



## ACTIVITY REPORT 2020

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## I. INTRODUCTION OF ARISE FROM ASHES

Arise From Ashes (AFA) is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization, operating in Liberia. AFA has offices in Liberia and Switzerland.

- Monrovia, Liberia: Zubah Town, Paynesville, Montserrado County
- Geneva, Switzerland: Maison Internatioanle des Associations, Rue des Savoises 5, 2015 Genève.

AFA has a tax-exempt status from the Swiss authorities. One of the primary benefits is the ability to accept contributions and donations that are tax-deductible to the donor.

### 1. VISION AND MISSION

Our goal is to help transform the lives of the country's homeless, poverty-stricken and marginalized, women, children and youth, into self-sufficient men and women, by developing sustainable community-based programs.

Our approach in fighting poverty is holistic. We aim at building an accommodation and a vocational training center where the marginalized homeless beneficiaries will learn a variety of skills and live for the duration of their training program. The accommodation is meant to take some of the youth from the streets and host them for the duration of their training, while providing them all the necessary tools to become autonomous. By so doing, the center will bring together all projects on the same campus instead of having them in several communities.

The center will contribute to the economic activities of the county and serve as a basis to fight poverty through job creation, not to forget psychosocial counseling.

We created a special focus on girls/women because in our society, when you educate or provide skills to girls, they help everyone. You equip them to get married at a good age, to get pregnant at a good age and their children have at least 50% chances of surviving; girls and women also play active roles in communities, they reinvest a good percentage of their income into their families.

### 2. OUR STORY

Liberia is a demographically young country; more than half of the population is between 15 and 24 years old. In addition, the population is growing rapidly with a fertility rate of 4.3 children per woman in 2018. Majority of the youth are left to fend for themselves, they spend their lives on the streets; many fall into drugs, prostitution, crimes, delinquency and are victims of abuse.

This population has been rapidly growing to the extent that the society created a new term to classify them and they are now known as "Zogos" (males) and "Zogesess" (females). They are considered a threat to peace, stability and security. They influence many other youth living poverty level including those who have a place to sleep. Arise From Ashes rather considers them as untapped potentials. It is important to note during the war, the education system collapsed and children, to this day, suffer an irreparable delay.

Many of the youth in Liberia could not complete primary school education and find themselves on the streets today. Several research, reports and interviews suggest that the best way out for them is vocational and skills development.

These grown-up children, the youth, now find themselves with no prospects, no hope for the future. Indeed, youth unemployment rate is approximately at 85%. Unemployment is a problem that affects the entire population and is overrepresented among young people given their share in the Liberian population. They have no other choice but to turn to the informal sector, which most of the time, is not sufficient to meet their needs and immobilizes them in an unstable and precarious situation.

These youth have over and over again expressed the desire to receive skills development training to be able to fend for themselves.

These youth, the future of Liberia, are our targets.

Our mission is to fight poverty by empowering youth to rise from the ashes - Arise From Ashes - and regain control over their lives for a more dignified future through vocational training and skills development.

### 3. FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS – DONORS AND CHALLENGES

We believe in strong governance and financial management. We have achieved a balanced budget while at the same time increasing our scope of action and impact. Our gratitude goes to the Commune of Cologne and the Commune of Choulex for their valuable financial assistance totalling.

Kokopelli is a French association which produces copyright-free and reproducible seeds from organic farming, with the aim of preserving seed and vegetable biodiversity. A.F.A. benefited from the “Seeds Without Borders” campaign that Kokopelli has been carrying out since 1999.



We also thank and Dr. Yvette Ghislain Crabtree (Kansas, USA) for her generous donation of a sewing machine.



**Sources of funding remain our biggest challenges in achieving our vision, mission and goals.**

Since its inception, AFA envisaged a strategy on how to depend on donations and grants to assist in developing the vocational training center and accommodation. At the same time, AFA is developing sustainable funding means to support the vocational training center in the long term.

AFA is putting more focus on skills development and training for youth with a business development component as part of its strategy. This will diversify its sources of income and fund its activities in the long run.

## **II. ACTIVITIES IN 2020**

The COVID-19 pandemic began in December 2019 and paralysed a lot of initiatives in the world by early 2020. The humanitarian sector was no exception. The entire planet had to put COVID-19 at the center of its day-to-day operations.

During 2020, schools closed down again, accentuating the delays in education for youth. Unlike some parts of the world, youth could not further their studies virtually due to lack of access to technology and electricity.

The entire world suffered the consequences of this pandemic, but for the poorest, the most vulnerable and marginalized, without food, security, education, etc. with little or no government support, their needs became more and more alarming. Those without any skills and education understood how urgent it was for them to have some minimal tools to be able to fend for themselves.

We had to find novel ways to integrate the efforts made to relieve marginalized victims living below poverty level within the COVID pandemic context. This challenge was actually the positive catalyst that gave birth to two of AFA's projects : Tailoring & Fashioni School as well as the COVID-19 Awareness program.



## 1. COVID-19 AWARENESS PLAN – APRIL 2020

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for awareness was really critical in these communities that are disconnected from channels of information and communication like television.

Due to the acute needs of our target groups, we decided to begin awareness in communities living in extreme poverty. We also engaged two professional Tailors to make some hundreds of masks for the awareness campaign.

According to the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) the distribution and donation of COVID-19 materials by several civil society and community-based organisations in Liberia represents 33% of all response activities. This is followed by community-based awareness-raising campaigns, which accounts for 17%.

Mask-making Workshop in March 2020



AFA worked with its local partners (a team of 21 persons including members and volunteers) to begin COVID-19 awareness in four of the poorest communities in Blamo Town, Monrovia, Gbekeh, Harper City Airfield Community and Nekangbo Community, Maryland County.

## 2. CRITERIA FOR THE CHOICE OF TARGET COMMUNITIES

The choice of the beneficiary communities was made in line with our mission, vision and goals.

Two of these communities (Blamo Town and Nekangbo) have typical slum characteristics: lack of basic infrastructures, high population density, poor and unhealthy environmental conditions, lack of

community toilets (5% of the residents have private toilets, 95% use the swamp land or « flying toilets ») very poor buildings, high rate of criminality and delinquency, etc., hardly any electricity (people use lamps and candles). People do not feel safe at night.

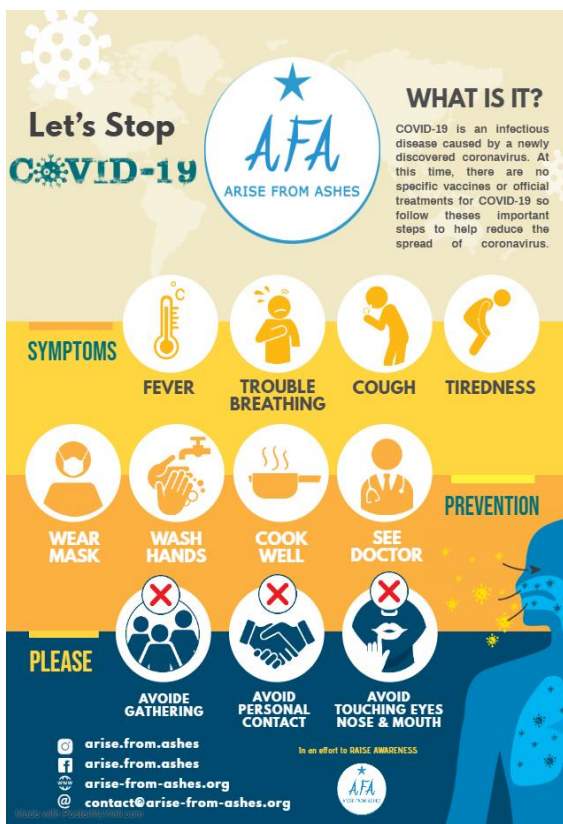


All of these communities have very bad access road conditions, especially during the rainy season. The main roads to these communities sometimes get blocked by earth and rubbish, with no real drainage systems. None of these communities do not have adult literacy, vocational training and skills development institute.

### 3. SENSITIZATION AND DISTRIBUTION

Our local partners distributed flyers during the awareness and explained symptoms and prevention methods to those communities.





Some hundreds of buckets with taps, specially designed for protection against viruses such as Ebola and COVID-19 were also distributed. These buckets are normally placed before a group of homes for visitors to wash their hands or for community members to wash their hands for each time they go out and return to the community.





Sanitary items (liquid, solid, powder detergents) were also distributed to empower the resilience of four communities against the pandemic.



Gbekeh village is an isolated village that is very clean with no criminality and delinquency, but has other characteristics of slums such as lack of electricity, water and the lack of other basic commodities.



As we continue to experience the distractions and challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, I would like to take a moment to express my deep appreciation for how our communities have responded to these challenging times.

### III. TAILORING AND FASHION DESIGN SCHOOL – JULY 2020

As stated earlier, the pandemic changed the course of plans.

In July 2020, AFA also established a Tailoring school in New Georgia Estate, Monrovia, where girls are learning professional tailoring.

Six girls between the ages of 18 and 26 were selected based on their backgrounds. These are mostly girls who cannot afford regular school and have turned to AFA for help through the New Georgia Community to offer them hope for the future. AFA intends to develop and extend this program to more girls. 30 other girls have expressed interest in this course, but we do not have the capacity to accommodate them. AFA is devising means to expand the school's program.

This school is run by two professionals.

The course is a two-year course with 360 hours per year.

## 1. Vision of the School

Our vision for this school is to offer tailoring/sewing and introductory fashion design classes to its students to enable them to fulfill their dreams and offering them a place in the fashion world. We have often heard that tailoring was one of the last options for youth who perform poorly in schools. We consider tailoring and fashion design to be a profession of its own, a fulfilling career path which entails being meticulous and tuned into artistic expressions. We believe that fashion designing adds value to tailoring. Fashion design is a very profitable industry which positively impacts many economies and nations. This industry employs millions of people worldwide.

Developing creativity is an integral part of their courses – through various exercises they develop their creativity in order to become good designers before they go to special design schools for higher level specialization. They learn how to transform any little idea into a professionally finished item. Most of the girls in the school have expressed interest in learning how to design. Their Teachers incorporated drawing shapes of different fabrics, trimmings at a low level. They started working on developing their ideas into a sketch and are learning how to make that design into an actual garment.

**Clothing (men's, women's, children, African, European, different kinds of fabrics – drawing, sketching, pattern-making by hand)**

## 2. Criteria For Selection

Women in poor and marginalized settings often have recourse to sex for money, drop out of school due to pregnancy, cannot afford to buy sanitary pads, products like soap, deodorant, etc. due to poverty. They find themselves either living with men who ill-treat them or get married at an early age.

Offering them vocational training is a good way for them to gain economic independence and to help other family members. This will take them away from idling about, away from the streets.

We created this special focus on girls/women because in our society, when you educate or provide skills to girls, they help everyone, you equip them to get married at a good age, to get pregnant at a good age and their children have at least 50% chances of surviving ; girls and women also play active roles in communities, they reinvest a good percentage of their income into their families.

We selected girls in the same community in which the school is located. By this, they will have no extra costs to bear for transportation to and from the school.

## 3. Curriculum - Year one

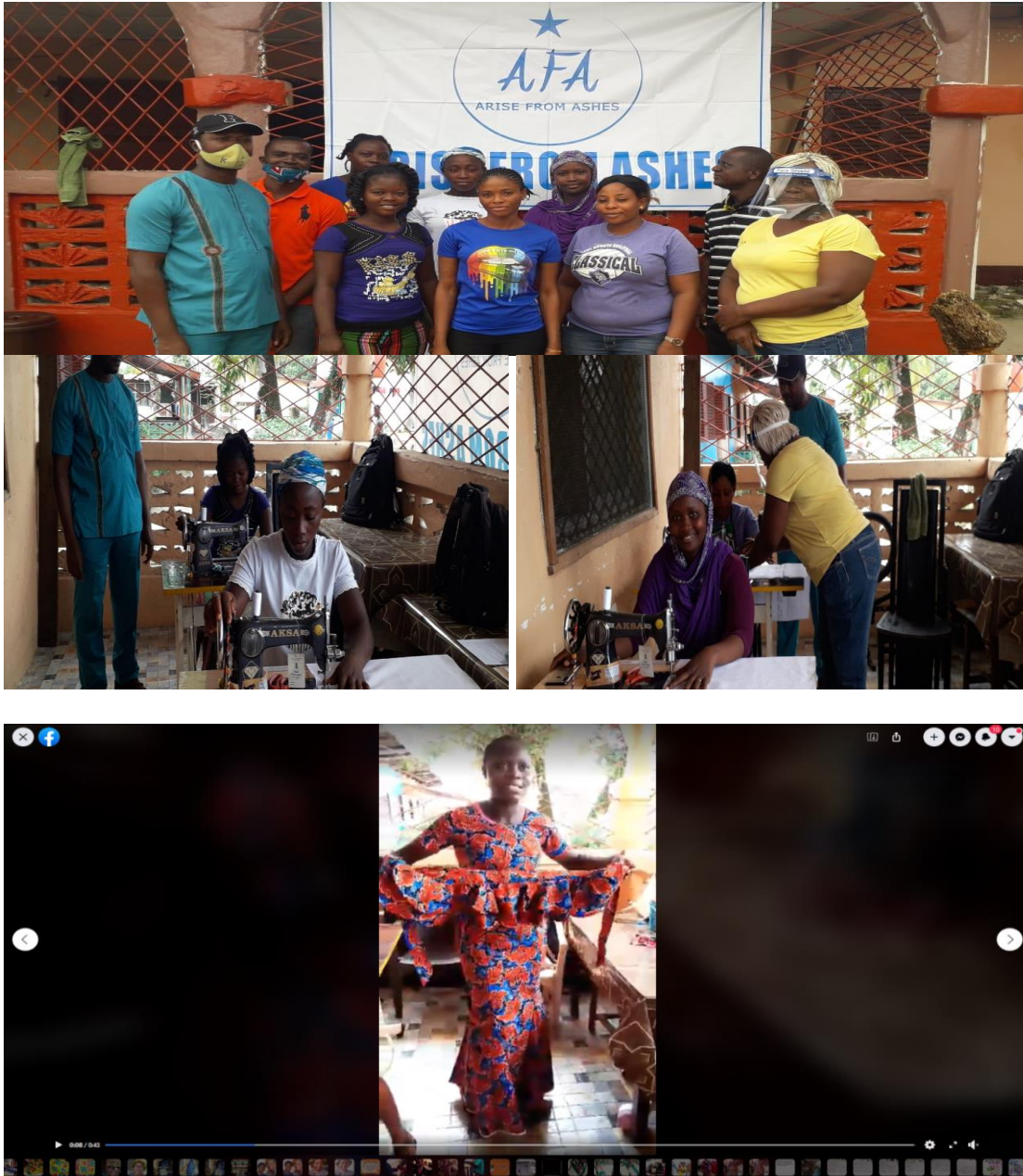
During the first year, students learnt, among others, the following techniques:

- Introduction to sewing;
- Different parts of the sewing machine;
- Choosing fabrics, pattern, expressing ideas into designs through basic drawing skills;
- Learning how to use a variety of sewing/tailoring tools and materials, measurement instruments, cutting tools;
- Alterations, traditional/contemporary tailoring/sewing;



- Non-mechanical sewing tools such as hand-sewing needles, thimbles, thread, safety pins, straight pins;
- Pattern development and construction for fashion and clothing;
- Garment production;
- Production techniques for different fashion items: clothing, accessories like hand bags, caps (shower caps, face caps), table sets, bathroom sets, etc.

**Sewing notions** include hand-sewing needles, thimbles, thread, safety pins, straight pins and almost any other small, non-mechanical sewing tool.



#### IV. AGRO-ECOLOGY PILOT PROJECT FOR VSLA – August 2020

AFA set up an agro-ecological pilot project to economically and socially empower young women who are members of the Village Savings and Loans Association in Maryland County. A.F.A. made available several acres of land in Gbekeh to these young women to enable them to cultivate locally consumed

products (i.e. plantains, cabbage, peppers, eggplants). These crops are intended to be sold by the young women of VSLA in the markets of surrounding villages. Low-income households do not have access to bank-based funding; consequently, they cannot have easy access to land. Since the local agricultural sector is underdeveloped (subsistence farming), they often have to cross the border to obtain supplies from the Ivory Coast.

Giving them access to land is a way of making their daily life easier and enabling them to increase their income. As their financial situation improves, these young women will be valued in their households for decision-making. They will also gain their financial independence by participating more in household expenses.

In addition, some of these women cannot afford to support their children's school fees, these children were out of school – they will finally be able to do so. Children's education is a problem for a large part of the population, yet it is an important element to end the vicious cycle of poverty.

It is also a way for AFA to disseminate agro-ecological farming techniques to these women due to the fact that each person authorized to cultivate on “*Resilience Farm*” land must sign our agro-ecological charter which contains all the practices and products that are prohibited on the site. AFA will support them in the transition by training them in natural cultivation methods.



We could not conduct some of our activities such as promotional events and fundraising due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were nevertheless able to continue building partnerships with other organizations.

Under « Financial Highlights....Challenges » above, we listed the names of donors who assisted us financially.

Below is the list of our donors and partners

## V. DONORS & PARTNERS

### DONORS



*Dr. Yvette Ghislain Crabtree  
(Kansas, USA)*

## PARTNERS



WORLD ORGANIZATION  
OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL  
ORGANIZATIONS (WANGO)



giving  
women



## VI. OUTCOME - IMPACT

## TAILORING – IMPACT

100%

unemployed enrolled &amp; trained

2

teachers employed

100%

teacher engagement

90%

students operational, sewing  
for family and friends

100%

students satisfied with classes  
& eager to learn more

## COVID-19 AWARENESS IMPACT

**100%**

AFA staff & volunteers trained  
in safety awareness

**4** communities participated

**400** specially designed  
buckets distributed

**400** masks per community  
distributed

**1600** flyers distributed



### VII. SUSTAINABILITY

Sources of funding remain our biggest challenges in achieving our vision, mission and goals. From its inception, AFA envisaged a strategy on how to solicit donations and grants in the early years to assist in developing the vocational training center and accommodation, while at the same time developing sustainable funding means in order not to depend on donor funding (grants or donations) after a certain number of years.

To diminish donor-funded and grant dependencies, AFA focused on areas in which it could provide skills development and training to youth. This business development component of AFA's strategy will diversify its sources of income and fund its activities after the center is established.

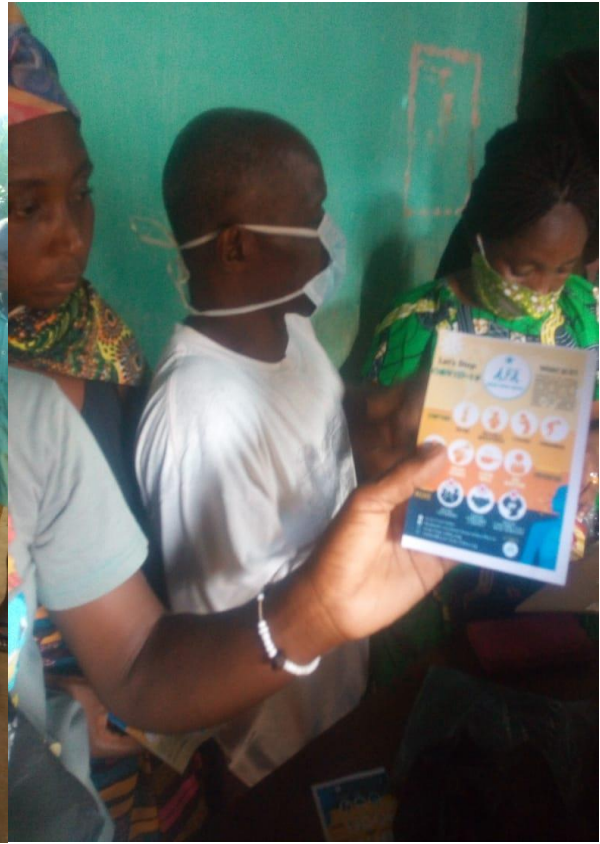


## ANNEX PHOTOS

### COVID-19 SENSITIZATION & DISTRIBUTION

















## TAILORING AND FASHION DESIGN SCHOOL

