

WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com West Africa Chapter

2009 ANNUAL REPORT



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report is the product of the combined efforts of various individuals, members and volunteers who in diverse ways supported the work of WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com West Africa Chapter throughout the year. Without their support it could have been very difficult for WCWGM to make the significant gains it achieved during the past twelve (12) months. We register our doubted-ness and appreciation for their invaluable support. We are also thankful to our partners: WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com Global Chapter, Peace Child International United Kingdom, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Student, Youth and Queer Organization (IGLYO) and Amazing Group Sierra Leone Limited. We owe all of them a lot of gratitude.

We want to thank our Mentors: Mrs. Lovetta A.R. Pratt of Enhancing the Interaction and Interface Between Civil Societies and the States to Improve Poor People's Lives (ENCISS), Miss Jillian Erica Lewis United Nations Development Program Sierra Leone (UNDP) and Mr. Babajide Olapade of Amazing Group Sierra Leone Limited (AGSLL) for providing supportive leadership to the organization. Their patience and steadfastness in steering the operations of WCWGM in thick and thin throughout the period contributed immensely to the success of the organization.

Our deepest appreciation goes to all Students Councils, Civil Society, Youth Groups, LGBTQ organizations and Faith Based Organizations throughout the country and outside that aligned their work with that of WCWGM. Their involvement with the work of WCWGM was not only a source of inspiration, but also helped to broaden the frontiers of advocacy for LGBTQ human rights in Sierra Leone.

Special thanks go to the fabulous staff and volunteers of WCWGM for their enormous support and enthusiasm throughout the year.

Whenever names are named, people run the risk of leaving out names of people and institutions that have made tremendous contributions. We are no exemption. We therefore thank all those who supported the work of WCWGM, but whose names are not mentioned here in this report. We equally appreciate their support and we always look forward to it.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Sierra Leone is a country on the coast of West Africa with a population of 6 million people. Sierra Leone is rich in mineral deposits. It is endowed with rich mineral resources like iron ore, diamonds, rutile and bauxite; rich marine resources like fish and lobsters; fertile agricultural lands and good climate conducive for agricultural activities. But majority of its six million people are living in abject poverty. The country has been ranked as the least developed country in the world by the UNDP. It occupies the bottom rung of the human development index ladder.

The human development and social indicators, including illiteracy, primary school enrolments, life expectancy, maternal and infant mortality and malnutrition are among the worst in the world. The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) stands at 290/264 per 1,000, whilst life expectancy at birth is about 41.8 years. The adult literacy rate is estimated at 34.8 percent, whilst the population with access to safe drinking water is only 34 percent. Endemic diseases such as malaria and Sexually Transmitted Diseases such as HIV/AIDS loom as a national menace and a threat to human development. About four-fifths of the population is in absolute poverty, with expenditure below One US Dollar (US \$ 1) a day. Sierra Leone is a country where homosexuality is illegal and with a high rate of homophobic and trans-phobic attacks against LGBTQ people. The problem of poverty is further compounded by the apparent absence of political will to not only put into place policies and mechanisms that can promote inclusiveness, transparency, and public accountability, but to also ensure that these policies are implemented effectively. The capacity of state institutions and other governance and monitoring structures at national and local levels are too weak to minimise corruption and mismanagement of public resources.

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com (WCWGM) is one of the world's most innovative diversity projects. It was founded in 2007 by a small group of activists committed to human rights and the ending minority discrimination worldwide. WCWGM is a non-political, non-religious and non-profitable organization aimed at promoting peace, equality, understanding and respect for all loving couples worldwide. The project is run by committed volunteers who dedicate their energy, knowledge and time for the benefit of all peoples, especially our mentors who help us to make our vision a reality.

Mission Statement

The main purpose of our project is to challenge any individual, government or society from preventing two adults from loving each other - if they are causing no harm to anyone and are happy together. Our project particularly focuses

on ending discrimination experienced by inter-racial couples, inter-religious couples and couples who identify as part of the LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Intersex Transgender) community. Our project is about promoting love, peace and equality for all loving couples worldwide.

Vision Statement

Our vision is for a world that respects and understands that love develops between different people in different ways, and that a love between two consenting adults that causes no harm is a thing to celebrate, not discriminate. Through awareness building, educational reform, social and government lobbying and the realisation of every individual's human rights, our project aims to create a more peaceful and understanding global village. We aim to systematically reduce discrimination, stigmatization and all forms of violence expressed towards people based on their 'difference', and to educate, counsel and support marginalized people to realize their human rights. Our vision is to have an understanding, peaceful society that values diversity and refuses to oppress one, recognising that oppression against one results in oppression against all.

Institutional Capacity

WCWGM is comprised of committed volunteers from various professional backgrounds including, accounting, human rights activism, peace building, human resources, information technology, business management and administration, international business communication, building and civil engineering and economics.

Projects Implemented

WCWGM implemented the following projects:

- Built a membership base of 75 people of various backgrounds.
- Developed initial plans of action on sensitization of sexual minorities on HIV/AIDS/STD/Is prevention and control.
- The West Africa Chapter hosted a social gathering and day out for LGBTQ Youth in Sierra Leone.
- In collaboration with Peace Child International (PCI) we were able to conduct a Gender Empowerment Workshop in Sierra Leone, May 2009.
- WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com West Africa Chapter attended the Gender Meeting organized by Peace Child International in the United Kingdom, May 2009
- WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com West Africa Coordinator was invited to be a preparation Team Member at the International Lesbian, Gay,

Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Youth and Student Organization (IGLYO) Conference called 'This is Who We Are' in the Netherlands, July 2009.

- WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com West Africa Chapter is a member of Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) Sierra Leone Chapter.
- A member of the HIV AIDS Youth Stakeholders Committee Sierra Leone.

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

WCWGM West Africa Chapter implemented the following activities and projects in 2009:

1. LGBTQ Closet Meeting

January 20th 2009 we organized a closed-door meeting with thirty-five LGBTQ identified people in Sierra Leone. We introduced the aims and objectives of WhyCantWeGetMarried.com West Africa Chapter and all present agreed to support the organization so that we can all break the chains of violence that affect our society. Those present were very happy to assist WCWGM with sensitization campaigns to promote peace, respect and understanding amongst everyone. We agreed that we are not going to start a LGBTQ Human Rights campaign in Sierra Leone as it is too early and not safe; so we agreed to promote peace, respect and understanding for everyone and will consider an LGBTQ Human Rights campaign in the future, once we have gained credibility for the project as an equal rights for all project in Sierra Leone.

2. Research on Gender Empowerment with marginalized young women in Sierra Leone conducted from 10th January 2009 – 20th February 2009

Interviews conducted by: George Reginald Freeman & Denzil Kargbo
Editing by: Bart Abbott

Summary:

The interviewees were several young women and two men who own small businesses and are attending schools in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The interviewees were between the ages of 19 and 30 years old.

The interview questions are listed here:

- What are the obstacles that YOU personally, as a young woman/man, have faced in business, society and your personal life?
- How have YOU managed to overcome these or any other obstacles yourself?
- Has being a woman/man held you back or pushed you forward?

- Do you participate in any community societies or groups?
- What is your role?
- Do you know of or have experienced any groups or societies in your community which are exclusive to men or women?
- Who occupies (men/women) leadership positions (informal/formal i.e.: regional mayor or leader of your religious group) in your community?
- Should women have a role outside the home? (Please elaborate i.e. in what way and why).
- What role do YOU have in decision making in the household?
- Do girls and women in the local community have access to educational institutions?
- What prevents girls and young women, boys and young men attending school?
- How many years of schooling have you had?
- Why did you leave school?
- Which health services are you lacking?
- How are you influenced by the way women/men are represented/portrayed in the media?
- Who inspires you?
- Have you had a mentor who has influenced you and if so what have they done?
- Have you received financial assistance to aid the establishment of your business and if so, who from?
- What support do you receive in regards to organizing and managing your business?
- How do you use the income generated from the business? (For example: Is the revenue put back into the business or spent on sustaining one's livelihood?)
- Do you feel you are able to make independent decisions regarding buying and selling? If not, why not?
- What could men do to help empower women?

The following is a summary of the interviewees responses:

1. The majority of women face severe sexual exploitation by men on a daily basis.
2. Sexual exploitation by men is one of the main obstacles to the success of women-run businesses.
3. Poverty causes women to be vulnerable to sexual exploitation because they are under severe economic pressure to survive and take care of others in their families.
4. Most young women leave school because of teenage and unwanted pregnancies.
5. Most young women and men do not have access to health care facilities.
6. All of the women and men who were interviewed started their businesses and continue to survive off of an initial investment ranging between USD\$30 and USD\$500. However the women interviewed said that they had requested loans ranging from USD\$400 - USD\$2000. It needs to be determined whether

the interviewees were requesting loans which were realistic for their needs or whether they were exaggerating.

The follow is a snippet of an interview that contextualises the typical situation of interviewees.

Nafisatu Fornah. 19 years old.

Nafisatu sells rice and cassava leaves along the roadside in Goderich Village, Freetown. She got married when she was 17 years old and had three kids (two sons and one daughter), two brothers and three sisters. Nafisatu's only daughter died after birth as a result of poor medical provision.

Nafisatu said she faces a lot of constraints in trying to pay the rent and feed her children. During rainy season her roof leaks and water floods in the family home. Her husband is an apprentice at a mechanic shop but this is an unpaid position. Nafisatu provides food and other basic necessities for her children. In her community and household, Nafisatu is not given the opportunity to make choices and decisions. She says her husband ignores her suggestions even when they are positive.

She says that in her community most families invest and provide access to education for boys more than girls. Nafisatul received 5 years of schooling and became pregnant when she was 15 years old.

She says she doesn't have a mentor, because there is no one in society that she admires.

Nafisatu says her husband gave her Le 200,000 to start up her business and profits are reinvested into the business and provide food, education and other basic necessities for my family.

Nafisatu says "Men should learn to absolutely believe in women as we are the greatest investments and the best economist that can manage the affairs of the home".

3. First Outreach Social Gathering

WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com West Africa Chapter social gathering took place on Monday 23rd February 2009 at the Mountain Rural District Secondary School, Regent Village in Freetown. Young people including came from various communities in rural and urban Freetown.

We began the social gathering by introducing the aims and objectives of WhyCantWeGetMarried.com and everyone participating agreed to support the organization so that together we can break the chains of violence that affect us all. Everyone was also keen to support the WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com sensitization campaigns on promoting peace, respect and understanding amongst everyone.



Although LGBT issues in West Africa are undeniably obvious, and affecting many people in the region, the group agreed that it is too early and unsafe to promote LGBT human rights campaigns at present; we agreed to more generally promote peace, respect and understanding for everyone and we might consider LGBT Human Rights later on when the project has gained more credibility in Sierra Leone.

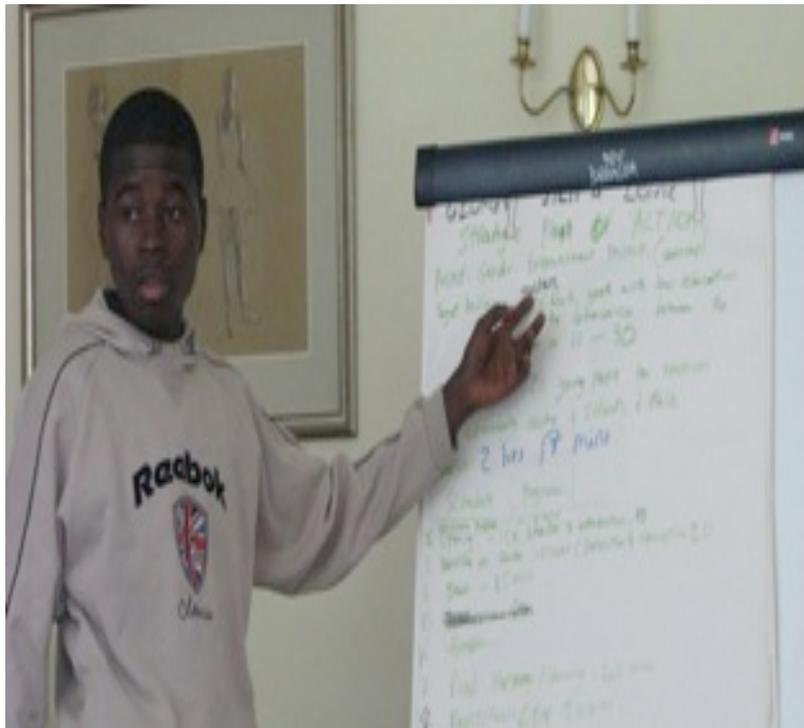
Other actions held throughout the day included peer-to-peer interaction and focused group discussions. We were also able to network with each other through getting-to-know you type games and discussions. We are excited to have these young people supporting our campaign because we believe they have a pivotal role to play in promoting peace, respect and understanding within our society.

4. PEACE CHILD INTERNATIONAL GENDER CONFERENCE IN ENGLAND

Gender Empowerment conference held on 7th May 2009 to 12th May 2009 at Peace Child International headquarters, England.

This Peace Child International Conference was chartered to produced a Gender Book, which we will use as a toolkit to showcase the best practices

and empower young people about gender empowerment globally.



Mr. George Reginald Freeman from WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com West Africa Chapter presented the research report, action plan and also worked with some other young people globally to develop activities to run a gender empowerment workshop.

The theme of the Conference is challenging young men and women to create optimum conditions for female entrepreneurs to succeed and for more young women to apply for the Peace Child International, BTC Grants.



We had a lot of fun, worked very hard, debated and argued a lot. We had the chance to participate in a number of participative sessions, which explore issues around the varying challenges and successes young women contend with globally.



I signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to conduct three (3) Gender workshops to empower young people in Sierra Leone.



The Gender book “Gender Journey” was the major outcome of the Conference.

5. Conducted Gender Empowerment workshop in Freetown May 2009.

The Project Committee held a pre-planning meeting on 25th May 2009, to develop approaches towards achieving project objectives and document the plan of action.

After agreeing on the activities planned, we started by delegating duties and responsibilities to volunteers of the project committee.

We held a radio program at the Cotton Tree News Radio Mount Aureol in Freetown on 8th June 2009 from 1:00pm to 2:00pm; George Reginald Freeman was the studio guest and he was interviewed on the Gender Empowerment Project where he introduced the project and spoke at length about the concept and outcomes of the intended project. Members of the public were motivated and contributed meaningful opinions that led to many telephone calls vocalizing support for the gender equality campaign. At the end of the program people congratulated WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com West Africa Chapter and Peace Child International for creating the platform for a gender equal society.

On 9th June 2009, Premier Talk Radio interviewed Mr. George Reginald Freeman and Ms. Mahawa Kargbo at their Good Morning Show 7:00am to 7:15 am. They were given an opportunity to discuss the assumptions and impressions about 'gender' and were able to publicise the Gender Empowerment Workshops.

The Gender Empowerment Workshops took place on the 9th, 10th and 12th of June 2009, at Scripture Union Sierra Leone Hall. The 9th June 2009 workshop



was the first workshop and was a women only event. The second workshop on 10th June 2009 targeting men only. The final workshop was held on 12th June 2009 as a all inclusive event. All the workshops commenced at 10:00am and finished at 1:00pm. These sessions allowed young women and men to discuss the challenges and opportunities of gender

empowerment, as well as empowering and engaging young people on social entrepreneurship and business start ups. Participants had a participative and decision making dialogue on the recommendations that they would like to bring to local and international organizations and the government.

The participants did ice breakers, networked with one another by identifying their areas of interests and skills, divided into small groups and discussed challenges, opportunities, and preferred solutions to the problems of gender inequality in relation to social entrepreneurs and business start ups.

On 11th June 2009 at 7:00 am, Mr. George Reginald Freeman and Ms. Mahawa Kargbo went to Radio Democracy FM 98.1 in Freetown. They introduced the concept of gender, disseminated the message of the Gender empowerment training workshops and we also talked about the outcomes of



the First workshop. We received text messages of support from listeners. Callers also recommended the program be repeated and as a result requests for more Gender training was made in Sierra Leone.

On 15th June 2009, Mr. George Reginald

Freeman disseminated the outcomes of the gender empowerment workshop to the public for fifteen minutes on the Good Morning show at Premier Talk Radio from 7:00am to 7:15 am.



Five newspapers published the Gender Workshops stories.

6. IGLYO Conference in Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Mr. George Reginald Freeman, the Coordinator of WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com West Africa Chapter was a Preparation Team Member at the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Youth and Student Organization (IGLYO) Conference called 'This is Who We Are' in the Netherlands, July 2009. He helped the preparations team select the best applicants from all over the world and introduced the various working teams at the opening ceremony. He also helped with the facilitation of workshop sessions and peer interaction. Mr. George Reginald Freeman was also a moderator for the speakers during the IGLYO conference.

As a team Mr. George Reginald Freeman was able to gather information on the Yogyakarta Principles on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and make further recommendations to the team. He also worked hard on a participative dialogue session and similar meetings. LGBTQ activists interacted with each other, learnt new ideas and offered solutions on how to address needs in various communities. Finally, the preparations team presented the conference statement and best practices developed by LGBTQ young people at the closing ceremony.

7. Human Rights and Peace Building Sensitization Campaigns

We thought it was important to hold community sensitization campaigns about WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com because it is everyone's responsibility to act peacefully, respectfully and with compassion towards everyone else.



The community sensitization campaigns started in September 2008 and are still going strong. We engage in peer-to-peer interaction and focus group discussions with young people throughout various communities. We focus on young people because we believe that young people are the pillars of the nation that will further the campaign and bring about generational change in our community. If we are to achieve sustainable peace, respect and understanding we must see young people as the solution that will enhance sustainable change in society.

In addition to the community sensitization campaigns, we embarked on similar campaigns with schools and colleges as well.

Throughout January the West Africa Chapter has been busy doing sensitization campaigns with the following secondary schools;

- Collegiate School
- Sierra Leone Grammar School
- Convent Secondary School
- Hamadiya Islamic Secondary School
- Prince of Wales School

We were also able to campaign at the following colleges;

- Fourah Bay College
- Liccsal Business College

- Milton Margai College of Education and Technology

The sensitization campaigns included peer-to-peer interaction, distribution of informative hand bills, brochures, student empowerment discussions, and presentations that promoted peace, respect and understanding during devotions and assembly presentation.



We were also able to campaign in the following communities:

- Charlotte Village
- Bathurst Village
- Regent Village
- Leicester Village
- Kroo Bay Community
- Waterloo Community
- Allen Town
- Hastings Community

8. Tolerance & Acceptance Campaign Radio programs



We broadcast three radio sessions on Citizen Radio in Freetown on the 17th December 2008, 18th January 2009 and 3rd February 2009. Our program went to air at 5:30pm with the hope of catching listeners at home. We opened the program by introducing the aims and objectives of WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com West Africa Chapter. Our main topic was based on general acceptance and tolerance of every human

being regardless of the age, religion, race, tribe, sexuality and gender. We raised awareness on the impact of acceptance and tolerance of all people as this can contravene traditional and societal norms. For example, in Sierra Leone inter-religious marriage is prohibited between Islam and Christianity, which are the two main religions. Likewise, in the area of sexuality, marriages of same sex couples are highly problematic. The advocacy sessions were geared towards promoting peace, respect and understanding, as we believe that this will enhance a sustainable platform for the attainment of equal rights and tolerance for all.

Towards the end of the radio programs callers shared the following opinions:

- People hope the program will have ongoing and sustainable impacts.
- They thought the project was educational as it opened peoples' minds towards general acceptance and tolerance.
- Some people did approve of the project because of perceived lack of relevance to their own lives

In conclusion, there seemed to be obvious support for the project to continue, and strive for increased peace, respect and understanding amongst everyone regardless of age, gender, tribe and sexuality.

9. HIV/AIDS/STD/Is prevention and control information session.

WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com West Africa Chapter held a one day HIV/AIDS information session at the Charlotte Primary School on 23rd September 2009 at 2:00pm. The HIV/AIDS information session took one hour. We gathered 25 young people from different schools, communities, Colleges and Universities with the purpose of informing the group about the dangers of HIV/AIDS and other STDs.



During this meeting a local health professional, Dr. Baryoh, taught young people about the reality of HIV/AIDS and safe sex practices. At the end of Dr. Baryoh's presentation participants had the opportunity to asked questions, and receive informed answers. Participants were also able to engage in Voluntary Confidential Counselling Testing

(VCCT) services at Dr. Baryoh's Surgery to know their HIV status within one month. At the end of the session participants expressed their gratitude for the opportunity.

After the HIV/AIDS information session, participants were able to visit the



Charlotte Water Falls as a group. Other actions held throughout the day included peer-to-peer interaction and focused group discussions. We were also able to network with each other through getting-to-know you type games and discussions. We are excited to have

these young people supporting our HIV/AIDS campaign because we believe they have a pivotal role to play in disseminating accurate HIV/AIDS information within our society.

At the end of the HIV/AIDS information session we developed a brochure with the help of Dr. Baryoh to further the campaign on HIV/AIDS in schools and the local community. We distributed 100 copies of the information brochure.

We were also able to host a series of sensitization campaigns with young people in schools during assembly presentations and with the community through drama sensitization.

10. Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) Sierra Leone Chapter.

On the 8th September 2009, WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com West Africa Chapter expressed a letter of interest to the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP). GCAP confirmed the membership of WCWGM on the 8th October 2009. GCAP is a coalition of youth groups, women's groups, Faith Based Organization, CBOs, CSOs, local and international NGOs who come together to campaign against poverty, advocate and lobby the government of it's commitment in implement the MDGs. We were invited to participate in GCAP Sierra Leone Chapter planning meeting on 12th October.

In 2009 we were part of the GCAP stand up campaign.



Denzil Kargbo and Neyorlyn Williams represented the organization in this year's GCAP celebration on the 17th October 2009, GCAP rally in Freetown attracted faith based groups, women's groups, pupils from primary schools, students from secondary and tertiary institutions, CBO, CSO, NGO, state institutions and the media.

All of these groups were encouraged to stand up individually, collectively and speak out against poverty. The procession in Freetown kicked off from two fronts: participants from the East started at Up-Gun round about, whilst those from the West end of the city started from the National Stadium. Both processions/groups converged at the Victoria Park centre of Freetown.



The processions were led by brass bands and megaphones were used to communicate this year's theme message to participants and bystanders. The participants wore t-shirts that said "Stand Up and Speak Out Against Poverty". Participants also sang anti-corruption songs and slogans as they marched along the streets of the city. Banners, flyers and placards bearing different messages were also on display.

The purpose of the event was to create public awareness and draw the Government's and partners' attention to the effect of poverty on the people. The rally climaxed with the reading of GCAP position statement to the crowd. The position statement was submitted to the Government of Sierra Leone as a reminder of the Government's commitment towards the MDGs and the eradication of extreme poverty.

KEY RESULT / IMPACT ACHIEVED

Through the gender research conducted with marginalized young women in Sierra Leone, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Women of all backgrounds face severe sexual exploitation by men on a daily basis.
2. Sexual exploitation by men is one of the main obstacles to the success of women-run businesses.
3. Poverty causes women to be vulnerable to sexual exploitation because of the severe economic pressure to survive and take care of their families.
4. Most young women leave school because of teenage and unwanted pregnancies.

5. Most young women and men do not have access to health care facilities.

After the gender empowerment workshops participants were able to understand the concept of gender empowerment, distinguish the difference between gender and sexual orientation; identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats through a SWOT analysis, network and partner to learn how to create successful entrepreneurship business plans.

We have spread HIV/AIDS campaign messages by disseminating our educational brochures in schools and communities. Many young people have recommended our brochures as being educational and accurate, suitable for all ages.

We were also able to set up a devoted team of volunteers from within communities, schools, colleges, and universities; to foster the campaign of peace and non-violence resulting from discrimination, affecting all people.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE WCWGM ACTION PLAN

In order to give WCWGM a strategic direction, we organized a three-day strategic planning session in Freetown. This session brought together staff and volunteers of WCWGM. The planning session started with a contextual analysis, SWOT analysis of the organization and an identification of strategic issues for future engagement. The 2010 action plan aims to provide realistic targets for the organization for a one-year period on critical national issues in response to the WCWGM vision, to promote peace, respect and understanding for loving couples worldwide.

NETWORKING AND COALITION BUILDING

WCWGM organized and attended a series of meetings and interactive sessions during the year aimed at bringing several organizations together to reflect on their work, share lessons learnt and to further strategic planning. These events have created a better understanding and cohesiveness within the coalitions, which is critical for the effectiveness and sustainability of WCWGM. The coordination team, schools groups and volunteers of WCWGM held Monthly General Meetings (MGM). These meetings helped to keep members up to date on critical issues affecting the well being of our community. Emergency meetings were held, albeit, irregularly to discuss and make decisions on emerging (unplanned) events. Working committees also met to work on tasks assigned to them.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

The commitment of WCWGM staff and volunteers varies depending on the importance the Chapter attaches to an issue. When an issue is considered to be at the centre of the organization's mandate, the members demonstrate maximum commitment to WCWGM activities around those issues.

The leadership of the organization has a huge role to play to further enhance the effectiveness of WCWGM. We found out that most staff and volunteers care very little about the effectiveness of the organization's work and activities implemented. Many staff and volunteers have left the organization to seek paid employment opportunities.

Government functionaries and other duty bearers are not as antagonistic as the organization thought them to be, and there is added value in working with them. The assumption that State actors are not willing to work on LGBTQ human rights is critical and not totally correct. Indeed, there are those who will never accommodate LGBTQ people, but there are equally some others in positions of authority who have demonstrated unwavering interest in not only working with LGBTQ organizations, but in creating lasting partnerships with them as well. Even though Government supporters are viewed as having betrayed their duties, there appears to be a gradual increase in support for issues concerning the LGBTQ community. This support has resulted in improved access to LGBTQ related information. However, there is still room for improvement.

The absence of a detailed work plan for WCWGM is having some serious impact on the work schedule of organization staff and volunteers. Most of WCWGM activities coincide with other schools and community functions. This sometimes makes it difficult to get the right people to attend certain events since those who are most suitable are not always available. This minimizes the quality of knowledge acquired from these events and its dissemination within the community.

The confidence of workshop participants has built up over time and WCWGM participants are not empowered enough to engage in meaningful dialogue with others in their community or make quality contributions in public events.

WCWGM could be more effective if there was coordination team based at a permanent office space. An accessible team could propel the work of the organization in Sierra Leone and better coordinate efforts with partner organisations. With no specific office space at present, correspondences are responded to late, and on occasion, not responded to at all. Also, coordinating the different governance/functions/campaigns is problematic. New areas of funding are not adequately tapped and membership drives across the country and outside is experiencing slow growth.

Recommendations

1. A Memorandum of Understanding/Cooperation spelling out clearly roles and responsibilities, as well as basic rules of operations and procedures, be developed and signed between WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com Global Chapter and West Africa Chapter.
2. The coordinating team should share reports and other vital information directly with international partners, donors and aid agencies to keep them abreast of what is happening. This could fill the gaps leading to funding opportunities.
3. WCWGM needs more in-kind and cash contributions from donors and aid agencies for project implementation and general operational support i.e. office rent, office equipment, a digital camera, a stipend for staff and volunteers. This will help us to run the affairs of the organization effectively and efficiently as well as ensure a higher quality of project delivery.
4. WCWGM should continue to involve state actors and international partner organizations in their activities from planning through to execution. Involving valuable stakeholders in the planning of activities will further enhance the credibility and support of activism towards equality as well as the relationships with partners.
5. The organization should undertake reflective planning that would see it coming up with a detailed work plan that will cover the whole year. This activity plan should be reviewed quarterly or half yearly.
6. International partners should continue to support learning and developmental events within and outside the country for young people to be empowered as change agents. These learning events could take the form of training workshops; learning/exchange visits, study sessions, sharing of information and seminars.

ANNEXES

LIST OF ACRONYMS

PCI	Peace Child International
ENCISS	Enhancing the Interaction and Interface Between Civil Societies and the State to Improve Poor People's Lives.
GCAP	Global Call to Action Against Poverty
WCWGM	WhyCantWeGetMarried.Com
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
BTC	Be the Change!
AGSLL	Amazing Group Sierra Leone Limited
SWOT	Strength Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats
MGM	Monthly General Meeting
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer.
IGLYO	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Youth and Student Queer Organization
LGBIT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Inter-sex and Transgender
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
STD	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
USA	United States of America
VCCT	Voluntary Confidential Counselling and Testing

Credits:

WCWGM Advisors

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Miss Jillian Erica Lewis (UNDP)

Mr. Babajide Olopade (Amazing Group Sierra Leone Ltd)

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Mr. Bart Abbott (Emerging Humanity USA)	Photographer, Research Consultant and Editor
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Mr. Ishmaila Bangura	Accountant
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Miss Neyorlyn Williams	Media Coordinator
Mrs. Mariama Woodie	Outreach Officer
Miss. Sylvia Deen	School Campaign Coordinator
Miss. Janet Conteh	Organizing officer

Gender Empowerment Workshop Participants List

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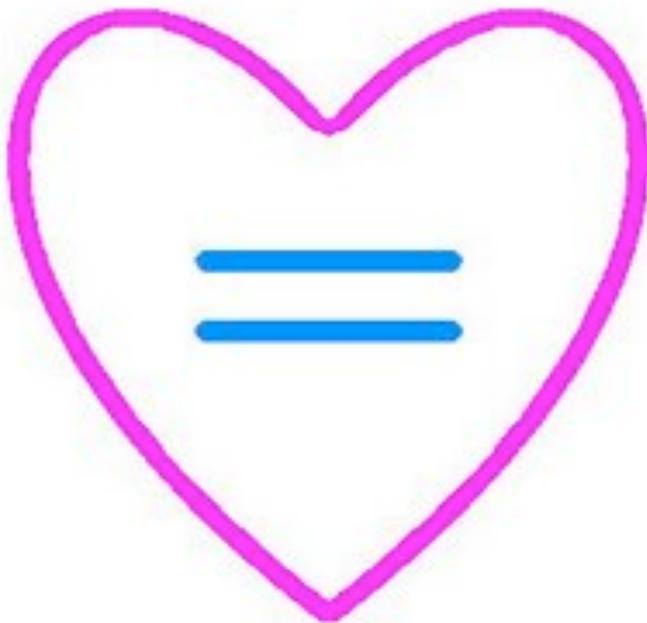
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