

### **Profile: Freetown, Sierra Leone's We Are the Future Centre**

Location: Freetown, Sierra Leone

Partners: City of Freetown, Glocal Forum, Quincy Jones Listen Up Foundation, World Bank Institute

Donors: Bank of Netherlands Partnership Programme (BNPP), World Bank

Theme: Youth Empowerment; Sustainable Urbanization

Founded in 2004, the We Are the Future (WAF) Centre in Freetown, Sierra Leone is one of six post-conflict cities chosen through the Glocal Forum for this innovative youth and child development programme.

Freetown City Council allocated 1.5 acres of land in the West end of the city, and a small two-room building was erected, with sanitation and power. School furniture was donated by the schools of the City of Baltimore in 2005. In its third year of operation, the Freetown WAF was able to partner with the private-sector company Tigo and build a protective perimeter fence. Currently underway, a multi-purpose complex building is being sponsored by FCC.

The Freetown WAF Centre offers programming and training in a variety of sectors chosen by the youth leaders who participated in the planning of the WAF concept. These are Arts, Nutrition, Health, Sports and ICT.



With the help of local youth activists and leaders, the manager and coordinator of the WAF Centre – also young Sierra Leonians – have offered a variety of dynamic trainings and programming in the Centre's first four years of operation. Some highlights, by sector, include the following:

#### **ARTS**

- Training for Youth in Child Psychology and Development, including the role of arts
- Performing and Fine Arts training for youth and children at the Centre
- Youth teaching arts to children in selected preparatory schools

#### **NUTRITION**

- Training of youth and children in Nutrition and Agriculture
- Involvement of Centre's Nutrition Coordinator with FAO projects
- Youth-constructed and tended garden beds at the WAF Centre, for both productive and educational purposes
- Youth preparing food for children at selected preparatory schools, in conjunction with the Arts Sector youth-to-child arts teaching programme

## HEALTH

- On staff health master-trainer
- Training of youth from the community by the master trainer on health issues
- Youth-developed “Health Message” through the Arts for HIV/AIDS outreach, sensitization and awareness raising

## SPORTS

- Creation of a mini soccer pitch with the support of FIFA
- Centre offering a Sports Curriculum in line with the National Sports Council
- Friendly football competition events between various youth organizations

## I.C.T.

- The local World Bank office in Freetown donated used computers and accessories for the creation of an ICT learning centre

## INTER-THEMATIC EVENTS

- Debate and Quiz Competitions designed to be both educational across all the themes of the Centre as well as interactive brainstorming sessions where the youth come up with ideas for the WAF Centre. Certificates signed by the Mayor of Freetown are given to outstanding participants.
- Talent Expos have been organized to bring together youth from various sectors and areas to showcase their talents in arts, sports and nutrition
- Awareness and Outreach has been ongoing through music, arts, radio and television as well as through visits to schools and community centres.

The very talented Abdul Rahman Jalloh, a centre staff member, wrote a song entitled We Are the Future, that was used as a thematic song at the 2005 World Bank Conference and was covered by CNN in late 2007. He is particularly active in outreach and promoting the centre through his performing arts talents.

Despite challenges with steady electricity and water supply and access to sufficient ongoing funding, the centre currently enjoys a great deal of community support and active youth involvement, and is located in a place that attracts tourists, opening up future possibilities for fundraising and income generating activities. Sierra Leone, despite its troubled recent history, enjoys a democratically elected government that actively promotes peace and security in the country, making for an effective environment in which to operate the WAF Centre.