



IDEAS For Us is a Florida-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and accredited NGO of the United Nations

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Building a Sustainable Liberia: The Path to 2025

**Created by IDEAS For Us, Inc
October, 2022**

Presented By: Clayton Louis Ferrara, Stephen Bigboy Lavalah, Justin Farrow, Reginald Burroughs III

This document contains many links to additional data and multimedia. We believe it is best viewed as a .PDF on a computer or smart device connected to the internet. This report has been prepared on behalf of IDEAS For Us and Youth Exploring Solutions and is dedicated to the beautiful people of Liberia and Guinea.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We at IDEAS For Us (IDEAS) would like to extend our profound thanks and appreciation to IREX for the Community Solutions Program (CSP) and the Collaboration for Community Impact (CCI) Grants Program. These programs are sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and implemented by IREX. Without the gift of having Stephen Bigboy Lavalah as our CSP Fellow in 2013, none of this would have been possible. You have changed the trajectory of our organization for the better and enriched our lives by magnitudes. We really appreciate you, IREX.

IDEAS would also like to thank the U.S. Embassy of Liberia and Guinea for making time to meet with the IDEAS team during our time in Monrovia and Conakry. As proud Americans, we were humbled by your well wishes and support for our program and its outcomes. Knowing that you have an interest in our findings and analysis encourages us greatly to further align our efforts. I am pleased to share this report in solidarity that we can open opportunities to further help the Liberian and Guinean people in partnership with USAID, Peace Corps, and more.

Youth Exploring Solutions (YES) would like to thank our selfless and tireless staff members who have kept their feet on the accelerator without stipends for more than 15 years. We are grateful to our county coordinators in Montserrado, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Margibi, Grand Bassa, Bong and Nimba counties that ensured all the events were successfully organized. Our utmost gratitude goes to the Clergies and Imams of the various churches and mosques and including leaders of women groups, community-based organizations, and motorcycle unions for actively participating in our events. We promise to help you.

Lastly, we wish to thank the Reader. We hope this document inspires you to make connections that we can leverage together to help empower the Liberian People. Please reach out to the authors at Clay@ideasforus.org if you would like to make contact with us for partnerships, collaboration, or inquiries. It is our hope that both domestic and international philanthropy can meet the goals outlined in the conclusion of this document. Your help is greatly appreciated.

INTRODUCTION

Document Overview

This document is intended to be a report of our activities undertaken in Liberia and Guinea between the 15th of August, 2022 and the 31st of August, 2022. Our trip to Liberia and corresponding actions were funded by IDEAS For Us, One Tree Planted, The Felburn Foundation, and IREX for the purpose of completing the IREX CCI Grant Program for 2022.

This report is structured into four sections. The first is the “INTRODUCTION”, which aims to give context to the reader about the ecology, economy, and society of Liberia and why the partners chose to align for the project. The second is “PROJECT NARRATIVE” which aims to explain the project methodology and outcomes. The Third section is called “DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS” and aims to analyze our data and share our reflections and future plans. The final, fourth section, called “BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE LIBERIA: THE ROAD TO 2025”, outlines our collective plan for Phase 1 as the first of four phases to enact our shared goals by 2025. Please note that this report contains many links to videos, maps, and additional data if viewed online as a .PDF connected to the internet.

The Partners

IDEAS For Us (IDEAS) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and accredited NGO of the United Nations focusing on social, economic, and environmental solutions at the local level. Our mission is to develop ideas, fund action, and scale solutions that solve the world’s most pressing environmental challenges. We specialize in building grassroots systems that focus on developing action projects, refining routine programs, and building social enterprises with revenue models to create economic activity that advances regional sustainability. Since our 2008 founding in an American dorm room as a student club, we have grown to take action in over 30 countries, raise millions of dollars for environmental action projects, and have been recognized by Pope Francis, two former U.S. Presidents, The United Nations, The Department of Energy, and The Brookings Institute alike.

IDEAS has had a presence in Liberia since December of 2013 when Stephen Bigboy Lavalah returned home after a four month stay living in Orlando, Florida, with IDEAS Founders Chris Castro and Clayton Louis Ferrara, as part of the August - December 2013 IREX Community Solutions Program. Since December of 2013, IDEAS has consistently collaborated with [Stephen Bigboy Lavalah](#) and his organization Youth Exploring Solutions. IDEAS has also collaborated with [Francois Kamano](#) since 2018 when he partnered with IDEAS as a part of the August - December, 2018 IREX Community Solutions Program. Since his return to Guinea, Francois has worked to establish an official [IDEAS For Guinea](#) branch of IDEAS. We have gone on to fund numerous action projects with partner foundations, philanthropists, and fellow nonprofits to advance sustainability in Liberia and Guinea. For this project, the IDEAS For Us team that traveled to Liberia was composed of IDEAS, CEO, [Clayton Louis Ferrara](#), IDEAS Board of Directors Member, [Reginald Burroughs III](#), and IDEAS Advisory Board Member [Justin "J-Bird" Farrow](#).

[Youth Exploring Solutions \(YES\)](#) was founded in 2007 by a 23 year old [Stephen Bigboy Lavalah](#). Stephen is a member of [Lorma Tribe](#) and was born in rural Zorzor, Liberia. Today, Stephen is a celebrated international leader, known across Liberia for being an action taker and humanitarian. [YES](#) has also grown to become a leading accredited nonprofit and grassroots youth-led development organization that empowers young people to take action in their communities by utilizing their energy, enthusiasm, and innovation. For 15 years, [YES](#) has helped thousands of youth, women and children in Liberia bring their ideas to life and get directly active in solving community problems related to sustainable development, environmental conservation, human rights, education, health, and agriculture.

[IDEAS For Guinea](#) was established in 2018 by [Francois Kamano](#). He is a passionate community organizer in Guinea and Liberia where he empowers children and families to grow food, plant trees, and upcycle waste. Since his work with IDEAS as a CSP fellow in 2018, he has been the leader of [IDEAS For Guinea](#). We have been fortunate to welcome him to Orlando for additional training in 2020, 2021, and 2022. Francois regularly contracts with the United Nations Foundation and he is currently the Program Manager of Francophone Africa for the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD).

Both [Francois Kamano](#) and [Stephen Bigboy Lavalah](#) never stopped working with IDEAS since their respective IREX CSP programs. In the case of Stephen Bigboy Lavalah, IREX was kind enough to partially fund a 2014 IDEAS trip to Liberia where three IDEAS staff traveled to Monrovia and held seven action projects over two weeks. Subsequently, we have raised over \$25,000 for action projects in Liberia and provided that money as direct aid to Stephen Bigboy Lavalah to fund action projects and educational programs for children and youth. We have also funded action projects for [IDEAS For Guinea](#) and in 2021, we funded \$5,000 worth of tree planting projects. Those sites were visited in 2022 as part of this project and assessed for project outcomes and impact. Francois Kamano has traveled to Orlando three times to learn from IDEAS leaders and to shadow us on various action projects. We have also had the opportunity to hold various online Zoom and Webinar-type educational programs for [YES](#) and [IDEAS For Guinea](#) branches. Our submission to the IREX CCI 2022 project was first ideated at the most recent collaborative workshop in 2021.

Overview of Liberia

Liberia is a beautiful coastal country, neighbored by Sierra Leone and Guinea to the North, the Atlantic Ocean to the West, and Côte D'Ivoire to the East. Archaeological evidence suggests that the first Liberians migrated into the area from the north and east between the 12th and 16th centuries, though emerging chronometric record data suggests West Africa as holding the earliest known examples of Middle Stone Age lithic technology anywhere in Africa, and therefore human occupation (in what is now Liberia) could date back more than 25,000 years. Native Liberians have had historically had contact with the Portuguese Europeans since at least 1461. However, it is Liberia's comparatively modern historical connection with the United States that continues to influence the country heavily today.

The history of modern Liberia dates from 1816 when the American Colonization Society, a private U.S. organization, was given charter by the U.S. Congress to send freed slaves back to Africa. President James Monroe (namesake of Liberia's capital city, Monrovia) provided funding and government assistance to land settlers as far back as 1822 - nearly 40 years before the start of

the American Civil War. Mortality from tropical diseases like Malaria was high and of the 4,571 emigrants who arrived in Liberia between 1822 and 1843, only 1,819 survived. By 1838, the settlers united to form the Commonwealth of Liberia under appointed leadership from the American Colonization Society. Finally in 1847, Liberia became Africa's first independent republic with a constitution modeled after the United States of America's constitution.

In 2022, Liberia celebrated the bicentennial of the arrival of free Black men, women, and children from the United States to establish a settlement on Providence Island. The U.S. Department of State Spokesperson, Ned Price, has stated that over the course of the 19th century, roughly 16,000 Black Americans emigrated from the United States to Liberia with the support of the American Colonization Society, joining thousands of resettled Africans rescued and freed from the slave trade by the U.S. Navy. As two of the oldest continuous republics in the world, the United States and Liberia share a unique history paired with common democratic values. IDEAS For Us recognizes these common roots and the historical significance of the arrival of these free Black Americans in 1822 for the bicentennial in 2022.

Liberia's Ecology

Liberia is a global biodiversity hotspot and significant reservoir of terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity that is under threat from humans. From lush forests, to mangrove estuaries, and fertile floodplains, many Endangered species call Liberia home. Sadly, they are endangered because they are over hunted for human consumption. Species hunted for food in Liberia include cane rats, forest elephants, pygmy hippopotamus, chimpanzees, leopards, duikers, and bats. It is not uncommon to see billboards around rural city centers and immigration stops that depict forbidden wildlife for possession. Bushmeat is widely eaten in Liberia, and is considered a delicacy, despite its suspected source of national ebola outbreaks as recent as 2014. IDEAS CEO, [Clayton Louis Ferrara](#), was in Liberia at the start of the last Ebola Outbreak (2014) and caught the last flight out of Monrovia before a Pandemic was officially declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) the next day.

A 2004 public opinion survey conducted by Reg Hoyt, who was then the Senior Vice President of Conservation and Science at the Philadelphia Zoo, found that bushmeat ranked

second behind fish (one of Liberia's most inexpensive and accessible meats) as a preferred source of protein for Monrovians. In households where bushmeat was served, 80% of residents said they cooked it "once in a while," while 13% cooked it once a week and 7% cooked bushmeat daily. The survey was conducted during the last civil war, and bushmeat consumption is now believed to be far higher due to the post-war economic fallout and inflation.

Additionally, slash-and-burn agriculture is one of the most significant human activities eroding Liberia's natural forests. A 2004 UN report estimated that 99% of Liberians burned charcoal and fuel wood for cooking and heating, resulting in deforestation. In 2014, IREX funded IDEAS CEO, Clayton Louis Ferrara, and IDEAS former International Director, Christopher Stampar, to conduct a health related program in Liberia as part of the 2014 IREX CCI Grant Program. The program directly educated large groups of poor women in Gbarpolu about the dangers of Carbon Monoxide poisoning from cooking with charcoal in unventilated areas. Heart disease was often blamed on Witchcraft by traditional African believers and through the 2013 IREX CSP program we learned of this phenomenon and devised a pro-active educational program. The first "Building A Sustainable Liberia" plan emerged from IDEAS 2014 IREX CCI Program.

Declassified reports indicate that in 2012, President Sirleaf granted licenses to companies to cut down 58% of all the primary rainforest left in Liberia. After international protests, many of those logging permits were canceled. In September 2014, Liberia and Norway struck an agreement whereby Liberia ceased all logging in exchange for \$150 million in development aid. Unfortunately, illegal logging and pollution remain significant issues in most of Liberia. Since 2006, the international community has paid for all garbage collection and disposal in Monrovia via the World Bank but exactly how much of that money met the intended use is still under some controversy. Unfortunately, we believe these environmental challenges will only get worse as Liberia continues to emerge into the 21st Century. We aim to change that.

Liberia's Economy

21st Century Liberia must be able to fund its own development. During our first trip to Liberia in 2014, the question was raised during a community workshop that "If America is

Liberia's Mother, why would she abandon us?", to which IDEAS CEO, [Clayton Louis Ferrara](#) replied, "America may be your Mother, but you all know you can not depend on your Mother forever". This exemplifies the strong maternal bond to the American Mystique that many Liberians have reinforced to them in school from a very young age. The authors found this to be very curious and in some cases fanciful, as Americans regrettably face many of the same problems Liberians do. Even in 2022, too many American children go to bed just as hungry as some Liberian children. Together we can change this.

Liberia is currently facing a 17% inflation rate and a 2020 GDP per capita of only \$646 USD. The unemployment rate has doubled from 2.1% in 2002 to the current 2021 level of 4.1%. Economic development will be impossible without a functioning economy and the availability of a capable Liberian workforce to support modern economic growth. Economic growth is a central challenge in Liberia, with living standards and economic opportunities in decline, Liberia has an even greater imperative to grow its economy in a fair and equitable manner given its large and growing youth population. In 2020, GDP growth for Liberia was -3 %. Though Liberia's GDP growth fluctuated substantially in recent years, it tended to decrease through the 2001 - 2020 period ending at -3 % in 2020. Current resource intensive and extractive means of generating revenue include mining, logging, and enabling foreign companies to engage in both the formers. Liberia is also famous for rubber production, though in the almost 100 years since Firestone first established plantations, the Liberian people's relationship with them remains strained.

The June, 2019 USAID's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) report on Liberia directly states that their goals are for USAID/Liberia to foster self-reliance by spurring private sector-led economic expansion through a focus on catalyzing reforms and cultivating a healthy, productive and educated workforce. Its three highly-interdependent pillars address the areas of greatest need: 1) Market-driven inclusive economic growth that translates into job creation, especially for youth and women; 2) Effective and inclusive governance catalyzed through reforms and greater accountability; and 3) Foundation for growth strengthened through a healthy, productive, and educated population. It has been our goal to further explore how these high level goals unpack at the county by county level and how NGOs like IDEAS can collect data using the IDEAS Hive and other IDEAS Programs.

Liberia's Society



Liberia is divided into fifteen counties and they are subdivided into a total of 90 districts and further subdivided into clans. The oldest counties are Grand Bassa and Montserrado, both founded in 1839 prior to Liberian independence. Gbarpolu is the newest county, created in 2001. Nimba is the largest of the counties in size at 4,460 sq mi, while Montserrado is the smallest at 737 sq mi. Montserrado is recognized as the most populous county in Liberia. All existing local governments – cities, townships, and clans – were created by specific acts of the Liberian government, and thus the structure and duties/responsibilities of each local government varies greatly from one to the other. This project directly engaged well over 2,000 Liberians in seven counties.

The modern Liberian population includes over 20 indigenous ethnic groups and various foreign minorities. Indigenous peoples comprise about 95 percent of the population with 16 officially recognized ethnic groups that include the Kpelle, Bassa, Mano, Gio or Dan, Kru, Grebo, Krahn, Vai, Gola, Mandingo or Mandinka, Mende, Kissi, Gbandi, Loma, Dei or Dewoin, Belleh, and Americo-Liberians or Congo people (so named because many immigrants including those freed from slave ships arrived from ports at the mouth of the Congo River).

Unlike Rwanda, Liberia's post-civil war/genocide reconstruction strategy has failed to double down on the empowerment and education of women and girls. Liberia will need to specifically support adult women and girls, as well as all youth to reach the country's full potential. Currently, Liberia's Gender Inequality Index (GII) value is 0.656, ranking at 154 out of 160 countries in the 2017 Index. This means that women have less representation and less education and comprise a smaller portion of the workforce, even when compared to other West African countries. This is not acceptable and represents a key problem stagnating Liberia's growth and development in the 21st Century. All our activities for this grant made a conscious effort to provide women and girls with the opportunity to share their experiences and be involved.

Liberia's Sustainability

Liberia ranks 158 out of 163 in the world among the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) voluntary index. Liberia has a country score of 49.9, as compared to the regional average of 53.6. Curiously, Liberia has been recognized as scoring highest (with a score of 100%) for both SDG 12: Responsible Production and Consumption and SDG 13: Climate Action. This is most curious, as the authors disagree with this data and further investigation is needed. One explanation proposed has tied these performance scores to the significant financial and professional investment many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have made in recent years to advance SDG achievement in Liberia. Because of this, IDEAS For Us has chosen to seek to better understand the underpinnings of the worst performing SDGs (SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy, and SDG 9: Industry, Infrastructure, and Innovation). We also believe that by focusing on these factors IDEAS, [YES](#), and [IDEAS For Guinea](#) can implement direct action at the county level to achieve the goals of USAID's 2019-2024 CDCS plan for Liberia.

Liberia faces significant sustainability challenges as a post-civil war and post-genocide society. We define sustainability as the accessibility and use of solutions that addresses the intersectionalities between environmental, economic, and social issues. No discussion of sustainability is complete without addressing the reality that Liberia has faced over a decade of continuous conflict and mayhem and the aftermath of this remains a significant challenge in the lives of many Liberians. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has surmised that early in Liberia's history, tensions arose between the Americo-Liberian settlers and the indigenous population. By 1980, Samuel Doe, who was from the indigenous population (Krahn Tribe), led a military coup and ushered in a decade of authoritarian rule. Food also played a significant role in this conflict and the aspect that the war occurred over food remains a widely shared sentiment among today's Liberians. By December 1989, Charles Taylor launched a rebellion against Doe's regime that led to a prolonged civil war in which Doe was killed. A period of relative peace in 1997 permitted an election that brought Taylor to power. In 2000, fighting resumed and an attack by Taylor was launched on neighboring Guinea. At this time, [Francois Kamano's](#) village of Guéckédou was burned by Taylor's army and many Liberian refugees trying to escape Taylor's war flooded the country. Many young Guineanians of Francois' millennial generation (who also

are part of [IDEAS For Guinea](#)) remember this incident vividly. In August of 2003, a peace agreement ended the war and prompted President Taylor's resignation. Taylor was later convicted by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague for his involvement in Sierra Leone's civil war. Taylor remains both imprisoned and curiously revered by many older Liberians to this day.

After two years of transitional governments, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became the first female head of state in Africa. In 2011, Johnson Sirleaf won reelection but struggled to rebuild Liberia's economy, particularly following the 2014-2015 Ebola epidemic, and to reconcile a nation still recovering from 14 years of fighting. Eventually she became engulfed in scandal. In 2017, former soccer star George Weah won the presidential runoff election, marking the first successful transfer of power from one democratically elected government to another since the end of Liberia's civil wars. 2017 also marked [Stephen Bigboy Lavalah](#)'s return to Orlando, Florida to train with IDEAS for a second time in person. President Weah has struggled to improve the country's economy though COVID-19 and spiking inflation rates and decreasing incomes have left many Liberians, young and old, reeling. The next presidential election is scheduled for 2023 and anything can happen, especially considering the U.S. Department of the Treasury Sanctions placed on three Liberian Government Officials in August of 2022.

An Opportunity Presents Itself

IDEAS, [YES](#), and [IDEAS For Guinea](#) all agree that there is a great opportunity to further advance sustainable development collectively at the local level in West Africa. Liberia and Guinea are very different countries but both also share similar challenges and intertwined conflicts over the last 30 years. A general lack of employment among educated youth is pervasive and this was indicated as a major contributor to economic hardship. All IDEAS Projects directly address social, economic, and environmental issues at their intersectionalities. This strengthens the resulting action project and prioritizes solutions that are not solely beneficial to one dimension of sustainability. Our collective experience also informs us that economic development and pulling people out of extreme poverty is the fastest way to reach the sustainable development goals. When no jobs exist, human trafficking, wildlife trafficking, illegal logging, corruption, and crime will prevail. Therefore we boldly imagine this project as contributing to a

five year plan to develop non-extractive, long term economic prosperity as a means of environmental protection and social progress.

Since our first IDEAS trip to Liberia eight years ago, our entire organization continues to be enriched by the perspectives and lessons learned during the Summer of 2014. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that continually seeks to better understand existing models for sustainable development, we recognize the merit of helping those who are farthest from sustainability first. We believe that there is absolutely nothing wrong with the Liberian people, in fact, they are some of the kindest, most generous, and hard working people we have ever met. Yet, there seems to be a national anxiety that the difficulties of life most Liberians are somehow justified by their national past. That is a stigma we are eager to break.

PROJECT NARRATIVE

Project Summary

By 2021, IDEAS and [YES](#) had recognized the need for increasing environmental action in Liberia. The timing was perfect to additionally engage [Francois Kamano](#) and the [IDEAS For Guinea](#) team, as the impact of COVID was starting to be quelled by vaccines and boosters. Francois Kamano was the IREX CSP Fellow to IDEAS in 2018 and we had every intention to apply for the IREX CCI Program for 2020. However, the appearance of the COVID-19 virus and its trajectory as a deadly global pandemic put a halt to those plans for two years.

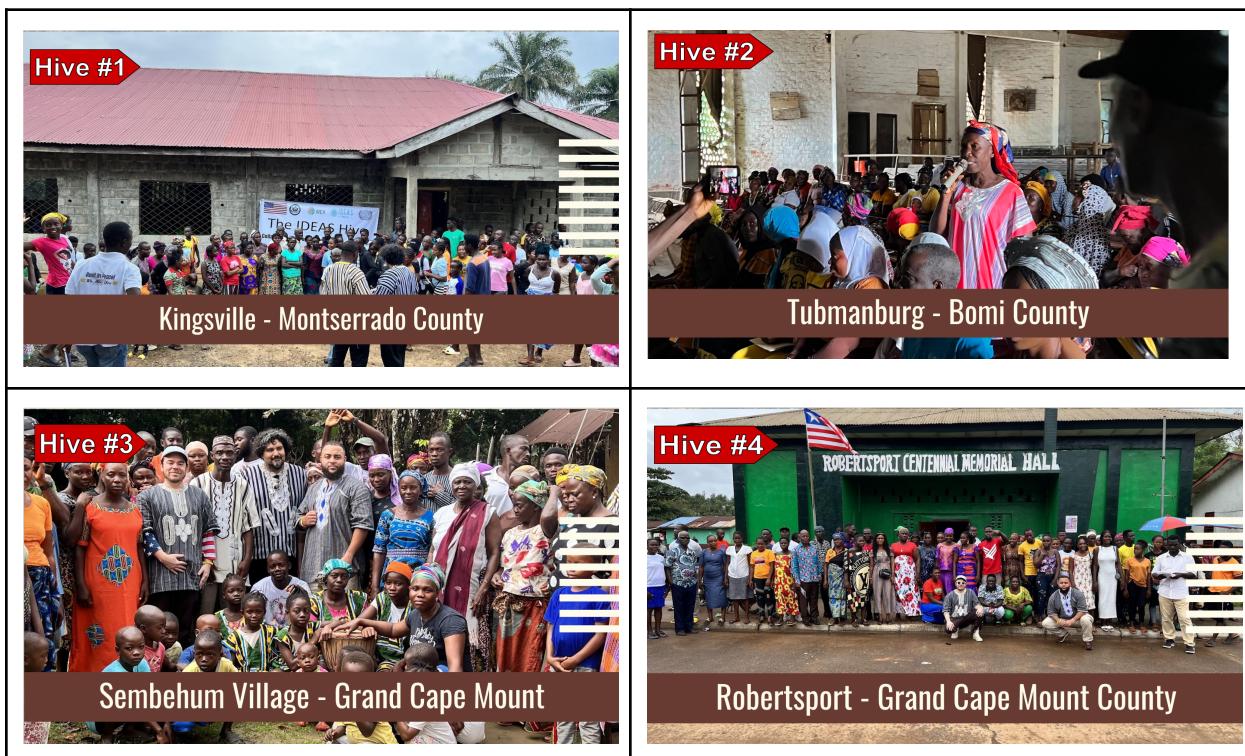
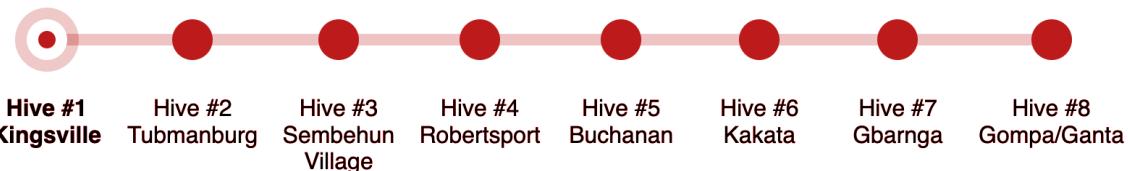
In April of 2022, IDEAS, [YES](#), and [IDEAS For Guinea](#) began planning a project that could build a partnership between the IREX CSP Alums from Liberia ([Stephen Bigboy Lavalah](#)) and Guinea ([Francois Kamano](#)). IDEAS had successfully built collaborations between Nepalese and Liberian IREX CSP Alums in 2018, so the neighboring countries of Liberia and Guinea seemed like a logical next progression. It was soon determined that the IDEAS Hive could be a very valuable tool to inform impactful action projects for IDEAS in 2022 and 2023, especially as Liberia and Guinea continue to recover socially and economically from COVID-19. By May of

2022, the project had launched and we began charting a framework for action projects and the IDEAS Hive workshops.

The IDEAS Hive is a community Think and Do Tank created by Chris Castro and Clayton Louis Ferrara in 2013. It has since evolved into the flagship program of IDEAS, having been implemented in over a dozen countries and was awarded by Pope Francis in 2016 for being a leading initiative on the global stage to achieving the United Nations SDGs. The IDEAS Hive can be held anywhere, at any time, and for groups large and small. It is a welcoming intergenerational and interdisciplinary gathering that always feeds its attendees. We have proudly held IDEAS Hive meetings in Orlando, Florida every month consecutively since February of 2013. We take complex global topics and make them as simple as possible to understand. We use guest speakers, round table breakouts, solutions showcases, and many other methods to keep this never ending exploration of sustainability both educational and cool. The goal of the IDEAS Hive is to take community feedback and crowdsource potential solutions that can be rapidly prototyped into IDEAS Action Projects. Successful IDEAS Action Projects evolve into routine IDEAS Programs, and those programs are refined over time to become full blown IDEAS Enterprises, complete with revenue models and numerous full time jobs created in local communities. One such solution was profiled by National Geographic for Disney+ called [Fleet Farming](#). In the documentary "[Paris To Pittsburg, 2018](#)" the IDEAS Program, [Fleet Farming](#), is recognized as an innovative way of reimaging sharecropping to grow organic food in the urban environment by converting lawns to produce tonnage of food and increase local and native biodiversity simultaneously. Fleet Farming began as an idea crowd sourced in the IDEAS Hive and it serves as one of many proof of concept examples.

Soon an ambitious project to launch the IDEAS Hive and IDEAS Action Projects across Guinea began to emerge. [Stephen Bigboy Lavalah](#) would travel to Guinea and take part in two weeks of IDEAS Hive community meetings and IDEAS Action Projects to serve as a beta test for the data framework. However, due to unforeseen international travel commitments, [Francois Kamano](#) had to travel outside of Guinea during the first week of the August 15th, 2022 IREX CCI project period and therefore the decision was made to focus on Liberia for the first $\frac{2}{3}$ of the project timeline and Guina for the following $\frac{1}{3}$ of the project timeline.

A central goal of the project would be to create a framework of metrics and key performance indicators that serve as a template model for all action projects conducted by community members in Liberia and Guinea. This template model will be shared with local partners to standardize the data they collect to align with local goals and the UN SDGs. We would also implement a series of action projects in Liberia and Guinea to train community members to develop action projects and then integrate the framework for reporting their impacts by 2023. We knew we wanted to work with over a dozen partner organizations in Liberia and Guinea but we never expected to have hundreds and hundreds of people show up to our events or to engage with over 3,000 individuals across seven counties in Liberia and two major cities on opposite sides of Guinea.





Project Goals and Objectives

For this project we traveled across Liberia to seven counties in seven days holding the IDEAS Hive Workshop in eight locations. Upon the completion of the Liberia portion of the trip, [Stephen Bigboy Lavalah](#) would now travel to Guinea with the IDEAS CEO and accompany him on a journey to Guéckédou where the IDEAS team would encounter IREX CSP Alum, [Francois Kamano](#). From there the IDEAS CEO joined the [IDEAS For Guinea](#) team and continued to Conakry, a journey of over 11 hours by car on treacherous African roads. Along this journey in

both Liberia and Guinea, we stopped at numerous schools, community centers, churches, mosques, and historical sites to engage with everyday Liberians and community leaders. We will gather and gradually enter those metrics into our data set to further test the effectiveness of our metrics and key performance indicator template model. This document depicts the Liberia based data and our analysis of Guinea will be complete by November, 2022. We also filmed interviews and documented our action projects with video and photography to further gather data that our outcomes and impact could be derived from.

Project Goal 1: Listen to everyday Liberians and Guineans to better understand their sustainability concerns at the individual and community level.

Objective 1A: Bring IDEAS Team to Liberia and Guinea to empower Stephen Bigboy Lavalah and Francios Kamano by holding community events, IDEAS Hive workshops, and IDEAS Action Projects.

Objective 1B: Hold IDEAS Hive Workshops in seven Liberian counties in seven days and collect metrics that align with the SDGs.

Objective 1C: Hold IDEAS Hive Workshops in Guinea to women's groups and collect metrics that align with the SDGs.

Objective 1D: Fund action projects in Liberia and Guinea and collect metrics that align with the SDGs.

Project Goal 2: Ask clarifying questions and identify potential actions to rapidly prototype IDEAS Action Projects led by YES and IDEAS For Guinea.

Objective 2A: Record and document feedback from IDEAS Hive events in Liberia and Guinea through photography, video, notes, and other means of data capture devised for this project.

Objective 2B: Assure that those passionate about giving feedback are provided with the space to voice their opinions in a non-combative way.

Objective 2C: Input action project and workshop data into a framework matrix of SDG data that IDEAS is developing.

Project Goal 3: Identify regional solutions for Liberians and Guineans that advance sustainable development by helping people, healing the planet, and growing prosperity.

Objective 3A: Analyze multimedia data collected in Liberia and Guinea.

Objective 3B: Develop a multi-phase pilot that grows a local solution into a national program with strategic philanthropic investments.

Objective 3C: Highlight Phase 1 projects and budget in an abridged document to be shared with partners, potential funders, and allies in helping the people of Liberia and Guinea.

IDEAS, [YES](#), and [IDEAS For Guinea](#) began the project as soon as notice from IREX was received that our proposal had been approved as an official IREX CCI 2022 project. By May of 2022, we were already holding action projects, collecting data, and taking the necessary in-country steps needed to establish an interested, sizable audience for the coming IDEAS Hive workshops and further IDEAS Action Projects. Per our agreement with IREX the project period must conclude by September 30th, 2022 and therefore it is our intention to begin uploading the full data set by October 1st, 2022 that encapsulates the project period of May 1st, 2022 - September 30, 2022.

Project Timeline and Activities

The [Timeline](#) below depicts the activities in Liberia and Guinea conducted between August 15th, 2022 and August 31st, 2022. As more data sets become available from post-analysis we will continue updating the timelines, maps, and graphs to depict the entire project period of May 1st, 2022 - September 30, 2022. We are pleased to provide a detailed multimedia breakdown of our activities using the link below the timeline image. If the internet is not available or you are reading a print copy, we provided a bulleted timeline below.

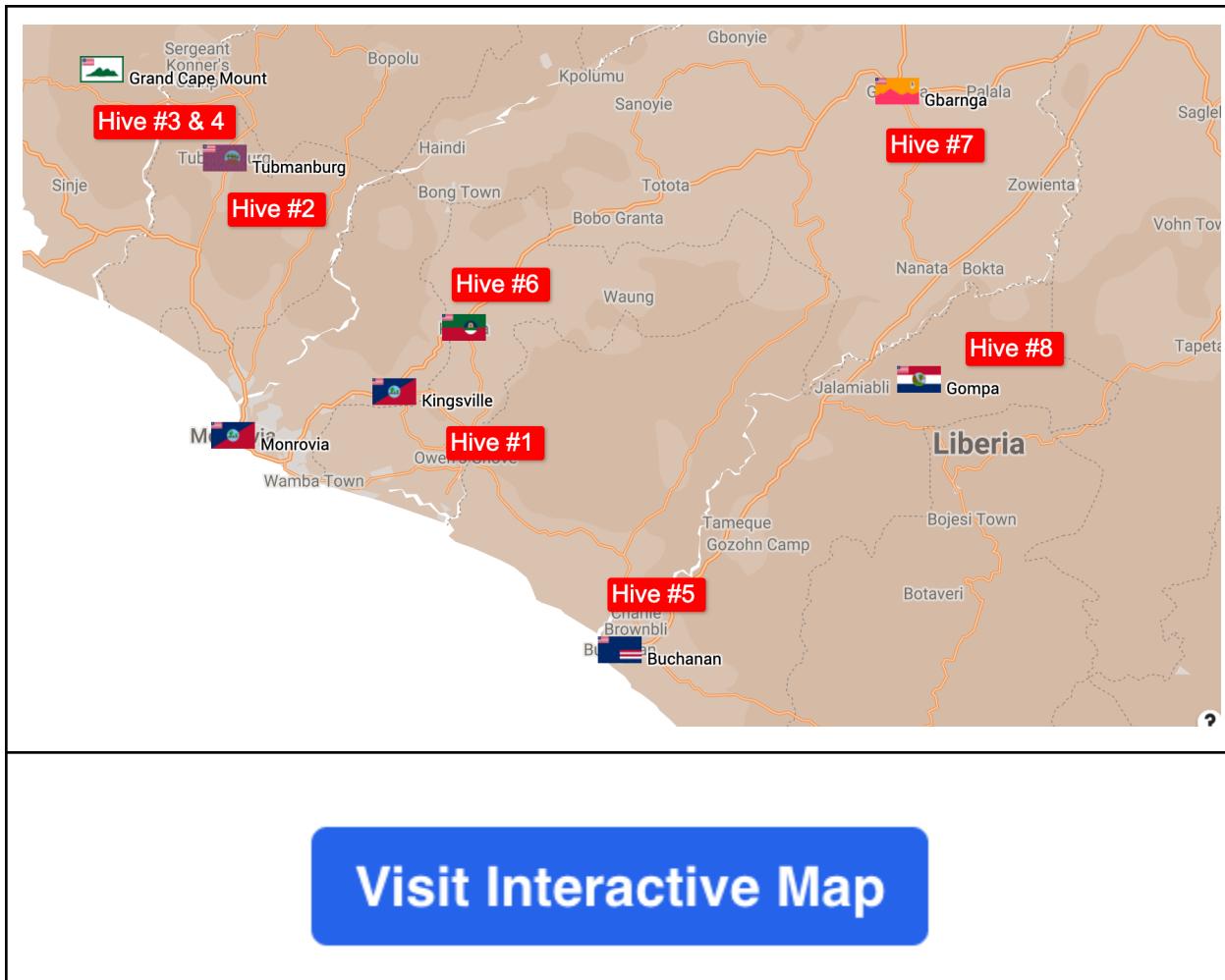
[This Timeline is Interactive | Click Here](#) | [Mobile Phone Optimized Timeline | Click Here](#)

| | |
|--|---|
| Day 1: Kingsville, Montserrado (155 in attendance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traditional welcome ceremony with Kola nuts and Stephen's Family - Interactive meeting in Soul Clinic at YES Headquarters - Truth Breakfast Show on Truth 96.1 FM - Meeting with Mr. Michael Toe, senior economist of the Ministry of Agriculture - Meeting with Dr. Henrique F. Tokpa, senator of Bong County and former President of Cuttington University - Meeting with Attorney Francis K. Gray, special assistant to Chief Justice Francis Korkpor now retired - Meeting with Honorable Ceebee Bashshell, representative electoral district #3, Montserrado County - Meeting with Honorable Dr. Bhofal Chambers, Speaker of the House of Representatives - Meeting with His Excellency Ambassador Michael McCarthy, U.S. Ambassador to Liberia - Interactive discussion with Sean Boda and Sade L. Tuckett, public affairs officer and deputy public affairs officer - The IDEAS Hive in Kingsville Township | Day 2: Tubmanburg, Bomi County (180 in attendance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coffee break ECOWAS Radio 91.5 - Meeting meeting with Mr. Joel D. Gamys, executive director of the Forestry Training Institute - The IDEAS Hive in Tubmanburg City - Interaction with members of the community to learn about the Gola Culture - Media interview - Travel to Robertsport City |
| Day 3: Sembehun Village, Grand Cape Mount (85 in attendance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Host a town hall meeting with the only female chief in the Commonwealth District alongwith the Paramount Chief and selected village members - Visit Sembehun Islamic Center - Interact with the Via people to learn about their culture and language - Given Via names by the Chief with approval from the Paramount Chief: Boakai (Clay), Siafa (Justin), Varney (Reggie) | Day 4: Buchanan, Grand Bassa (215 in attendance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Visit to American Corner Buchanan -The IDEAS Hive at the Bassa High School in the port City of Buchanan - Learn about the Bassa language and culture |
| Day 5: Kakata, Margibi County (230 in attendance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Visit to American Corner Kakata - The IDEAS Hive in the American Corner at Booker Washington Institute - Learn about the Kpelle tradition, cultural and language - Interact with emerging musicians | Day 6: Gbarnga, Bong County (185 in attendance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The IDEAS Hive in Gbarnga City - Learn about the Kpelle language and culture - Meet with local business owner, Mr. Moses Manston - Media interview with local news papers - Have lunch with people of Gbarnga - Tour Cuttington University |
| Day 7: Gompa/Ganta, Nimba County (220 in attendance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The IDEAS Hive in Gompa/Ganta - Learn about the Mano and Gio tribes - Media interview and Lunch of GB with the people of Gompa | Day 8: Settlement of Deadlock for Guinean Visa Application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete Guinean Online Visa application without acceptance of payment online - Detained at Border for 24 hours - Seek Francios intervention |
| Day 9 and Day 10: Guéckédou, Guinea (48 in attendance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Travel to Guéckédou - Traditional welcome ceremony with village Chiefs - Clay (named Fayiah) - Dinner and Interaction of staff members and volunteers of IDEAS For Us Guinea | Day 11 - Day 13: Guéckédou Tree Planting and IDEAS Hive (118 in attendance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plant native trees and flowers alongside the road newly refurbished road - Visit native trees planted online the river to prevent flood and provide green space for recreation - Visit IDEAS For Us - Guinea and Friend of Guéckédou offices - Lunch with staff members and volunteers of IDEAS For Us Guinea - Visit organic garden that uses compost - The IDEAS Hive in Guéckédou with nine (9) women groups |

*all "in attendance" records indicate sum from sign in sheets and do not include those who did not add their signatures but were counted in the head count.

Project Locations

The map below depicts each of the seven counties we visited in Liberia. The counties are Many have unique features that contribute to why we chose them, you can read more by using the link below the map when you are connected to a computer or smart device that is online. This data set will be updated frequently and Guinea's location data will be included shortly.

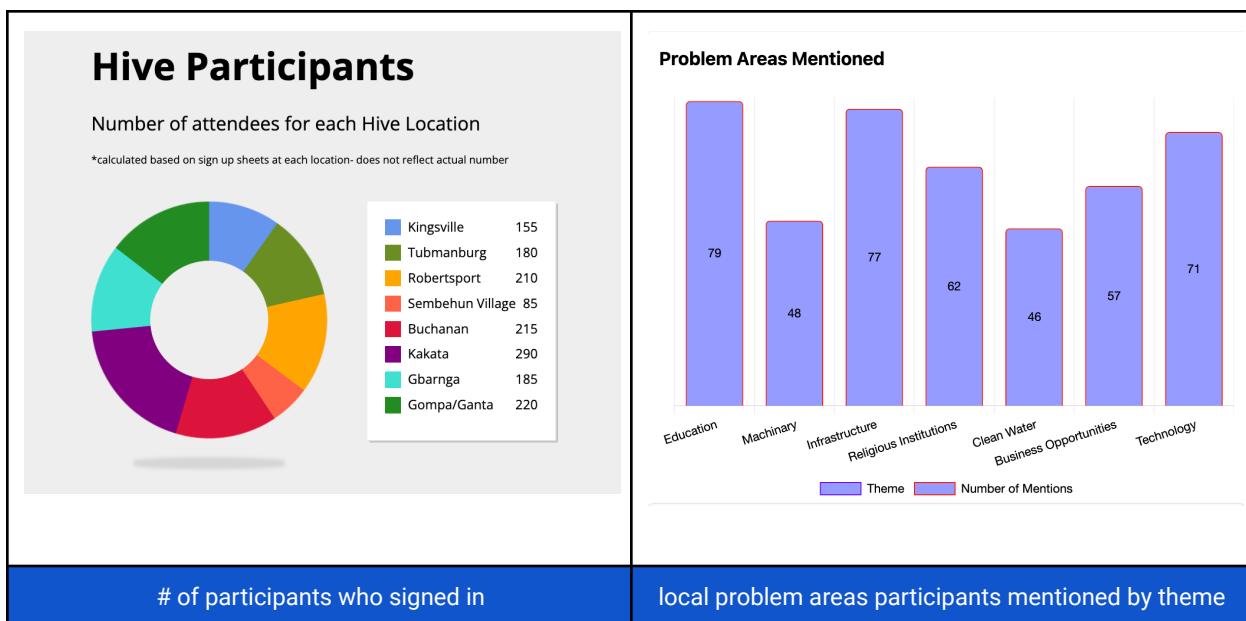


DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Outcomes and Impacts

The total cost of the project was \$19,500 USD. IDEAS was awarded \$5,000 USD from IREX for the project, \$7,500 from One Tree Planted for action projects in Liberia and Guinea, and \$7,000 from the Felburn Foundation to complete the project budget.

The charts below depict the results of our IDEAS Hive Workshops across seven counties. The data was taken only from the sign in sheets, passed around to participants, as well as a head count we conducted. In total we directly engaged with 1,540 who signed in at the events. Our head counts indicated a total of 1,832 attendees with the final gender mix being 67% female attendees for the IDEAS Hive. 73 members of the community participated in the IDEAS Action Projects with 83% of the participants being male.. We did not account for age data (as it can be seen as culturally invasive) but we would like to note that all IDEAS Action Projects and IDEAS Hive workshops welcomed an intergenerational audience, with many women and religious minorities having their voices heard and themselves directly involved in action.



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Reflections and Future Plans

This was an extraordinarily enriching experience for IDEAS, YES, and IDEAS For Guinea. It is often considered cliche among our peers to state the “life changing” nature of Africa, but it is impossible to overstate the effect Liberia and her wonderful people have had on my team. Not only has each American IDEAS team member expressed a strong desire to return to Liberia in 2023, many of us have already begun our own side projects to help our new friends from villages, colleges, communities, and speakeasies. We are actively engaged in designing curriculum on civics, holding fundraisers, collecting musical instruments from American Churches to send to Liberian Churches, and we are continuing to engage the Muslim Community and Christian communities in Florida and Washington D.C. to create further religious solidarity.

We also see an opportunity to collect art supplies and foster further artistic expression in Liberia. Of course, books and educational materials such as teaching aids and classroom curriculum can be gathered relatively easily. Donations will be made available to Liberian churches, mosques and schools for free and/or loan. Funds raised from the rental of equipment and musical instruments will be used to purchase seeds for fruit tree planting efforts throughout the counties we serve, providing food for the communities for decades to come.

Besides the aforementioned, our future plans fall into four distinct areas of focus:

- **A multi phase sustainable development plan is justified:** We believe that a four phase program could be structured to advance sustainable development and align the actions of IDEAS, YES, and IDEAS For Guinea with USAID’s 2019-2024 CDCS plan for Liberia. This project would also focus on the need for strategic jobs, localism, and civic education..
- **We want to foster the professional development of four unique Liberian individuals:** Four individuals stood out to American IDEAS Team members to the extent that they have taken personal interest in helping foster their professional development. We are currently in the process of helping 20 year old Emmanuel Cooper explore his dreams of becoming a United States Marine. We are helping collect American clothing to pre-stock her currently empty clothing/fashion store for 25 year old Princess Zuba. We are providing business mentorship and resources to a 33 year old single mother of two

named Ms. Sackie to develop her living room beautician school into a proper business. We are also helping a 16 year old entrepreneur to expand her Robertsport popcorn business and mentor other youth in her community to take similar action.

- **Civic education is a dire necessity for people of all ages:** Liberia can not be a Republic if her citizens do not understand how their government works. We want to integrate civic education into all of our activities moving forward for this project.
- **We want to create a traveling environmental film series in Liberia:** We realized there are many Liberians who have most likely never seen a whale or a dolphin before. We knew that it could be very inspirational for Liberians of all ages to experience something outside of their environment which enchants and inspires them. This “awe” that is inherent to Nature can be leveraged to open their hearts and minds and reach the point of action. For this reason we are partnering with the Blue Ocean Film Festival to provide a *Blue On Tour* experience for Liberian citizens in rural areas. Blue Ocean has accumulated over 2300 ocean related films over the years, from the best filmmakers around the world. This program will not only deliver eye opening lessons in ocean conservation and sustainability, it will serve a secondary purpose- introduction to civic engagement and local politics. Our program will provide a gateway to understanding a world in which working together is the best path towards the realization of solutions to shared problems.

In closing, we firmly believe that the best days of Liberia are in the future. Though there is no shortage of challenges facing the Liberian People, there is also no limit to what they can accomplish if they are given the fair opportunity to understand how their Government works, attain an education, and to achieve greatness through purpose and self determination.

The final portion of this document is a brief project summary, objectives, and abridged budget for the first phase (of four total) for the “Building A Sustainable Liberia: The Road To 2025” project. We encourage you to read it and to also make any introductions to those who may want to assist in making the project a reality. The authors wish to sincerely thank the reader for your time and attention. We thank you and encourage your feedback.

- [Clayton Louis Ferrara](#)
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Building A Sustainable Liberia: The Road to 2025: Phase 1 of 4

About IDEAS For Us

IDEAS For Us (IDEAS) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and accredited NGO of the United Nations focusing on social, economic, and environmental solutions at the local level. Our mission is to develop ideas, fund action, and scale solutions that solve the world's most pressing environmental challenges. We specialize in building grassroots systems that focus on developing action projects, refining routine programs, and building social enterprises with revenue models to create economic activity that advances regional sustainability. Since our 2008 founding in an American dorm room as a student club, we have grown to take action in over 30 countries, raise millions of dollars for environmental action projects, and have been recognized by two former U.S. Presidents, The United Nations, Pope Francis, The Department of Energy, and The Brookings Institute. IDEAS has had a presence in Liberia since December of 2013 when Stephen Bigboy Lavalah returned home after a four month stay living in Orlando, Florida, with IDEAS Founders Chris Castro and Clayton Louis Ferrara, as part of the August - December 2013 IREX Community Solutions Program. Since December of 2013, IDEAS has consistently collaborated with Stephen Bigboy Lavalah and his organization Youth Exploring Solutions (YES) for over 50 action projects in the USA and Liberia.

Project Summary

In the Summer of 2022, IDEAS team members Clayton Louis Ferrara (IDEAS CEO), Stephen Bigboy Lavalah (YES), Justin "J-Bird" Farrow (IDEAS Advisory Board Member), and Reginald Burroughs III (IDEAS Board Member) traveled to Liberia on a U.S. Department of State Funded program implemented by IREX Community Solutions Program Alumni and IDEAS. The project held a series of community workshops and action projects across seven counties in Liberia in seven days. We then teamed up with our colleagues in Guinea to test the same framework through translators into French and various dialects of Kissi. The data collected was analyzed and it became apparent that we had



insight into core environmental, economic, and social challenges faced by everyday Liberians. We determined localized sustainable development programs that would advance local agriculture and train youth for strategic vocational jobs that also advanced the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This local implementation of sustainable development is a speciality of IDEAS and the opportunity to launch a pilot solution became apparent.

We believe that data-led solutions are key to advancing sustainable development at the local level. Through the analysis of our data, we identified three key focus areas that could advance the SDGs and meet USAID's 2019-2024 CDCS plan for Liberia with direct action. The first focus area was to launch a "Made in Liberia" Movement that will evolve into a Liberian-Worker-Owned business. This would combat the increasing amount of foreign companies providing Liberia with all of her needs. The second focus area is the establishment of strategic vocational schools that will train everyday Liberians to gain meaningful employment. It has been communicated to us that vocational schools are often difficult and expensive to get to and from. Therefore we proposed a pop-up vocational school that will use the existing infrastructure of highly centralized buildings such as Churches, Mosques, Universities, and Community Centers. The third focus is the need for a Learning Lab to serve as a hub for visiting American students, researchers, and as a dormitory for Liberians to receive mentorship and entrepreneurial training.

Economic development is a key part of sustainable development and we have chosen to break the project into four phases. Phase 1 consists of establishing a pilot program to launch the initiative across the 15 counties in Liberia and reach a minimum of 3,000 Liberians. Phase 2 is designed to replicate the best practices of Phase 1 to serve more Liberians across the country and Phase 3 is designed to expand upon innovative ideas crowd sourced from everyday Liberians in Phase 1 and Phase 2. Phase 4 fully establishes the "Made in Liberia" movement as a Liberian-worker- owned company conducting business with neighboring countries and regional trade associations.

Phase 1 of 4: Project Outcomes

IDEAS recognizes that economic development is inseparable from sustainable development. In the absence of employment, poverty is assured, hope fades, and families, especially women and children, suffer. We have developed a series of three (3) goals that align with the data we collected during our series of interviews, workshops, and action projects in August of 2022. These goals have a high propensity for success and therefore we have designed them to be pilot projects that gather the data needed to justify



their expansion in the following three phases of this four phase program.

Phase 1 acts on the data informed conclusion that agricultural jobs, targeted vocational training, and a cultural shift in entrepreneurial opportunities are ripe innovations for deployment. We already possess much of the curriculum, grassroots network in Liberia, existing relationships with Chiefs and community leaders, and have the experience to launch these solutions. What we lack is the funding to assure our level of quality as we implement the projects equitably, ethically, professionally, and scientifically.

Goal 1: Introduce “Made In Liberia” Movement As an Agricultural Solution

- ★ **Objective 1A:** Build out existing manufacturing site to manufacture cassava grinders using local materials, local labor, and at least 80% Liberian resources.
- ★ **Objective 1B:** Train community members to manufacture cassava grinders as democratic community owned business. All positions are paid and awarded to Liberian citizens.
- ★ **Objective 1C:** Provide a run of 25 grinders to be strategically given to tribal members who have requested such technology. We will also then provide them with training on how to use the grinder and additional products and revenue models that can be made from organic Cassava farming in Liberia.

Goal 2: Create and Launch Vocational Job Training Pop-Up “Liberian Green Jobs Youth Initiative”

- ★ **Objective 2A:** Work with vast network of community partners to create or enhance existing vocational training programs for 1) Electricians, 2) Solar Install Technicians and Sales, 3) Soap Making and WASH Kits, 4) Waste Upcycling Businesses, and 4) Organic Liberian Rice Production
- ★ **Objective 2B:** Host Two (2) Vocational Job Training Pop-Ups in each of the 15 counties in Liberia with an aim at delivering training in civics and employment to 5,000 Liberians.
- ★ **Objective 2C:** Partner with local, regional, and University partners to study the economic impact of the Vocational Job Training Pop-Up “Liberian Green Jobs Youth Initiative”.

Goal 3: Build and Launch the Montserrado Innovation Lab in Soul Clinic

- ★ **Objective 3A:** Enhance existing space in Soul Clinic with a build- out that modernizes facilities with electricity, running water, modern bathrooms, a dorm for up to four (4) live-in work study students or international volunteers.
- ★ **Objective 3B:** Host American College Students, Members of IDEAS For Us, Volunteers, and Liberian Citizens from outside of Montserrado for 2-Week, 1 Month, or 3 Month apprenticeships and business mentorship programs.
- ★ **Objective 3C:** Provide \$50,000 of Community Innovation Grants to Liberian Citizens who complete our official IDEAS apprenticeship program or IDEAS

business mentorship program and have completed a business plan in alignment with the SDGs and SMART Goals.

- ★ **Objective 4D:** Align goals with the USAID's 2019-2024 CDSCS plan for Liberia.

Phase 1 of 4: Abridged Budget Breakdown

The budget below depicts the funding needed to get the project off the ground. The budget accounts for four staff positions in Liberia, data analysis and visualizations for a year, the establishment of an innovative “Made In Liberia” agricultural and economic development, a vocational job training pop-up hub, and most importantly an Innovation Lab with grant funding for citizens across Liberia and centrally located in Montserrado as a modern innovation hub with a dormitory for four (4).

| Name | Item description | Total Cost in USD |
|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------|
| IDEAS For Liberia Director | Manages program and serves as Executive Director of IDEAS For Liberia, partakes in fundraising with CEO, COO, and CBO of IDEAS in USA and Liberia. Full-time 36 hours per week position. | \$40,000 |
| Liberian Community Manager | Recent College Graduate showing high potential. Manages economic, environmental, and social programs to assure data collection and timelines are met. Manages both Program Coordinators. Full-time 36 hours per week position. | \$25,000 |
| Liberian Program Coordinator East | Well known and well trusted community member of any age. Serves as outreach specialist, customer service specialist, and educator. Full-time 36 hours per week position. | \$25,000 |
| Liberian Program Coordinator West | Well known and well trusted community member of any age. Serves as outreach specialist, customer service specialist, and educator. Part-time 16 hours per week position. | \$15,000 |

| | | |
|--|---|---------------|
| Data Analysis and Visualizations | 5 Hours a week of Data Analysis with SDG visualizations and partner data integration for 12 month period | \$15,000 |
| Payroll Taxes | Government taxes IDEAS is required to legally pay our staff. | \$9,218 |
| Agricultural Solution Expenses | “Made in Liberia” Cassava Grinder Development Program w/ Initial Run of 25 Grinders. | \$ 120,782 |
| Vocational Job Training Pop Up “Liberian Green Jobs Youth Initiative” | Focusing on electrician certification, solar installer, soap making, Waste upcycling, and organic rice farming. | \$50,000 |
| Montserrado Innovation Lab in Soul Clinic | Build out existing space for community and international exchange students to have electricity, running water, showers, and accommodations needed to professionalize existing space for U.S. audiences. | \$37,000 |
| Innovation Grants | Awarded to citizens that graduate entrepreneurship and civics workshops at Montserrado Innovation Lab in Soul Clinic | \$50,000 |
| Project Implementation | Vehicle Chartering, Data Collection, Catering for Feeding Community Members, Venue Rental, Travel Costs for Liberian Staff and U.S. Staff, Visas, and communication fees for radio and print media | \$45,000 |
| Indirect Costs | Standard 10% as indicated in IDEAS For Us Bylaws for organizational insurance, rent, accounting, and managerial stafftime | \$48,000 |
| Total Phase 1 Budget | Line Items Abridged | \$480,000 USD |

Author's Note: Phase 1 of “Building A Sustainable Liberia: The Path to 2025” is aimed at advancing the SDGs at the local level and a national level by the completion of Phase 4 in 2025. This will give five additional years to advance the SDGs before the 2030 UN Deadline. Please reach out to Clay@ideasforus.org if you would like additional information about this project proposal. Thank You.