

Report back to The Funding Network

1. Name of your organisation and date funded by TFN:

*Future First Global
23rd March 2015*

2. What was the project you sought funding for from TFN?

What are its aims and objectives? Have these changed since receiving TFN funding?

“An Alumni Community for Every School: Liberia”

Future First Global’s project in Liberia was aimed at tackling Liberia’s severe youth unemployment rates—currently estimated at as high as 70%—through the development and strengthening of alumni engagement in schools. The recent Ebola crisis was detrimental to Liberia’s schools, and many schools were closed for an extended period of time. Our project hopes to provide young people in Liberia the education and skills they require to help them transition into the workforce.

Future First Global proposed to partner with the Ministry of Education and a local NGO (YOCEL – Youth Coalition for Education). TFN’s contribution was fundamental in helping Future First achieve its first goal: a training and implementation workshop with our partners and representatives from a group of 12 schools.

3. Were you able to do this work as you described it in your application and presentation? *Yes*

What evidence do you have for the success or failure of the funded project?

The intensive two-day workshop was rolled-out successfully on June 19th and 20th 2015 in conjunction with YOCEL. The training and development workshop involved 12 schools in Monrovia. A team of Future First and YOCEL staff visited three of the pilot schools (GW Gibson, E.J. Goodridge High School, and William Gabriel Kpolleh). The team also met with other Stakeholders: Honorary Joseph N. Boakai (Vice-president of the Republic of Liberia), the Education Team of USAID, Open Society Initiative in West Africa, and the Education Team of the World Bank.

Future First Global gave an overview of our program with a key focus on the process of building alumni communities (Capture, engage, track, campaign and mobilize). YOCEL presented their baseline polling, which indicated that 90% of current students are willing to receive career talks and mentorship from former students, and 80% of outgoing high school students would be prepared to give back to their schools if the opportunity was provided.

4. If you were not able, please explain what happened and why? *N/A*

5. Can you quantify any changes? Eg ...expanding number of employees, number of projects, geographical scope.

We were able to successfully complete the workshop and the initial assessment of existing alumni networks in Liberia.

Additionally, Future First Global launched a global campaign through the hashtag “Back to School” and the catch phrase “Advice to your 16-year-old self” in February 2016. The initiative asked participants to change their profile pictures to their old school pictures and to take a picture with a blank card where they state the advice they would give to their 16-year-old self.

This campaign gathered a lot of momentum through social media. There were 12 countries involved, and this list included Liberia thanks to work that had been initiated with YOCEL through this workshop. Direct tweet impressions (i.e. the number of times a user saw the tweet on Twitter) amounted to almost 21,000.

6. Can you measure, assess or describe the change that happened as a result of this work?

What actual change did the funded project generate? What proportion of the project/work did TFN fund (eg all/x%)?

TFN funded approximately 70% of the work in Liberia. As a result of our partnership with YOCEL—that was born out of this workshop—there is a fully operating mailing list of alumni for the 12 pilot schools. There have already been 3 alumni attending/career talk events in 3 different schools this academic year.

With the help of YOCEL, Future First Global's workshop has started to funnel the will to give back efficiently and systematically. As a result of YOCEL's assessment and in partnership with Future First Global, YOCEL has identified the existing will of Liberian former students to give back. It also been able to identify that a lack of financial support and the lack of knowledge on how to build lasting alumni networks from the time students graduate, are two of the key problems to be faced—rather than a lack of alumni networks themselves. This ties into our research and understanding of the difficulties in maintaining alumni networks; it also supports Future First's initiative, and we sought to tackle these problems during the workshop.

We are not able to measure direct change, given the nature of Future First's mode: actual changes can only be implemented by those we work with and advocate to—head teachers, teachers and NGOs. However, we do hope that the new operating mailing list of alumni and the alumni activities that are being coordinated will serve as a useful incentive for this model to grow nationwide and that this will mean thousands of students will be benefitted from alumni volunteering and fundraising in Liberia. The "Giving back to our schools" culture is already latent in the country, and the assessment and workshop have helped in this realization. It is this impulse to give back, after daunting tragic experiences, that Future First Global hopes to harness into a nationwide movement in Liberia, and further across the globe.

7. As a result of presenting at TFN, did you experience any of the following;

- new subscribers to your mailing list
- new volunteers to your organisation
- further funding from individual donors
- further funding from institutional funders
- an introduction that benefitted your organisation (e.g. to an individual, business or other organisation)
- other benefit (please describe)

We did not experience any of these as a result of the presentation itself. However, the positive confidence spiral that has begun with TFN's funding continues to grow. The Open Society Foundation has granted us \$200,000 for 2016. TFN's support of our work has been invaluable in giving OSF confidence in the work we have been leading until now.

Additionally, and as a result of the workshop in Liberia, the country launched the "Back to School" Campaign with us globally. The Back to School campaign in Liberia was well covered by the press. The campaign led several MPs back to their schools, where they committed themselves to series of renovation works at their institutions. Several prominent Liberians including the Senate Committee Chair on education, the CEO of S4 Infinity and

the CEO of J-Palm Liberia, as well as other senior senators and representatives from the Ministry of Education all signed up for the campaign.

As a result of the workshop and back to school campaign, both the US embassy and World bank have expressed interest in helping YOCEL and our expansion in Liberia.

A great quote, featured in the press release by Beyan Flomo Pewee, summarises this initiative: “From Grand Gedeh to Montserrado and other parts of the country, people want to giveback and there is no greater force for strengthening education systems than communities. Whether you are a journalist or plumber, a beautician or politician, you have something to give.”

PRESS:

<http://awakeafrica.org/liberia-yocel-launches-backtoschool-week-campaign/>

<http://www.newsghana.com.gh/back-to-school-week-campaign-launched/>

8. Could you give us an estimate of how many people have been reached by the TFN funded project/work and by how much?

Specifically, the workshop involved 12 head teachers, and YOCEL conducted interviews to 68 participants (including teachers, students and head teachers).

More broadly, each of the 12 head teachers represented a school of about 500 students. Estimating the head teacher response rate to our model at about 50%, would mean that around 3000 students now have access to more reliable and helpful alumni networks.

9. Can you tell us any personal stories to highlight the value of funding from TFN?

Bevan Flomo Pewee, introduced his assessment of alumni engagement in Liberia by thanking Future First Global. Poignantly he added: “We at YOCEL welcome the vision of Future-First Global that is aimed at turning every school in to an alumni community. The assessment conducted in three counties was not just about collecting data, but building coalition and mobilizing communities to support the work of their schools [...] In Liberia, we fought 14 years of civil war that greatly affected our education system, and recently we were hit by the deadly Ebola Virus Disease that closed the doors of over 4,000 schools in the country. The continued attack on education is an alert to our future. So we must do all we can to secure our future and I am of the hope that former students helping their old schools can make us actualize this vision. I would like to use this medium to reach out to people reading this report, requesting them to join us create a vibrant Alumni Community For Every School movement in Liberia.”

Pauline Wanja, upon the work she had conducted with FFG in Liberia adds: “Reflecting on the state of the schools that night we wondered if building alumni communities was a priority for the school, equipping the schools with chairs and building classrooms felt more urgent and the sensible thing to do. But conversations with over a dozen school principals gave insight to the specific role and significant need of Alumni in Liberia schools, like the principals, they too get to play part in rebuilding an education system. And we were surrounded with Alumni doing exactly that.”

Thanks to the vision of three alumni that had gone back to become principals in their alma maters, the prospects of their schools in dire need had begun to change. For Future First it has now become a question of supporting and propagating the initiative of leaders such as these. As many of the headmasters that we met mentioned, alumni have been fundamental in building back schools after the Ebola crisis and Liberia’s civil war. 3 of the 12 pilot schools have headmasters that are actually alumni of their alma maters. The three of them felt the

need to reorganize their fellow former students to see how they could help. In talking to Pauline, one of the principals expresses his belief thus: “One’s alma mater should be the priority of any alumni: to strengthen the work of the school institutions in rebuilding Liberia.” (Peter Logan, alumni and Vice Principal of E. Goodridge Memorial High School). This shows Liberia’s

- 10. Since presenting at TFN, has your organisation undergone any significant change(s) which our donors would be interested to know about (these changes do not need to be related to the experience of presenting at TFN).**

Future First Global has recently (March 2016) hired a new Research and Partnerships Officer, who has extensive experience in Latin America. Our Research and Program Manager also recently moved to Singapore, and is helping expand the model in South East Asia. Through these changes Future First Global hopes to significantly expand its work globally.

- 11. Do you have any other comments regarding TFN funding?**

We would just like to thanks TFN for its belief in our model and project, and for their continued support in our efforts.

- 12. Can you please include any relevant photos or clips that may relate to the project.**

Please see link to photo slide show (private on YouTube) prepared specifically for this report.

<https://youtu.be/-T7pgqDtxiA>