purchased between 2023 & 2024 up to 28.1 acres and with a long-term aim of making the institution financially sustainable. The acquired land will be partly used to establish an agri-business venture particularly in the food processing and value addition sector.

VSLA



A total of five groups comprising of 150 rural women were trained in VSLA methodologies over a 5day workshop period in 5 communities. After 29 days of sitting, once per week, covering a period of about 8 months which started 27th May of 2024, the groups were able to save a combined total of \$1,145,310 Liberian Dollars or an equivalent of US\$6,092 at the rate of \$1:188LD. The 125 women who were trained in

entrepreneurship have established petty trading activities in their various communities, 56 of them were visited to know the outcome of the training, if they are keeping record properly, type of business they are involved with, and how to switch from one small business to another.

Climate Smart Agriculture

The CSA awareness raising event started September of 2024 in twenty-five communities. Twenty-five (25) communities were visited during the CSA awareness exercise in a clustered format. More than five hundred inhabitants are now aware of the CSA practices and methodologies. These are the names of the communities in which the awareness exercises were conducted: Tomglaywin, Gbanquio, Gaopa, New Nyasen, Nyo, Guowin, Loyee, Meakemie, Gontee, Kpaytuo, Domba, Garwonpa, kenpea, Mehnla, Zuatown, Gorgan, Blamehn, Ganwee, Zehnplay, Buanplay, Gwalay, Trouplay, Zontuo, Fehnplay, & Beapea. The awareness exercise was done by moving into the community with PA system, megaphones, flyers etc. The PA system was mounted at a particular location in the community for minimum two hours, where community dwellers had the opportunity to listen to the importance of practicing climate smart agriculture activities, the advantages it has, how it reduces food insecurity and so on. Flyers were distributed in the process. We also use megaphone during the Awareness Event.

SHIFSD also conducted entrepreneurial skills training which went well during the period under review. The various topics taught were broken down to the beneficiaries' level or simplified for the participants easy understanding. Participants did presentations on various topics. The one hundred and forty-five (145) participants who underwent the training became very excited afterwards and appreciated SHIFSD and her donor ALL WE CAN and Otto 8 Per Miles for funding the all-women training workshop. The entrepreneurship training lasted for six (6) days and the training started on June 24 and ended June 29, 2024.

Exchange Visit to Sierra Leone



As part of learning for improved project implementation, exchange visits were planned between organizations implementing All We Can/Y-Care International projects in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The two countries' projects were similar in ways which made it suitable to learn from each other through sharing of ideas, experiences, information and best practices. The Liberia team (organizations) which included: Camp for Peace, Efficient Research and Development Institute (ERDI), Self-Help Initiative for Sustainable Development (SHIFSD), Rural Human Rights Activist Program, and

Young Men's Christian Association of Liberia (YMCA). The idea was to learn from the projects in terms of achievements made and how some success stories and best practices can be replicated in Liberia. This provided a chance for the Sierra Leone team which includes Mamie Foundation, Pikin-To-Pikin, Advocacy Movement Network (AMNet) and Young Men's Christian Association Of Sierra Leone (YMCA) to also learn and identify best practices that could be propagated in Sierra Leone from the Liberia projects through sharing. The Objective of undertaking the trip was to exchange knowledge, ideas, experiences, lessons and best practices since the Liberia and Sierra Leone Projects are similar and striving to attain a common goal. The visit was incorporated in the review and planning meeting for the next phase of the All We Can project which created a very good platform for learning and sharing ideas.

The visit began with a meeting between partners to discuss the movement of the different teams. The meeting started with welcome statements by the YMCA-SL Eastern Regional Coordinator, Mr Solo, and this was followed by visiting of the host partners. After a brief meeting on December 3rd, we visited several project sites in BO and Kenema Districts.

While in BO, we visited the YMCA Vocational Training Institute. At this training site, trainees are learning

Tailoring, Hair Dressing, Weaving and Tie and Dye. They also have a Show Room at this centre where they display and sell some of their products to generate funds for the school.

However, this centre is challenged with the lack of training materials most especially sewing machines, scissors and other essential materials for the smooth running of the school which has cost some of the trainees to drop from the program because they could not afford tool like scissors. According to the supervisor, the training duration is three years and each department usually contains 25 trainees per training cycle. We also visited the YMCA branch in Kenema where they are running both skills training and academic programs. YMCA is basically involved in vocational training and academics.

We later moved to Blama, a town around BO City, where Mamie Foundation organized a health club in the primary school. While at the primary school, the team interacted with the students.

The health club performed a drama on personal hygiene, teaching others how to take care of themselves and their surroundings. The health club is amazing and most of the girls in the club ages range from six to twelfth years.

After visiting the health club in Blama, the team moved to Kenema. While in Kenema, the team visited the Opportunity Training Centre (OTC). This centre is partially sponsored by Mamie Foundation. At the OTC, trainees are learning tailoring, electronics, blacksmith, masonry, hair dressing and ICT. According to the supervisor of the OTC, the facility was

constructed by the peace keeping force after the civil war to help train and integrate ex-combatants into their communities.

Most of the trainees at the OTC, (Opportunity Training Centre) are people with disabilities believed to be affected by the civil war. The team left Kenema at about 2:00pm and drove over three hours to visit a project in Kpandemie where Mamie Foundation organized the youth, women, and men into various working groups. These groups are involved in agriculture, mostly rice farming, cocoa, ground nut, beans and beekeeping.

On December 4, 2024, the team moved to the southern region of BO to visit some of the projects carried out by Pikin- To-Pikin Movement. The first stop was at the UBC Primary School where Pikin-To-Pikin organized a health club to help create awareness on malaria prevention and other communicable diseases. According to the supervisor, the health club moves from house to house to raise awareness on malaria prevention and encourage community members to clean their environments. After meeting with the UBC School Club, the team moved to the next community to visit a safe home constructed by Pikin-To -Pikin to help educate women on family planning and birth control. The women at this centre are also learning tailoring to be able to do something for themselves after the safe home.

On the third day of the exchange visit, the team moved to Freetown to visit the Sierra Leone Partners' offices and have one-on-one discussion with them; and give feedback and lessons learned from the field.

We visited Mamie Foundation head office, and the team was warmly welcomed by the Executive Director, Mr. Sylvester Macauley. In his statement, he said Mamie Foundation uses the integrated approach in program implementation; he further said "to select a community, we first request NGO mapping report from the Kenema District council to understand what, who and where organizations are working to avoid duplication of efforts. Based on the feedback, we realized that Kpandemie was one of the deprived and hard-to-reach communities; so, we decided to select it as one of the communities to work in."

We visited Pikin-To -Pikin ,(child to child), and the Executive Director welcome the team and said Pikin-To -Pikin was established 1994 after the civil war in Sierra Leone to help war affected children across the country. Since then, they have implemented several projects in most of the districts.

The team also visited AMNET (Advocacy Movement Network) at their head office in Freetown. AMNET is an advocacy network that focuses on child protection and women empowerment and they are implementing several programs in the south eastern districts in the country. They are also providing VSLA program for women empowerment and training them to take leadership role in society.

Education Development Center (EDC) Project

USAID Youth Advance Project is a five-year program (2021-2026) funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) in partnership with the Government of Liberia and local partners including SHIFSD Liberia Inc. to support market-driven, locally relevant educational and training opportunities for 21,000 young ages 15 – 35. In the year 2024, SHIFSD in partnership with EDC was able to implement major activities in Montserrado County under the USAID Youth Advance project. During the implementation of the project, SHIFSD made significant impact in the life of youth across Montserrado county in the year under review. As such, SHIFSD built the capacity of 722 youths in Basic Education (numeracy and literacy) and Work Ready Now (soft skills) in class in 18 communities across Montserrado County for the implementation of Pathway 1, Cohort 2 and 3. Out of the 722 youths, 261 were youths who completed pathway 1, Cohort 2 in session and placed for transition for apprenticeship / Specialized training and Work Based Learning opportunities at the beginning of 2024 in 6 project communities, 8 sites. 461 are youths who enrolled in Cohort 3 and also completed the in-session training in December 2024.

Pathway 1, Cohort 2:



The pathway 1, Cohort 2 261 learners from the 8 project sites (Kalita High School, SHIFSD institute, Great Commission Academy site 1&2, MTI, Konuwa and Louise Preparatory Christian School site 1&2) who completed the in-session training, some were placed in their respective communities as they identified their area of interest. Some of those Youths from Barnesville, Chicken Soup Factory, Pipeline, Mount Barclay and Johnsonville communities expressed interest in enrolling at SHIFSD's run Holy Hands Institute (i.e. the TVET program) in Johnsonville for vocational training at the Close of Cohort 2 for transition. Those Youths placed in Holy Hands stayed for the period of 10 months starting from February 2024 to December 2024.

Cohort 2: Hands Holding Activity



From June to September 2024, there was an activity with 5 of the 261 youth who completed the in-session activities and were placed. This program is called the hand holding activity which served as strengthening of youths who were engaged in businesses independently. This program was intended to improve their skills in managing their businesses as they were taught in class in module 5 of their lessons. The program lasted for 4 months followed by certification of participants after completion of the activity in September, 2024. The activity team was headed by the EDC Team in collaboration with SHIFSD staff to ensure that they meet its objective.

Pathway 1, Cohort 3:

In May 2024, pathway 1 Cohort 3 of the USAID Youth Advance project implementation began with the recruitment of over 30 community trainers or facilitators, who have

knowledge, skills and experiences about youths with little or no literacy and numeracy, drop-outs or out-of-school youths up to 5th grade, for vetting from the selected project communities. Out of the 30 facilitators recruited, 26 were hired after the vetting exercise.

The 20 new trainers contracted were sent for the EDC facilitators' training in July 2024 to ensure the strengthening of their capacities to best deliver and meet the project objectives. The management team of SHIFSD worked with community leaders and community members who have similar background experiences and the intimate knowledge of the dynamics of the local communities, were engaged in word-of-mouth conversations to build trust and engage youths in the recruitment processes. The recruited community facilitators and the community leaders in collaboration with project staff canvassed the targeted communities, engaged in conversations with the youths about their situations, and shared information about the project. Over 15 communities were mapped. Out of the 15, 12 communities were selected for the implementation with 1 old site maintained reaching it to the total of 13. Below is the table of trainers and sites information:



During the recruitment process, over 500 youths were recruited. Out of the 500, 461 learners were identified and enrolled for in session training for 5 months in 12 communities. Those Youths were trained in both Basic Education (Numeracy and Literacy) and Work Ready Now (Soft skills) respectively. The 4 month in session activities were climaxed with transitional activity at the closed of the in class activity.

Out of the 461 youths enrolled, 315 youths were placed in various opportunities identified for apprenticeship / specialized training and Work Based Learning in 12 of their respective communities for transitional activities or support after the in-class training. During the period under review, 200 of the 300 placed service fees were paid to service providers who are offering skills of interest to the learners. 115 youths service fees payment is outstanding even though they are attending classes. 146 youths placement is outstanding. Some of the youths from various sites decided to join the 29 youths at SHIFSD sites to be placed in the SHIFSD's TVET program for their transitional activities.

In December 2024, a one-day Health fair program was conducted as a closing activity for the 461 youths who completed the in-session activity to strengthen their capacities about Sexual Reproductive Health. This Sexual Reproductive Health activity was also founded as part of the USAID Youth Advance project. This activity was carried out in 5 of the 12 communities as clustered by bringing together 461 learners to share experiences, learn and become knowledgeable about their reproductive health issues. 10 nurses were invited to



educate youths and demonstrate using assorted commodities. Some assorted commodities were provided by health workers from Government health facilities and distributed to youths who expressed interest at the end of the program.

As part of efforts to improve youth's financial sustainability, SHIFSD with support from EDC established 5 Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA) groups in 5 project communities (Kpelleh Town, Peace Island-540, Rehab community and Upper Red Hill-Wein Town) under the USAID Youth Advance project across Montserrat County. At the beginning of the establishment of the VSLAs, there were training conducted by SHIFSD staff for beneficiaries ensuring that their capacities were built to manage the groups independently. Election was conducted to have leadership in place for sustainability of the groups. The Youths appreciated SHIFSD for this initiative and they are now managing their groups and savings.



Hummingbird Academy

Education remains at the core of our activities. During the year under review, we expanded our academic programs from elementary & junior to now senior high grade 10, and partially constructed a new educational facility with 14 classrooms, one computer lab and library for both vocational skill training and academy activities. We had 16 teaching staff, 8 female and 8 males with the total enrollment of 381 students, 141 boys and 240 girls, for the 2023/2024 school year.

Holy Hands School Construction/T-VET

In 2024, we focused on vocational training to promote economic resilience in the communities we serve. We have adopted an integrated educational approach which blends Technical, Vocational Education & Training (T-VET) with the students' academic studies as a way of better preparing prospective high school graduates to become employable on the job market upon graduation. It is with said intention that the 14 classroom, one story school building is being constructed as can be seen in the below pictures below:



For more information about the school construction project, kindly request to see the school project specific status report. The one-time grant to construct the school was provided by the Brown Marital Trust, USA.

Donor/Sponsors Acknowledgements

We express our heartfelt gratitude to all our donors and partners whose support is vital in our mission to make sustainable impacts. Our special thanks go to God Almighty as our chief sponsor, the Brown Marital Trust, Stichting INITIAT, All We Can, and Education Development Center (EDC).

Future Goals

Looking ahead, we aim to further expand our programs, strengthen our fund-raising capacity, and introduce new economic development projects. We are committed to enhancing our data analytic capabilities to better measure our impacts.

Conclusion

As we reflect on the past year, we take pride in the progress and achievements that have shaped our organization's journey. Despite enormous challenges and shortcomings, our commitment to excellence, innovation, and resilient community impact creation has remained steadfast.

Throughout the year, we have strengthened our operations, expanded our reach, and reinforced our core values. Our financial performance, strategic initiatives, and collaborative efforts have positioned us for sustained growth and long-term success.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on our mission and dedicated to creating even greater value for our stakeholders. With a clear vision, strong leadership, and unwavering support from our team, partners, and communities, we are confident in our ability to navigate the future with resilience and purpose.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our employees, partners and all stakeholders who have contributed to our success. Your trust and partnership inspire us to strive for excellence and innovation in everything we do. Together, we look forward to another year of progress, impact, and shared success.