

About YONER-LIBERIA, Official Pitch Site Partner in Liberia

The August, 2003 Peace Agreement marked the end to Liberia's second civil war and the start of Liberia's transition to a democracy. As part of this transition, Liberia needed to reconcile and reintegrate the child soldiers used in both conflicts. YONER-LIBERIA was created in direct response to this need, with an emphasis on entrepreneurship as a tool for reintegration, economic development and regional stability.

The Youth Network for Reform, also known as YONER-LIBERIA, was created in 2008 to reunite communities, and provide support for child victims and soldiers created by both civil wars. Part of this mission involves training young Liberians on how to become entrepreneurs and drive Liberia's growth and development in the 21st Century. Since its inception the organization has directly helped improve the lives of more than 30,000 young people and children in Liberia. Entrepreneurship is key to Liberia's post-war development. Unfortunately, entrepreneurs face many challenges and barriers. Among the top challenges, the public sector is the largest employer in Liberia, the growing youth population is unemployed or underemployed, education is not doing enough to prepare young Liberians for the work force, and the startup ecosystem in Liberia is missing many key ingredients for success.

Jarius Andrew Greaves, Founder/Executive Director of YONER-LIBERIA viewed all of these challenges as potential threats to peace and stability in Liberia. In an effort to overcome these challenges, he created YONER-LIBERIA and in 2017 joined the *Horn Entrepreneurship's Diamond Challenge for High School entrepreneurs at the University of Delaware, United States of America* as an *Official Pitch Site Partner in Liberia* and tapping into the resources offered by the Horn Program to fully domesticate entrepreneurship and innovation at high school level in Liberia.

Diamond Challenge-2018 - "Liberia 1st High School Entrepreneurship Competition"

From August 2017 to February 2018, YONER-LIBERIA in partnership with and financial supports from the University of Delaware (USA), US Embassy Monrovia, Ministry of Youth & Sports and a host Liberian local businesses successfully piloted the "*Horn Entrepreneurship's Diamond Challenge for High School Students*" Project in Liberia, now coined "*Liberia National High School Entrepreneurship Competition*" which brought together 40 students from 10 high schools in Montserrado County and finally, hosted a live National Pitching Competition as the capstone event and selected three winners out of the 18 business innovations. The 1st Place Winner was invited to the United States to participate in the Global Semi-Finalist Competition at the University of Delaware. Throughout the entire project, YONER-LIBERIA documented activities and created a video documentary for later airing in Liberia as a means of showcasing young Liberian talents and promoting and investing in entrepreneurship, science and technology innovation.

Diamond Challenge-2019 - "Liberia National High School Entrepreneurship Competition"

Finally, the 2018/2019 Edition will be scaled up and organized in Montserrado, Margibi and Grand Bassa Counties. The Project seeks to recruit and develop 10th to 11th graders gain 21st

century skill-set through critical thinking, problem solving, entrepreneurship and business development and management. YONER-LIBERIA will work with 40 high schools in the three counties and will recruit four (4) students from each school and pair them with suitable mentors who will guide them in developing innovative businesses to solve social problems within their communities through the Mentoship Institute. YONER-LIBERIA will organize a week-long Innovation Lab for the participants to deepen their understanding of how to successfully refine their business concepts developed and implement their ideas as well as gain skills from experienced local and international entrepreneurs and business development experts; such as pitching, iterating, PowerPoint preparation, presentation, public speaking and utilizing technology to leverage ideas into innovative businesses to solve community problems. Finally, YONER-LIBERIA will host the High School Entrepreneurship Competition as the capstone event to select the Three (3) National Winners for the best entrepreneurial idea. The winners will receive cash prizes for business start-ups and continue mentoring until the businesses are well established. The first winner will travel to the United States of America at the University of Delaware to participate in the Global Competition in April 2019.