



## **YaLa Africa Freetown Annual Report June 2014 – June 2015**

*Our year at a glance...*


### **Introduction**


Glocal Forum YaLa Africa-Freetown (GFYA), is a Community-Based Organization registered with Freetown City Council, dedicated to bettering the lives of young people in Sierra Leone and throughout Africa.





The Glocal Forum We Are the Future (WAF) Center in Aberdeen was created in 2005 as a community center for youths and children. Partnering with Freetown City Council and local and international partners, it is providing services to vulnerable children and youths, including early childhood education, training of trainers, sports and cultural activities, income generating activities, micro-gardening, etc.

In 2013, the Glocal Forum WAF Center partnered with YaLa Africa, an online movement dedicated to the empowerment of youth across the African continent ([www.facebook.com/yalafrica](http://www.facebook.com/yalafrica)). Glocal Forum-YaLa Africa-Freetown aims to harness the power and potential of YaLa Africa's members into concrete and long lasting development actions for the young generations of Sierra Leoneans.


### **Nutrition Field Programs**

 In partnership with FAO, we started implementing the “We Are the Future” program in Sierra Leone, where malnutrition is responsible for 46% of child deaths. The recent Ebola outbreak has created additional stress on the population. Due to the dramatic loss of human lives, in order to contain the spread of Ebola, the government has mandated movement restrictions, which in turn have had devastating consequences on agricultural harvests and overall productivity resulting in widespread food insecurity.

 Despite these dire conditions, we were able to train 15 youth in nutrition and urban agriculture and, consequently, hire them as Youth Trainers, responsible for providing training to younger children in schools and orphanages under the supervision of a local agronomist. By hiring these youth, we were also able to give some economic respite to households, whose income has drastically dropped following the Ebola outbreak.

-  Our Youth Trainers established three community gardens at the We Are the Future (WAF) Center, the SOS Children's Village and the Maga Community Primary School, all located in Aberdeen, West Freetown, one of the areas most affected by Ebola. This has allowed us to provide a means of food security to these children and their caregivers since the fruits and vegetables from the micro-gardens are used to supplement the school lunches.
-  The schools in Sierra Leone reopened on April 30th, for the first time since July 2014. Since then, 142 children at the WAF Center started learning about crop recognition, gardening and the importance of nutrition. Culinary demonstrations were organized with the children's parents and caretakers where they learned about food preparation, personal and kitchen hygiene and the importance of a balanced diet. The children's activities and culinary demonstrations are set to start at the two other sites (SOS Children's Village and Maga Community School) in the coming months.
-  In February and March 2015, at the height of the Ebola crisis, YaLa Africa joined in the Ebola awareness raising efforts led by governmental and inter-governmental agencies. The 15 Youth Trainers thus received a comprehensive training in health, sanitation and hygiene, which are key elements for Ebola protection. They also learned to provide special nutritional advice and basic health recommendations to sick people (Ebola or HIV/AIDS infected). They conducted door-to-door information campaigns in quarantined areas and within their own communities, and distributed food and basic supplies to vulnerable households under quarantine. In March, YaLa Africa also organized a meeting with the Youth Trainers and Ebola survivors, as well as other members of the communities, in order to learn from their experience and help fight Ebola-related discrimination.
-  We have been working in close partnership with FAO, Freetown City Council and other local stakeholders in order to align our actions with the national and international policies and protocol on Ebola prevention. We have been encouraged by all partners to scale up our efforts in order to reach an increasing number of youth and children at this very critical time for Sierra Leone's recovery from Ebola.

### **Online Education & Advocacy Campaigns**

-  Our Facebook membership grew from 111,500 youth from over 20 countries including Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Tanzania, Rwanda and Nigeria to a few members shy of 161,000, at present - an annual growth rate of about 45% - which translates into tens of thousands more youth from across Sub-Saharan Africa joining the largest online pan-African youth movement to date dedicated to the empowerment of youth.



- ✚ Our online HIV/AIDS Campaign keeps empowering youth to openly discuss this deadly virus, which affects 5 million young people worldwide, 70% of whom are in Sub-Saharan Africa – that is **104 youth infected with HIV every hour!** Tens of thousands of YaLa members are reached and engage in this life-saving dialogue weekly – they share facts, HIV prevention and protection messages, debunk myths and fight stigma. Thanks to likes, comments and shares, one post has the potential of reaching over 160,000 youth.
- ✚ In March 2015, our members created the first HIV/AIDS Discussion Group on Facebook, which is closed to maintain privacy. Within it, HIV+ youth from over 10 Sub-Saharan African countries, including some of the countries where HIV/AIDS is most prevalent, share their experiences of living with HIV with their peers. The HIV/AIDS Discussion Group serves as an online counseling, information sharing and mutual support group for youth, by youth.
- ✚ YaLa Africa's blog was also launched in March 2015 with the aim of offering a collaborative platform to African youth for sharing their personal stories, thoughts and aspirations for Africa. In just a few short months, we have received blog entries from a dozen YaLa members from across Africa. With entries by young men and women from Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda, Uganda, Botswana and more, the blogs address topics such as women's rights, social media and youth leadership. '[Under the Baobab](#)' - which we publish bimonthly on both our [Facebook page](#) and newly created website ([yala-africa.wix.com/yalaafrika](http://yala-africa.wix.com/yalaafrika)) - attracts hundreds of visitors at each new blog entry.
- ✚ In April 2015, in partnership with the [Akilah Institute for Women](#) in Rwanda and the YaLa Academy of [YaLa Young Leaders](#), an online peace movement of youth from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) from which we draw inspiration, YaLa Africa inaugurated the first Class of youth from Sub-Saharan Africa to join the YaLa Academy School of Citizen Journalism. 28 students from the Akilah Institute for Women ages 19 to 25 years old have enrolled in the program. Every two weeks, the participants gather online to learn from leading journalists and new media experts about ethics, writing, interview techniques, and photojournalism, among other topics. Through online lectures and writing assignments, they gain essential journalism skills, which give them the necessary tools to make their voices heard and **speak** up against social injustice to foster change in their communities. Enrolled students participate in the program through YaLa Africa's Facebook page and an interactive video platform powered by InterCast at [www.YaLaAcademy.org](http://www.YaLaAcademy.org). This innovative peace-building program, made possible by the United States Institute of Peace, aims to create a network of tech-savvy citizen journalists to engage in cross-border dialogue and voice their opinions in real-time on the issues facing youth in the Middle East and Africa. We hope that Rwanda, as the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to join this free online program, will pave the way for many more.



As Senior Nutrition Officer at the Food and Agriculture organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome, Brian Thompson, commented, “major achievements [of YaLa Africa] include [that] the online portal of YaLa Africa has now reached 160,000 African youth through Facebook and has been stimulating sharing of good practices and ideas on nutrition and agriculture.” Our weekly nutrition posts, in fact, reach a growing number of youth – we reach an average of 1,200 people per post, 3,600-4,800 people per week. The number of youth who has engaged with these posts through comments, likes and shares has also increased by 40%. This is a chance for us to showcase the progress of our field programs in Rwanda and Sierra Leone and it’s the very first step in providing information to replicate these programs in other Sub-Saharan African countries in the future.

On July 2nd 2015, YaLa Africa and YaLa Young Leaders will hold the “1 Million Rally for Peace” online conference. The event celebrates 1 million youth in the Middle East and Africa – the 1,000,000 young men and women who have joined our online movements for a better, more peaceful region. Connecting online, these young activists will come together and will be addressed via video messages collected for this occasion from top political, cultural and economic leaders, including UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, FAO Deputy Director General Daniel Gustafson, U.S. Under Secretary of State Richard Stengel, TV journalist and producer Patricia Amira, Rwandan Minister of Youth and ICT, Jean Philibert Nsengimana, Rwandan Minister of Agriculture, Tony Nsanganira, FAO Representative in Sierra Leone, Gabriel H.R. Rugalema, FAO Representative in Rwanda, Attaher Maiga, Vice Mayor of the City of Kigali, Hope Tumukunde, and many others.