



Norad



Peace Child International  
empowering young people

Be The Change Academy West Africa Network  
Narrative Report 2016-17



A man in a brown jacket and red scarf is holding a large white cloth with a drawing of a person and a map of Africa. He is standing in front of a group of people, and the background shows a corrugated metal roof and some green plants.

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Above: Customer Service Tool demonstrating bad customer service

## Introduction

This project represents a continuation and extension of the Be The Change Academy West Africa Network project. The objective of the original contract was to improve the livelihoods of disadvantaged young women in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. This project ran from 2013-15 and focused around a dedicated training approach aimed at increasing entrepreneurial skills. This initial project saw some encouraging results in creating employment for young women and saw significant increases across several livelihood indicators including income, skill levels and health. During the first project we identified and highlighted the key lessons learnt on delivering entrepreneurship training to disadvantaged women, who in the West African context are largely illiterate. An extension grant was awarded in 2015, followed by a further extension from October 2016 to April 2017. This report complies the results and the activities completed for the 2016/2017 extension grant.

Based on the lessons learnt from the original 2013-

2015 project PCI adapted our training approach to be based entirely on images and interactive games. This approach was developed and tested during the activities of the 2016/17 extension grant.

The programme aims to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable young women in Sierra Leone and Guinea. Vulnerable young women remain entrenched in poverty, without the capacities or network to take advantage of the opportunities they have. This aim is achieved through training and guiding the young women to develop business management skills that they will be able to use to manage their own growing businesses and improve their livelihoods.

The project targeted Sierra Leone and Guinea, as the initial extension funding was allocated solely to our partner in Liberia. However PCI provided \$10,000 of co-funding to our partner in Liberia to keep the project running.



## Background

**Peace Child International (PCI) is a youth-focused international NGO. We organise regular World Youth Congresses where young people voice the ideas and concerns that we use to develop our goals and strategies. One of the key considerations that young people raise at these events is the problem of unemployment.**

In response, PCI developed the innovative Be The Change Academy (BTCA) business development support approach, which integrates training, financing and mentoring to help vulnerable young people start, manage and grow their own businesses, creating jobs for themselves and others and positively contributing to economic development and poverty reduction.

The BTCA was successfully piloted in Kenya and further funding was secured for India. In 2012, in partnership with our local youth network in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, we developed a project plan for the Be The Change Academy West Africa project. Funding was secured from NORAD and activities launched in 2013. This project enabled PCI to further test and develop the BTCA methodology into new environments and economies.

## Activities Completed

**The project was launched in October 2016, MoU's were signed with the implementing partners in Guinea and Sierra Leone. A recruitment process was launched to hire facilitators in Guinea and Sierra Leone. Four facilitators were recruited in each country, in total 6 men and 2 women.**

### Preperation

In October work started to revise the original training methodology, incorporating lessons learnt and the feedback from participants of the original 2013-15 grant. A new step-by-step training process was outlined and an idea for each training tool was developed. The step-by-step process recognised that some participants struggle to identify viable business plans without support, in the revised methodology the first training tools focus on identifying business ideas.

Participants are encouraged to consider several different elements in order to select and choose a viable business plan. These elements include market demand, possible input/support businesses and the entrepreneur's skills and capacities.

In November the training tools were further developed and an illustrator was hired to fully visualise and draw the final tools. The illustrator made drafts of each image and worked closely with PCI to refine and improve the interpretation of the images. Towards the end of the month PCI's Programme Manager and Technical Advisor undertook a field trip to train the project facilitators in using the new tools. During the training the facilitators gave their feedback and ideas for further improving the interpretation and relevance of the images. These comments were shared with the illustrator who revised the images accordingly.

In addition to this, and in close collaboration with the partners, a targeting strategy was developed for each country. This dedicated strategy was designed to ensure that the most marginalised and vulnerable



young women were identified and encouraged to enrol in the training. In Sierra Leone the targeting strategy included analysing participants education, we prioritized communities with only a recently opened Primary School, meaning that access to education was limited before the school opened. Initial scoping work was undertaken to identify communities that meet the targeting criteria around Kenema. This led to the selection of four



communities. In Guinea the team firstly identified the impoverished areas in Conakry where there is an established market with young women trading outside, often walking around selling things from buckets carried on their heads.

In December PCI's team and the illustrator completed the design of the total pack of images. The partners undertook the participant recruitment. In Sierra Leone visits to the selected towns or communities where undertaken where discussions were held with local key stakeholders, local community leaders, locally established women's groups and with young women directly. Once these

meetings had been conducted AWISH submitted a report to PCI suggesting the breakdown of the training in the different communities as some had higher population levels and therefore required more training groups to be formed in that area. This report was approved by PCI and AWISH began to recruit young women into the training. In Guinea a visit was undertaken to each of the identified areas and initial conversations were held with young women trading in these areas, market leaders and local authorities. Jatrophia S.A. then held a review and suggestions of the areas to target was submitted to PCI, who approved the recommendations. Jatrophia then started to recruit young women into the training, mostly using word of mouth promotion. A training group was established in each of the targeted areas.

PCI in close collaboration with our partners established terms of reference for an open bid for local artists to print the training tools. A strategy using rice sacks was put in place for durability, cost and ease reasons, as access to quality printing services onto plastic sheets is limited in Guinea and Sierra Leone. A closed offer was launched and three bids from local artists were received. The best offer, according to a jury comprised of our partners and PCI, was awarded the contract in each country. In Sierra Leone a youth-led business, Young Generation Artists, won the contract.

## Training

In January 2017, the final packs of training tools were delivered to our partners and a second field trip was undertaken by PCI to train the project facilitators in the second half of the methodology. Our partners then launched the training activities with each established training group. In Sierra Leone PCI Programme Manager participated in the start of the training activities to support the facilitators in the practical use of the tools.

A detailed baseline was undertaken to collect data against the indicators in the results framework monitoring, using two sample groups, young people targeted by the project, and a control group. We



have defined several measurable indicators based on this that will be used to measure improvements in the livelihoods of young women. These included monthly cash incomes, spending on healthcare, employment status, skills level and self-confidence.

In February the training activities continued. PCI provided support to our partners in using the tools, and the partners adapted their delivery to be locally relevant, based on their knowledge of the local communities, culture and livelihood activities. This was to ensure that the training was run effectively. Each training session consisted of working on between two to five tools, and could run between one to two hours in duration. Each training group organised the training with the trainer so that the young women were still able to work and complete their household responsibilities. This flexible approach contributed to the low drop out rate.



In March the training activities continued. Detailed discussions were held between PCI and our partners to plan the savings and loan group activities. It was discovered that a high percentage of participants were already members of existing informal saving and loan groups this enabled us to link into established networks.

In Sierra Leone the activities were delayed because the recruited artist was struggling to complete the complete kit of training tools in time. Also the high enrolment rates meant that group sizes were large meaning that more time was needed on each tool to ensure the understanding of all participants. Therefore PCI and AWISH decided that in order to ensure the quality of the training and business plan development a decision was taken to halt the VSLA/Entrepreneur network set up. This was agreed as the creation of these networks must be driven and agreed by all the young women in the community and in terms of the time left to complete activities it could have been a major risk to the group's sustainability to facilitate the creation of such groups and not to have been able to support, or link the groups to another organisation, to guide these groups at their early stages.

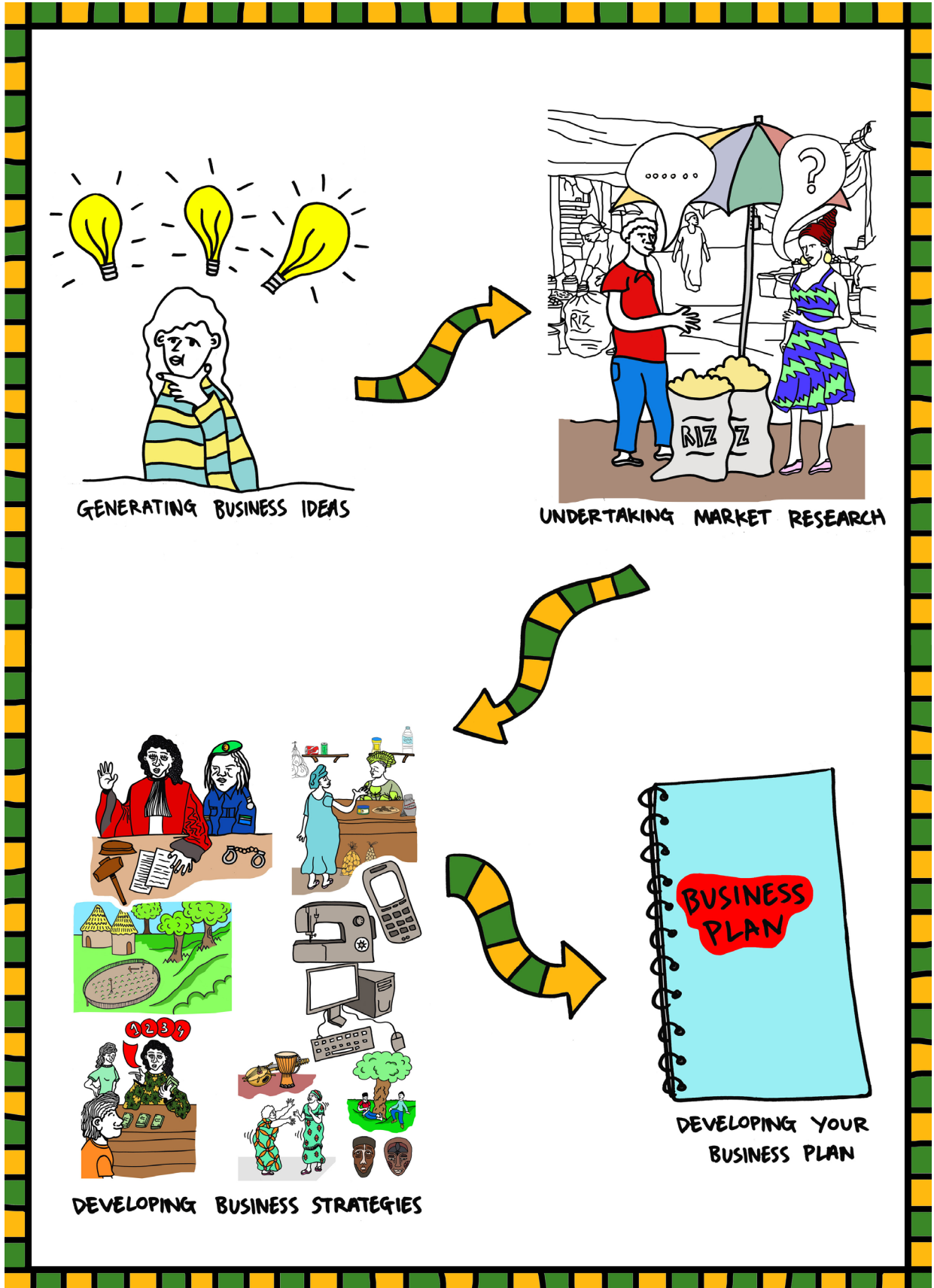
### Completion

In April the training activities came to a close. Jatropha offer a dedicated saving product targeted at young women to support them to save together and build up capital that they can then later invest in business activities, as part of their micro-finance product portfolio. This product aims to place young women into groups and encourages them to save a small amount each month. A joint account is opened and monthly payments are made into it. The saved amount is regularly withdrawn and allocated to a member for her use. This is essentially a formalised version of rotating savings groups that are common across West Africa. The bank account provides protection to each member's savings. A regular problem with informal rotating savings clubs is the misuse of the saved money by group leaders, leading to people losing their savings and having no recourse to reclaim them. Jatropha's product has all the advantages of an informal group but protects each member's savings from loss through misuse.

During April and the first week of May project wrap up was undertaken with the final M+E surveys completed, the graduation ceremonies were held and preparation for the audit was completed.



# The Be the Change Academy Process







## Outline of the Revised Training Methodology

**Building from the original modules developed between 2013-15, PCI adapted and re designed its training materials to better meet the needs of our target group of marginalised disadvantaged young women.**

The training consists of four steps, excluding an introductory phase to introduce the project and the training.

### **Introductory Phase: Introduction to the training**

The objective of this step is to ensure people's expectations of the BTCA training match those of what the project is able to offer. A key issue PCI faced

in the past was the expectation of the participants to either receive financial incentives or support to launch their business. A series of tools and games are used to set people's expectations about the training, establish what support they will receive, and what support they won't receive, explain what the goals of the training are and introduce some of the key concepts that will be used throughout the training. Particularly the six elements of business development are introduced: Economic / Market; Legal / Political; Natural Environment; Technology; Management; Social / Cultural. This section was designed to help the participants understand that the training will only be effective if they to actively engage in it and understand the value in it.

### Step 1: Generating a Business Idea

This section was a major point of difference from the previous training, however a lot of the training ideas used in the previous training were adapted to create these tools. Between 2013-15 we encouraged all participants to enter the training with a business idea. This had two unintended consequences; firstly it marginalised those who didn't have a business idea, and secondly it could lead to a big demotivation of those with a clear business idea that is then proved unviable during market research. The revised approach focuses on the skills the participant has and the approach needed to develop a new business. The training then took a pause to give the participants time to generate several different business ideas that will be examined in more detail during step 2.

### Step 2: Undertaking Market Research

Once the participants have identified between 3-5 business ideas, step 2, undertaking market research is launched. By having at least 3 business ideas that are explored during the market research phase, enables the participant to select the best business that will lead to the greatest increase in their livelihood. Some of the key considerations include: Supply Chain Analysis using a picture based game, the 5Ps of Marketing, Analysis of Options for

Funding your Business, focused on formal (banks, MFIs etc) and informal (saving groups, local money lenders, family etc) options. Participants define what information they need to research, what possible source/informant has this information, what they need to do it and develop an action plan to collect the missing information. A break in the training is then taken while participants undertake their market research.

### Step 3: Developing Business Strategies

Upon completion of the market research, each participant selects the most viable business idea as the business that they will then go on to launch. This section is designed for the participant to conduct a detailed analysis of the proposed business and

develop strategies for each of the six elements of business development. A detailed budget is then established. This step includes the most traditional training, as participants learn how to develop a budget, calculate profit/loss and do a cash flow analysis to determine when additional financing is needed. Participants are then supported to do this for their business idea in order to examine the viability of the business and to develop a financing strategy.

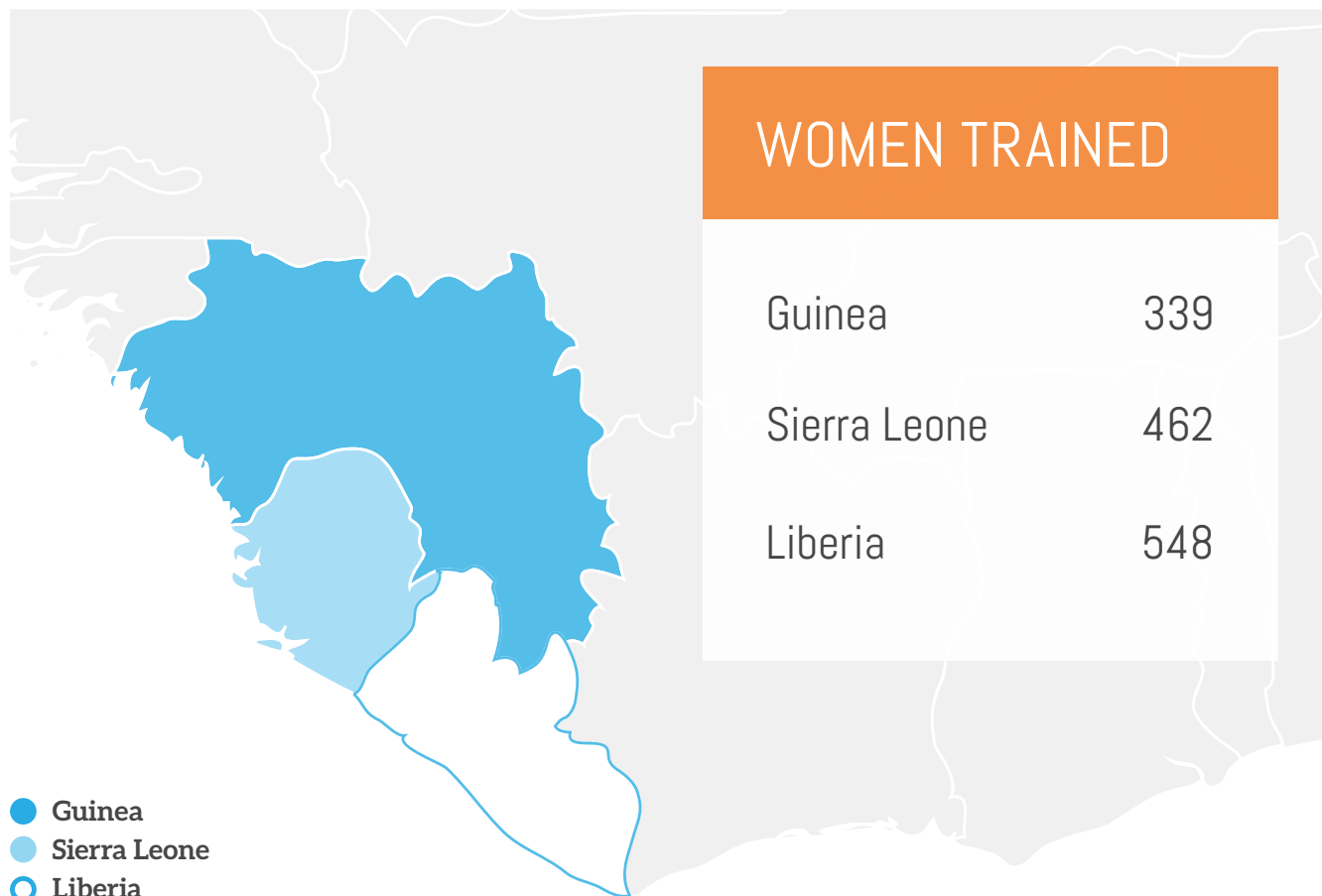
### Step 4: Developing Your Business Plan

Once all the necessary information has been collected and analysed in Steps 2&3, Step 4 of the training is to combine this information into a concise business plan. The business plan provides the detail of their proposed business together with robust evidence proving its viability. The key concept here is that the business plan is of value to the participant and contains information that will help guide them to create or implement this business. The simpler the business plan format the simpler it is for the participants to complete and use in the future. As such, a simple format was created, intended to be formatted like a vaccination booklet, something that can be easily kept and referred to, consisting of key points such as the marketing strategy and financial considerations. A secondary objective of the business plan is to provide a document to support any applications for a loan.

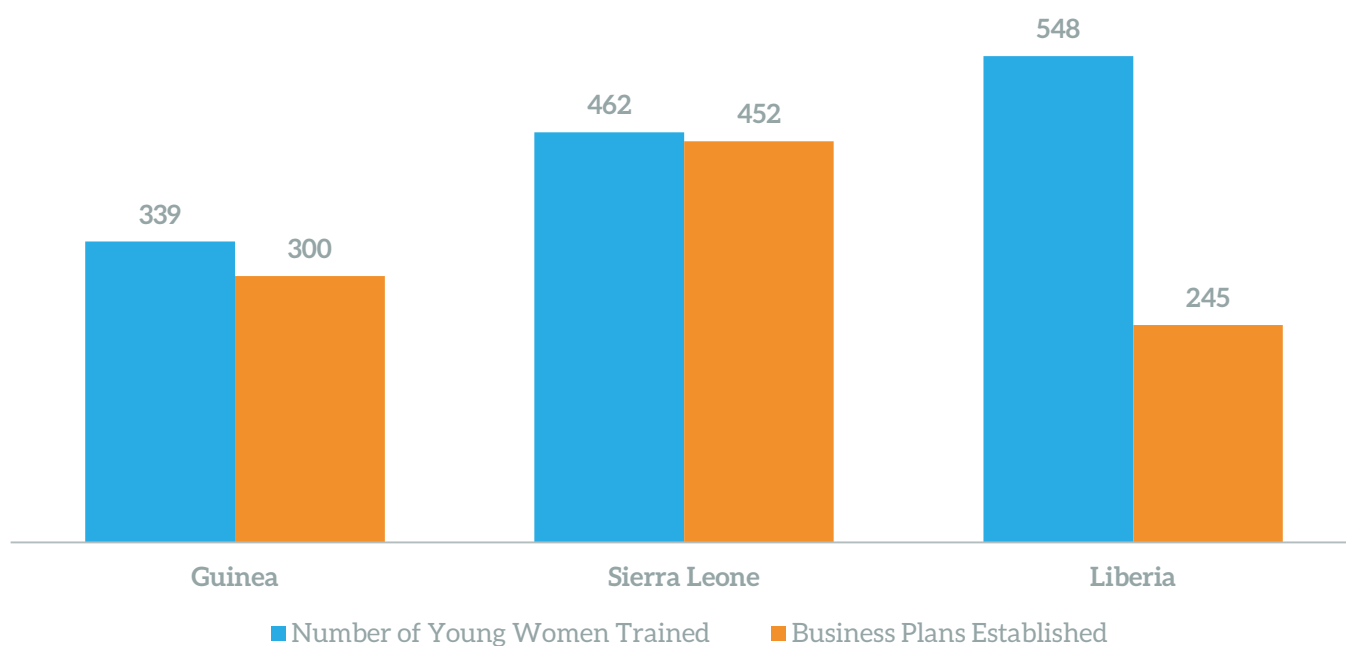
Within these five steps PCI developed 29 tools and used 143 images to facilitate the participants learning during the course of the training. These images and tools were reviewed twice during the project once following the initial training of trainers in November and again following the second training of training in January. During this process we engaged our in country teams to identify and analysis images to identify areas for improvement. We redesigned the tools accordingly to make sure that these images would be effective during the training and relevant to each training location. PCI recognises that the development of the image-based tool is continuous and that it will only improve with more use.

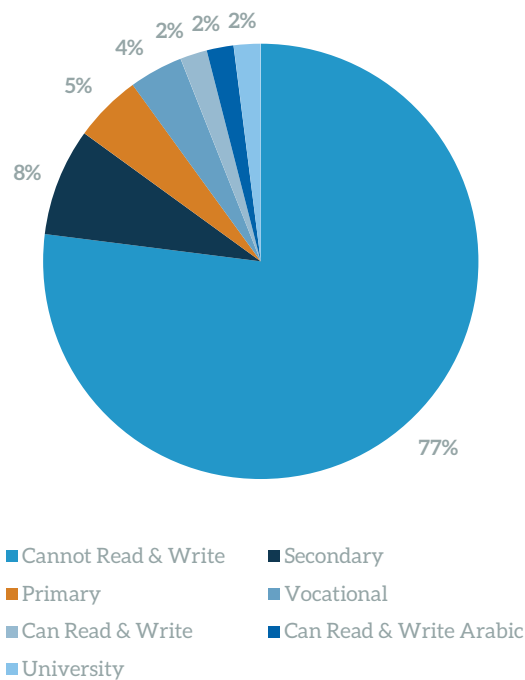


## Project Impact, Outcomes and Outputs

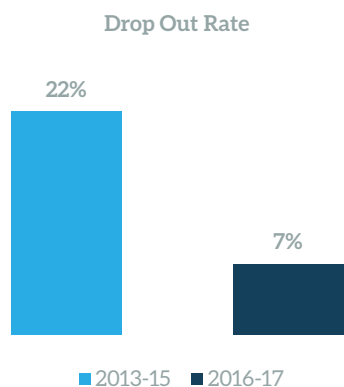


- Guinea
- Sierra Leone
- Liberia





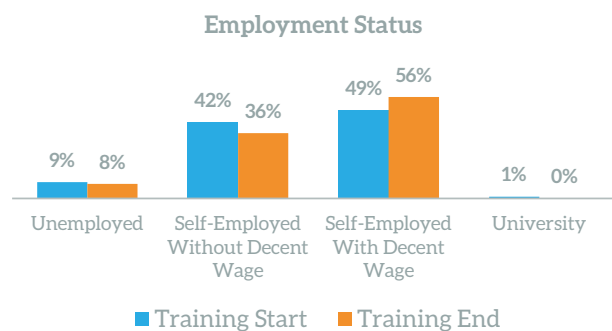
The project was successful in targeting our key participant's illiterate young women. As shown above education levels of the young women 77% were unable to read and write. PCI see this as a major success in our abilities to reach those that are normally unreachable by Business development training.



Given that PCI made the conscious effort to target more disadvantaged young women, we could have expected a higher dropout rate for our 2016-17 training. However as shown above we have lowered our dropout rate by 15%. This is the result of the newly designed innovative and engaging image based training tools designed for the latest NORAD project. This statistic is backed up by findings from the focus group discussions where

young women themselves said the images were easy to understand, the games fun to participate in and that they always saw value in continuing. Anecdotes from the trainers also highlight the effectiveness of the images in promoting understanding. They would regularly show an image and a member of the group would be able to explain the image correctly immediately.

The trainers and coordinators of our partners were very complementary of the image-based tools, stating that it not only generated a huge interest due to its relatively novel approach but also encouraged participation because the tools were easily accessible and to understand. The development of the step-by-step methodology was easy to arrange and organise sessions with participants, which fits into their schedules. These all promoted continuous engagement with the project

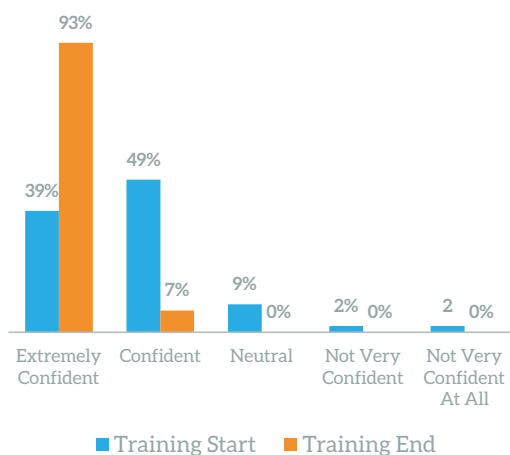


and was the main reason behind the low drop out rate. Given the short time frame of the training, there are encouraging trends appearing that highlight the effect of the training. As shown above, unemployment has reduced and there has been an increase in people being self-employed with a decent salary from 48% to 56% at training end.

One of the major changes has been the self-perception of the participants towards their own abilities to start and run a successful business. Over the course the training the participant's confidences increased greatly, as shown below, increasing from 39% being extremely confident to 93%. This is significant change in the young women's perceptions of themselves and should empower them to become successful entrepreneurs, creating a sustainable livelihood for themselves.

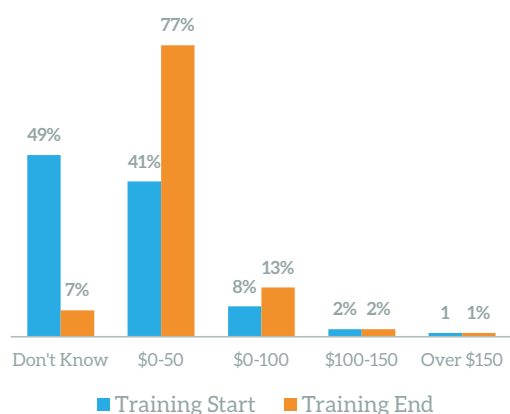


**How Confident Are you that you could start & Run a Successful Business?**



The training was successful in enabling the young women to be able to determine their incomes. Businesses are often run by mixing personal and business finances, making it hard for managers to determine how much they have earned. This normal practice also puts the business at risk if the manager goes through a personal crisis as the capital of the business is used to cover personal needs, putting long term livelihood security at risk. Understanding the split between the business and personal, and ensuring that entrepreneurs take a salary from the business, has been a key impact of the BTCA program. This is demonstrated by the drop of participants who were not able to calculate their incomes, as shown below, from 48% at the start of the project to 7% at project end. Simple financial skills are hugely important to make a business sustainable, and therefore provided a sustainable long term livelihood, as it allows the young women to understand both their expenditure, profit and salary.

**Income**



The qualitative information collected suggests that the young women that have taken part in the training have been able to immediately put into practice their new skills. Several women testified to having changed their business after completing the training, with early signs that profits have increased. One participant in Largo, Sierra Leone, started out selling shoes, however she often struggled to sell her stock. During the BTCA she reached out to her community, during the market research step, and asked them what they wanted? Using her findings she was able to change her stock and now she regularly sells out in a few days, meaning that she is now earning more. This is just one example of the many similar stories that we have seen from the participants of the training.

Based on these stories and the huge increases in self-confidence in managing a business, PCI are confident that participants will be able to increase their profits and hence their incomes in the coming years.

## Liberia

During the course of this project, PCI provided financial support to our partner in Liberia. Trainees were recruited from three Schools, one vocational College and one community. This targeting varies from PCI work with Guinea and Sierra Leone but we were excited for the opportunity to work within schools and vocational training establishments and test the new training methodology. Many schools and vocational training establishments fail to provide adequate entrepreneurship training to students. Our partner reports that the use of the new tools was successful but also stated that if we were to maintain this as our key audience some of the images tools and training concepts would have to be updated for this different target audience.

# Case Studies

## Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Gbessia, Conakry

The project targeted the area of Gbessia in Conakry. It is one of the poorest areas in the city, with many women struggling to survive selling anything to earn enough to pay for rent, food, clothes and school fees for their children. The project trainers started recruiting women in the area and mobilised a large interest. Several meetings were held with the women, their families and community leaders to promote the programme, ensure recruitment into the training and organise the training sessions with the relevant stakeholders.



The training was very successful, with only one recorded drop out. During the training the women became close and used to working with each other. At the completion they decided to create an association so that they could continue working together and supporting each other. Jatropa are now supporting them to go through the necessary legal process to get registered. This group will also act as a rotating saving and credit group and will open a bank account with Jatropa to support this. The process remains ongoing and PCI are convinced that the group will be a vital support network for the young women entrepreneurs.

## Rayon de Fille (RAFIGuinée)



Aicha Diaby enrolled in the BTCA in 2014, without a fixed idea of a business, but she was always interested in beauty products. She was struggling to earn money and was reliant on family members to support her. During the training she identified shea butter products as a really good locally made cosmetic product that has a high local demand. Through a family tie she knew she could purchase high quality shea butter, from the interior of Guinea and through her market research, she knew where to purchase good packaging and access labelling services to ensure her product was well received in her target market. She came up with a name, created a logo and launched the business. Now several years has passed and her business continues to grow and she is now financially independent and able to support her family members when they are going through tough times, in the same way they previously supported her. She recently decided to create a Facebook page and use social media to promote her business, where she is now active in promoting women's health issues, see (<https://www.facebook.com/rafiguinee/>).





## Lessons Learnt

### Participant targeting

We have found it is highly effective to target and train the most vulnerable in society so that they can step up out of poverty. It is equally important young women can access support after the training ends. We have learnt that it is most effective to link into local informal institutions, such as community groups like existing saving groups, and train the whole group, instead of random recruitment and creation of new groups. It would also make facilitating and supporting the linking activities, possible financing of the VSLAs/ Entrepreneur networks and facilitating the start of entrepreneurial mutual peer-to-peer support within the group more effective, as groups of women that formed independently have substantial social capital,

trust and they are often used to supporting each other.

However PCI also recognises that this strategy can also isolate and marginalise those women who are not members of any of those local institutions. Groups are often formed along social and family lines, and outsiders to this are often the most marginalised in society. PCI plan to overcome this by establishing two types of training groups, those women who are already members of a local institutions who will all be trained together, and then forming training groups of young women who are currently excluded from these local institutions in the hope that they build up trust amongst each other and then are motivated to work together in the future, like the Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Gbessia.

## Business management

One of the key challenges that graduates have faced is in managing their businesses, because of the high illiteracy levels. Poor business management can easily lead to business failure. The results from the monitoring and evaluation survey have shown that only 20% of young women participants are confident in business management records, such as stock taking, recording expenditures etc.

The use of mobile phone technology provides an attractive solution to this problem. Most of the smartphone and feature phones available in our target area have preinstalled voice recorders. This provides a possible solution for the challenge of managing a business for illiterate people. Our monitoring and evaluation data shows that 18% of young women trained own a smartphone and 53% own a feature phone. 56% of young women stated that their phone already has voice recording applications pre-installed.

PCI are investigating the possibility of developing a Smartphone / Tablet Application that would enable the participants to enter key data on day to day business, using voice recording, in order to track stock, sales, profits and even salary, to understand the business's overall status. The application would ideally have voice to text capacities so that it can automatically calculate profits, expected cash / bank balances. PCI believe that such an application would be accessible and easy to use for even the most vulnerable in society. Developing this application will be impossible without significant financial investment and PCI are now researching ways to do this. Our partner in Guinea, Jatropha, have recently started selling tablets on credit to university students and PCI believe a similar business model whereby tablets or smartphones with the developed application pre-installed are sold directly to the user on credit through micro-finance institutions will both be able to cover costs and lead to a large impact on the livelihoods of some of the most vulnerable and impoverished people in the world. Once developed the application will significantly improve the BTCA process.

In the short term PCI will start experimenting with

voice recording for business management using the feature and smart phones that participants already own. A set of training tools will be developed and integrated into the BTCA training model. By doing this PCI will be able to learn, with participants, how best to utilise and adapt the idea to different types of businesses and markets.



## Tailoring the BTCA Methodology to Target Different Groups

Youth Crime Watch Liberia are successfully experimenting with a mixed curriculum of some of the image-based tools with some of the written based lessons in TVET and high schools in Liberia. This mixed curriculum was developed in partnership with PCI. Their target group often have at least basic literacy skills a mixed approach can lead to better results.

## Expanding the BTCA Using Technology

Due to the uptake and increased availability of technology to the mass market in our target regions, PCI are keen to investigate the new opportunities that are opening up in support of digital technology. We believe that due to the new adaptations of our training materials that are highly image based, there is an opportunity to develop an interactive training course application for tablets or mobile phones. This could enable us to reach far greater number of participants at a much lower cost of intervention, that in the future would enable PCI to cover its costs through the income generated from the sale of the application.









## Conclusions

The project has enabled PCI to develop and field test an innovative business development support approach targeting some of the most vulnerable young women in the world. This has proven to be highly successful, encouraging participation and promoting increased understanding of our target group. The success of the image based training tools far exceeded our expectations at the beginning of the programme. We have been able to take some key learning's from using the designed tools and we continue to strive to make improvements to the training course, to increase its impact.

PCI and our partners were able to exceed our targets in number of young women trained, within the

allocated budget. Project outcomes have largely been met, however due to the short time of the project some indicators have not been achieved, especially in regards to the creation of saving and loan groups and entrepreneur networks.

This project has continued a successful programme, expanding to reach more vulnerable young women in West Africa with business development support. The monitoring and evaluation data shows encouraging results that PCI are confident will lead to significant increases in incomes and reduced poverty of vulnerable young women and their families in West Africa over the next few years and be a catalytic change in their lives.





## About Peace Child

Peace Child International was founded in 1982. We harness the energy, creativity and skills of young people throughout the world to solve some of our most pressing problems – initially peace-building during the Cold War; then environmental degradation and the struggle for sustainable development, and now youth unemployment – both in developing and developed countries.

For more than 30 years, our programmes have been shaped, driven and run by young people, and that's what makes them so effective.

We are currently working to close the skills gap by improving youth employability, and we're helping young people create jobs through promoting entrepreneurship and supporting new business ventures.

We do this by providing education, training, mentorship and access to investment capital.

As an organisation in consultative status with the United Nations, we build strong partnerships through our biennial World Youth Congress to advise and advocate youth policy solutions to UN member states, as they make new global agreements on everything from climate change to conflict transformation and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Peace Child International is a UK registered charity (No. 1095189)