

## The Country Situation

Liberia is an emerging democracy riddled with a long political history of division, segregation and discrimination. The country is located on the west coast of Africa with some 43,000 sq. miles as land surface area. Liberia is inhabited by a population of about 3.4 million people made up of 16 ethnic groups and an elite Afro-American ruling class referred to as the “Congoes” or the Americo-Liberians. The strata of development in Liberia, have, for centuries, been between the so called “Congoes” and the “natives”. The “Congoes” or the Americo-Liberians held the realms of powers for decades. Native children were not allowed to attend the same schools as the children of the Americo-Liberian ruling class. They controlled the state and oppressed the natives. The natives received some leverage during the regime of former President Tubman and Tolbert. Towards the days of the late President Tolbert, the African Renaissance spread out to the natives, some of whom benefited education under the condition to disguise their native heritage. Some of whom included the leader of Movement for Justice in Africa MOJA, Togba Nah-Tipoteh and the late Gabriel Bacchus Matthews who led the revolt to open up the political system.

For centuries, Liberia has been deeply entrenched with various ethnic and political divisions. The divisions led the country into fourteen years of civil war. The war broke down the infrastructures and human resource capacity of the country.

Among the worst affected, were the youth. The defunct Truth and Reconciliation Commission refers to the youth as both the victims and perpetrators of the most inhumane acts of human rights violations that occurred during the civil war for which today they are least educated part of the

Liberian society.

Today Liberia grapples with the war effects. Rebuilding the human resource capacity, the reconstruction of basic infrastructures and the restoration of basic social services are key national priorities.

The country records the youngest population in the West African sub-region according to the National Housing and Population Census conducted in 2008. More than half of the national population are below the age of 35.

They represent the most vulnerable population who may likely be lured to de-stabilize the country when national programs ignored them.

President Sirleaf alluded to this in her second inauguration speech, that the urgency of the moment is the constructive engagement of the youth to consolidating the development gains and prevent the relapse of the civil conflict.

LYIPSUD believes that the solution for the young people are the young people themselves. They need to take the lead in changing their destiny. LYIPSUD’s role is to devise innovative solutions through sustainable development programs that counter the war effects in the lives of the young people.

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## Historical Background

The Liberia Youth Initiative for Peace and Sustainable Development (LYIPSUD), INC. was established in 2008 and formally registered with the Liberian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in accordance with the “*not-for-profit corporation act of 1977*” on April 15, 2009 as a school based media development NGO (High School Journalists Training Network, INC. HISJONET). The vision at the time was to mainstream democratic values within the Liberian school system. HISJONET’s focus was to demand greater openness and transparency in the Liberian school system through periodic reports on the vices that pervert the system with student journalists as key focal points. HISJONET has worked with more than 50 secondary schools through various training and capacity building programs and facilitated their access to the national media.

Also working from different sectors, the board of incorporators with advice from the advisory board recognized that the High School Journalists Training Network narrowed the scope of operation of the organization. The Articles of Incorporation of HISJONET was amended to reflect a holistic engagement in the development processes of the country with qualified young people playing key roles. *Liberia Youth Initiative for Peace and Sustainable Development (LYIPSUD)* was formally endorsed by the Liberian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on January 10, 2012. LYIPSUD is recognized by the Ministries of Youth & Sports and Planning & Economic Affairs as a community based youth development organization.

## Objectives

The main objective of LYIPSUD is to devise and implement new and innovative programs geared towards the empowerment of all young people for the sustenance of genuine peace and development and the promotion of democratic values in Liberia.

The main objective is buttressed by several specific objectives targeting key thematic areas/sectors in which LYIPSUD’s intervening role becomes viable in the post war reconstruction and development of Liberia.

**Specific Objective I:** To provide education and skills development opportunities for the Liberian Youth with priority on the underprivileged, marginalized and discriminated groups.

**Specific Objective II:** Promoting healthy habits through awareness, capacity development and information sharing about harmful life practices in providing technical and professional guidance for Liberian youth to enhance productive living.

**Specific Objective III:** Facilitating the establishment of synergies/networks to complement the efforts of national and international state and non state actors for the implementation of programs where we have shared vision and objectives.

**Specific Objective IV:** Developing innovative programs that complement the global efforts towards the achievement of the millennium development goals. LYIPSUD’s focus is on goals # 1, 2, 3 and 8 with young people as key priorities. LYIPSUD’s programs are also mainstreamed within the Liberia Vision 2030.

## Thematic Areas of Intervention

LYIPSUD’s programmatic focus is in pursuant of the objectives aforementioned:

- *Education/Scholarship programs including capacity development programs for indigenous population groups, student groups, youth-led civil society organizations.*
- *Vocational Training and skills development for youth to facilitate self employment and income generation in reducing the burden on national government.*
- *Livelihood Opportunities for vulnerable groups including women and girls, youth with disabilities through the forming of cooperatives, and community based self help groups; promoting inclusive development at grassroots level.*
- *Health Programs for vulnerable and adolescent groups focused on girls and women with disabilities who are mostly victims of “double discrimination” in society*
- *Sensitization Programs*
- *Self esteem capacity development initiatives*
- *Street to Street Campaign projects on HIV/AIDS, STDs, TB, Malaria prevention and strengthening referral networks for access to available treatment etc.*

## Core Values

Cross cutting the implementation of all development projects initiated by LYIPSUD is the mainstreaming of gender and disability issues, and the respect for the fundamental human rights and the inherent dignity of the human person as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international protocols promoted by the United Nations and all international solidarity organizations to which Liberia is a signatory. LYIPSUD is inspired by the speech of US President, Barack Obama, “*Young People, you and only you, have the ability to re-imagine the world.*” Accra, 2010.