Since last year, Global Communities and its staff have been on the front lines of the fight against Ebola in Liberia. Working directly with communities on education and prevention practices, in addition to coordinating burial teams and a cemetery for victims of the disease, our work played an important role in containing Ebola and helping dramatically reduce the number of new cases.

But Global Communities’ presence in Liberia began long before the current Ebola outbreak. With a presence in Liberia since 2004, we have worked on a variety of projects - from helping women entrepreneurs to helping former child soldiers reintegrate into society - that have improved the livelihoods of countless Liberians.

**Goldman Sachs’ 10,000 Women**

From 2009 to 2015, Global Communities partnered with Goldman Sachs’ 10,000 Women initiative to train underserved Liberian women in business management. During that period, the program achieved its goal, training 278 Liberian women entrepreneurs in a thirteen week curriculum on practical business and management skills. The program also offered one-on-one business advisory, access to a dedicated resource center, interactive learning forums, networking opportunities, and links to capital.

Globally, 10,000 Women partners have reported data showing immediate and sustained improvements in women’s businesses and, 30 months after graduation, 81 percent of surveyed participants reported increased revenues and 71 percent added new jobs to their businesses.

In Liberia, the program helped a variety of innovative women entrepreneurs, like Agnes Kamara, who owns a garbage collection business and with help from 10,000 Women, managed to get her finances in order, expanded to include recyclables and therefore hired new employees to meet growing demand. Additionally, Idell Blake Johnson entered into the male-dominated world of woodworking, and with the help of 10,000 Women, learned the basics of bookkeeping and marketing. She plans on expanding her business and helping more women break into the woodworking industry. Another entrepreneur, Kabeh Sumbo, was so successful in her business to provide locally processed Liberian oils (palm oil, palm kernel oil, coconut oil, and tobogee oil) to hotels, restaurants, and the general public, she was invited by Goldman Sachs to speak at a Clinton Global Initiative event in New York City. While there, she had the opportunity to meet First Lady Michele Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

**Youth Engagement in Service Delivery (YES)**

Combining ongoing efforts to improve both the sanitation situation in urban communities with the need to boost youth employment, Global Communities implemented the Youth Engagement in Service Delivery (YES) program in Ghana and Liberia. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the YES program helped to build the capacity of local youth organizations and trained youth for employment in the solid waste sector. In the end, 27 community based enterprises were mobilized in the waste collection sector, with several enterprises providing brand new services including recycling sorting and composting.

In addition to helping stimulate the solid waste sector, the program also focused on building the capacity and life skills of youth with training in savings and financial literacy, basic business and employability skills.
Partnership with Monrovia City Corporation

In addition to its work in sanitation as part of YES, Global Communities partnered with the Monrovia City Corporation (MCC), the governing body of Greater Monrovia, to help improve capacity for the city to handle municipal waste. With funding provided by the World Bank, Global Communities and the MCC helped create a variety of trainings for community based enterprises that work in waste collection. This included a two-day training workshop on waste collection business record-keeping and reporting, practical waste auditing exercises and waste chain field work. At the same time, Global Communities helped the MCC improve its own capacity to manage and monitor the contractors it works with on waste collection. By improving the MCC’s overall governing ability, the program was able to achieve a much more sustainable impact on garbage collection in Monrovia.

Liberia Enterprise Development Finance Corporation (LEDFC)

Small- and medium- enterprises fuel economic growth across the world, but in developing economies these firms often lack access to credit, and banks and other institutions lack the sophistication and willingness to lend to such firms. To help address these concerns in Liberia, Global Communities, RLJ Companies, and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) partnered to create the Liberia Enterprise Development Finance Corporation (LEDFC). Designed to ensure that Liberia’s private sector becomes an engine for growth and sustainable development, LEDFC provides technical assistance and business capital to small and medium-sized private enterprises in Liberia.

After proving the viability of a SME lending facility, LEDFC was successfully transferred to the private sector, with the Ghanaian-based Ghana Growth Fund Company taking control of operations in June 2013.

Helping Ex-Combatants

In the wake of almost 14 continuous years of civil war, Liberia was awash in ex-combatants, many of them children, with a history of violence, a lack of employable skills, and an uphill climb to reintegrate into normal civilian life. To help address the needs of this at risk population, Global Communities partnered with the World Bank and Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) to help develop a better understanding of the best ways to help these important beneficiaries. Working with a local NGO, the program helped set up an experiment in which some former soldiers received counseling and training, while some received cash payments. The goal of the experiment is to determine which intervention would be most effective in helping former soldiers reintegrate into society. By tracking the relative success of the individuals who received the payments versus those who received training, it can be determined which system is more efficient at helping former soldiers. By creating an experiment to better understand the role cash transfers can play in helping individuals, the program not only helped improve the lives of these former soldiers, but also provided valuable information on what works in development.

Global Communities is an international non-profit organization that works closely with communities worldwide to bring about sustainable changes that improve the lives and livelihoods of the vulnerable. Development is not something we do for people; it is something we do with them. We believe that the people who understand their needs best are the people of the community itself. Please visit our website at www.globalcommunities.org for more information.