

YOUTH AND URBAN RECYCLING IN LIBERIA

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY IN FOUR MONROVIA SLUMS

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CONTEXT

- Now: heavy outbreak of Ebola
- Scene of a violent civil war from 1989 – 2003
 - High number of combatants were young
- Ongoing United Nations Military Intervention in Liberia (UNMIL)
- Mixed views on the success of DDRR

POLICY ENVIRONMENT

- Youth is a highly political category in Liberia
 - High priority to “re-encounter the youth and put them back in society”
 - “A tool for positive development and not a tool for war”
- Jobs are seen as the most sure way to create a peaceful society.
 - But: formal unemployment is high (75- 85%)
 - Informal activities: working for survival
- Idea: Youth need to be empowered, but also given clear direction

YOUTH AND URBAN RECYCLING PROGRAMME

- ActionAid Liberia in cooperation with social enterprise Compost Liberia
- Trains and works with youth group members in several communities around Monrovia:
 - To stimulate youth economic independence
 - Environmental sustainability
- Broad range of activities:
 - Recycling
 - Urban agriculture
 - Compost-making

GOBACHOP

- Emphasis on urban agriculture and compost-making
- Youth leader priority: small shopkeeper and farmer



NEW KRU TOWN

- Emphasis on recycling and organising accountability forums
- Youth leader priority: high school economics teacher and local political broker



WEST POINT

- Emphasis on recycling: no space for agriculture
- Youth leader priority: to bring new projects to West Point, improve area reputation



DOE COMMUNITY

- Low activity level
- Youth leader priority: Ex-combatant, would rather work on peace-building and sensitization of youth



KEY LESSONS: DIFFERENT YOUTH GROUP IDENTITIES

- Leader priorities
- Conceive of themselves as: Networks / Non-governmental organisations / Community-based enterprises
- Mainly targeted young men between 25-35
- Many are youth programme ‘veterans’
- Members have **different personal goals**

KEY LESSON: STAKEHOLDER ROLES

- Youth groups see the role of Compost Liberia and ActionAid Liberia differently:
 - Compost Liberia: both business and ActionAid project implementer
 - ActionAid Liberia: Rights-based NGO, financier, and decision-maker

