2017 COHORT
CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

STORIES OF CHANGE
ABOUT STORIES OF CHANGE

This publication showcases leadership stories from various communities within West Africa. The stories highlight the growth and influence of young West African leaders who continue to shape the development of their various organisations and communities. The publication reveals their abilities to lead themselves, lead others, transform organisations and influence society.

The publication is a product of CSLI organised by the West Africa Civil Society Institute with support from Ford Foundation West Africa and the Rockdale Foundation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The institute expresses its sincere gratitude to Samuel Owusu-Baafi and Maame Darkwaa Twum Barima for their commendable work in putting together this change stories publication. WACSI is also pleased to acknowledge staff members who coordinated this process including Charles Kojo Vandyck, Leandre Banon and Chamrid Kpadonou. The institute would like to thank Ford Foundation West Africa and the Rockdale Foundation for the technical and financial support throughout the process.

This publication was designed by: Chamrid Kpadonou, WACSI

ABOUT CSLI

The Civil Society Leadership Institute (CSLI) is designed to groom the next generation of leaders in civil society. It equips participating fellows with the skills and tools they need to create sustainability in their fields and places of work and amplify the effectiveness of their actions. It also designed to bring the present and future young leaders in civil society together to share ideas, build each other up, to construct a vibrant, resilient and effective civil society in West Africa. The programme is run in two phases, the training phase and mentorship/coaching phase. These phases together, provide the fellows with strong theoretical principles and experiential guidance to put their learning into practice.
A NEW DAWN OF LEADERSHIP

A CSLI STORY OF AUGUSTINE MACARTHY
“Barack Obama once said, ‘change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for and we are the change we seek.’ This gave me a clear sense of direction to make Education and Youth Empowerment-Sierra Leone (MEYE-SL) a better organisation,” Augustine Macarthy, the Executive Director, professed.

Augustine had blamed the challenges his organisation faced on his colleagues. Upon careful introspection, he realised that the dearth of his leadership had significantly contributed to their challenges.

He did not believe he possessed the requisite leadership skills to tackle them. This led Augustine to apply for WAC-

SI’s Civil Society Leadership Institute (CSLI) programme; to enhance his leadership skills to lead MEYE-SL better.

“I applied for the CSLI programme due to the challenges I faced in leading my team members, the delegation of their roles and the inadequate leadership skills I had in managing our organisation. I was anxious about transforming the leadership system within my organisation when I realised I was not well equipped to handle the day-to-day challenges MEYE-SL faced,” he confessed.

Augustine’s participation in the two-week leadership programme increased his understanding of the different aspects and styles of leadership. He was now better equipped to lead his organisation more effectively.
“The transformative leadership training model of CSLI has actually helped in building my leadership skills and potential particularly in productivity, management strategies and team building. It has refined my capabilities to be innovative in selecting the leadership styles to apply within my organisation in any given situation, boosting the team spirit amongst colleagues,” Augustine emphasised.

“I now know the need for me to be focused and have a well outlined plan to assist me to lead my organisation in achieving our goals,” he continued. “All these robust changes happening in MEYE-SL are as a result of my participation in the CSLI.”

A year after the programme the organisation’s overall productivity has tremendously improved, positively influencing the image of MEYE-SL.

“After his CSLI Training, Augustine has made decision making in the organisation more consultative through monthly staff meetings, weekly performance reviews and involving the Board Chairperson on the withdrawal of funds from the MEYE-SL Bank accounts. No wonder, staff performance has improved!” Augustine Paul Tucker, a MEYE-SL Board Member, shared.
CHANGING THE DYNAMICS OF LEADERSHIP

A CSLI STORY OF THELMA ANKORA
“Before the CSLI, I faced challenges with communicating feedback without managing my emotions. I communicated feedback in a manner that was not sensitive to the listener; irrespective of the outcome. It must be communicated anyway,” confessed Thelma Ankora, Programme Officer, Initiative for Gender Equality and Development in Africa (IGED-Africa) and a participant of WACSI’s Civil Society Leadership Initiative (CSLI) 2017 Cohort explained.

Out of the 409 West Africans that applied for the CSLI, Thelma was chosen to be a part of the second cohort of the leadership programme.

The various aspects of the two-week leadership programme, which included mentoring, training, multi-cultural participants and a faculty of knowledgeable experts, were designed to facilitate transformational leadership through a digestible approach.

The programme touched on soft and hard skills a leader must possess, focusing particularly on emotional intelligence, an essential skill for any successful leader.

“Our emotions need to be as educated as our intellect. It is important to know how to feel, respond and react to situations, particularly in the professional environment,” Esi Sey, a faculty member, reiterated to the 2017 CSLI Fellows.

“One major aspect of the programme that changed my professional life was the session on emotional intelligence by Esi Sey. I have learnt to manage my emotions before expressing them to others, not making hasty decisions during pressing moments but carefully analysing the impact of my actions. I learnt the need to manage my expectations as my reactions at work were often triggered by them,” Thelma confessed.
Thelma applied for the programme aiming to enhance her personal and professional leadership skills to effectively lead not just herself, but her colleagues at IGED-Africa and her community.

“I recognised after the CSLI 2017 that I have better self-awareness which pushed me to show a lot of initiative in the performance of my duties. I’ve seen an improvement in the execution of my tasks, with a definite sense of professionalism which has impacted my colleagues, friends and family,” Thelma asserted, “I now see every opportunity as a stepping stone and a reason to make an impact in any sphere I find myself. Before the programme I shied away from responsibilities when put in teams but I have now developed a sense of belongingness towards my organisation and I’m committed to achieving our objectives.”

Realising the programme had boosted her confidence, Thelma went above and beyond, introducing and championing policy initiatives that have empowered women and girls with disabilities in her community to stand up against domestic and gender-based violence.

“I conducted a needs assessment to find out what the needs of these women and girls with disabilities were concerning eliminating domestic and gender-based violence. I worked with them to develop creative messages that served as a guide to what the campaign should focus on,” Thelma said proudly. “Through awareness raising and advocacy campaigns, these women and girls with disabilities know their rights but also claim them. They have been empowered to exercise their rights.”
REVIVING CORPS AFRICA SENEGAL

A CSLI STORY OF MAREME NDOUR
Mareme Ndour believes in duty; her duty to manage and lead her colleagues and organisation more effectively as Deputy Director of Corps Africa-Senegal. In 2017 she discovered a means to fulfilling her duty. She identified WACSI’s Civil Society Leadership Institute (CSLI) programme as the ideal platform to make this happen.

“WACSI’s CSLI was a must for me. I realised that it will take a while for them to reach my rhythm so I need to be empathetic in order to support them to be more productive,” she lamented. “Reflecting deeply on the situation, I realised I needed to better myself as a leader to make greater impact. I knew for sure that the CSLI platform could empower me to do just that.”

After returning to her organisation after the two-week leadership programme, Mareme realised the tremendous impact the training was making in her organisation.

“The CSLI incredibly reinforced my leadership skills particularly regarding my style of leadership and relationship with my colleagues. It impacted my ability and willingness to empower others, to achieve together, the organisation’s goals,” she attested.
Applying for the programme with the aim of taking her leadership skills to the next level, Mareme could feel the tangible impact of the various sessions of the leadership programme. She now has a clearer understanding of what leadership means and has the skills she needs to excel in this position.

“The sessions helped me understand that in my role as a leader, I needed to empower others. I was introduced to the notion that leadership is not just having power but empowering others with it,” Mareme confessed. “I have implemented this in my organisation. I now give my colleagues the space to take up initiatives and grow in their roles in the organisation,” Mareme shared proudly.

The beauty of the programme is the impact it makes not only in the professional and individual development of the participants, but the community they find themselves.

“I can confidently confirm that my participation in the CSLI has given me a stronger disposition and mindset to collaborate with people of different cultural and professional backgrounds,” she professed.

“Through the coaching and support I gave to my team, the latter succeeded in transforming several lives in my community by implementing projects on food security, education, environmental issues”
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE

A CSLI STORY OF CHINENYE ETORIRU
“I used to focus on just myself, completing my daily tasks without considering a holistic approach to enhance my organisation’s work,” Chinenye Etoniru, a 2017 Fellow of WACSI’s Civil Society Leadership Institute (CSLI), shared as she reflected on the impact of the programme on her personal and organisational development.

Chinenye was one of the eighteen young civil society activists who were selected to be a part of the second cohort of the Fellowship. She had been promoted shortly before the programme yet was unsure she had the tools to effectively execute her duties and excel in her new role.

“The programme was instrumental in helping me transition roles effectively. From the session on leadership and influencing change, I learnt to develop programme innovation as a discipline, moving from just implementing programmes to innovating and taking the lead by thinking outside the box to achieve results.”

WACSI’s CSLI was created in 2015 to initiate the process of nurturing middle level civil society professionals by strengthening their leadership competencies. The programme is run in 2 phases: training and mentoring/coaching. This design facilitates transformational leadership focusing on individual development, institutional strengthening and societal transformation.

Today, the thirty-eight Fellows who have undergone the Fellowship programme, just like Chinenye, attest to a marked transformation in their personal and organisational development.

“The CSLI programme helped me hold myself accountable to the results that I envisioned in my professional career. I learnt to lead myself, constantly innovating to achieve my outlined goals. This results-oriented thinking led me to successfully review and upgrade a leadership curriculum for a
programme I currently lead.” Chinenye stated proudly. “This curriculum has been adopted for use in all other youth leadership programmes in the organisation. A few months before the CSLI, this would have seemed impossible. The programme unearthed my potential which drove me to change and lead growth in my organisation.” Chineye confessed.

“Before attending the CSLI programme, I easily gave up whenever I was faced with difficulties during a project implementation. Now I consciously choose to make every project work despite challenges. I work with a leadership mindset and take ownership of the project,” she asserted. “During one of our recent projects, I designed a programme that provided learning opportunities for underprivileged school youth through organisations and community centres that cater for them. This change came about because of unforeseen challenges that affected the entire approved programme model,” she added.

“I quickly formulated a new design which was accepted by the funders and management of the organisation. This boldness was instilled in me through self-leadership at the CSLI programme; which is first holding myself accountable to set goals and pushing for results despite obstacles,” Chineye explained.

“The two-week training was a turning point in my career. Interacting with other young development professionals from the region helped me realise that most of the problems non-profit organisations face in Nigeria exist in other West African countries. This gave me hope and the unique opportunity to learn from my peers, share my experiences and best practices and to develop solutions to advance my community,” Chineye proclaimed.
“There are more opportunities than those seeking for it, but it only takes one to know what to do in order to get it”. These words by the faculty member of CSLI, Dr. Jeff Bassey, left an imprint on LAMIN SONKO RAID- Gambia’s Project Manager.

With a change in mindset after his participation in the leadership training, Lamin’s reignited passion and productivity has pushed him to be persistent in spearheading initiatives for his organisation.

“Prior to my participation in the CSLI, RAID-Gambia faced issues with mobilising resources to run our projects. Thanks to the leadership programme, I learnt these skills and garnered the knowledge that has helped me mobilise $72,000 for a project that will educate over 1000 Gambians in different communities on the health effects of tobacco,” he confessed.

Lamin has adopted new methods and techniques from CSLI that has helped him become emotionally intelligent, refined his people management skills and achieve his goals in a timely fashion.

“What stood out for me in the programme, was how to be emotionally intelligent and improve my people management skills,” Lamin said proudly.

“The training has boosted my capacity to implement a two-year advocacy project for the enactment of a tobacco law within a year. As the project Manager, I led my team to utilise tailored strategies which influenced the Gambian parliament to pass the bill into a law; the first of its kind,” he added.
INNOVATION FOR CHANGE

A CSLI STORY OF SIDIKI AMINATA DIAKITE
“Last year, I gained a lot of experience on leadership and innovation from WACSI’s CSLI Fellowship. This experience has made me an innovative young civil society activist, who is now eager to engage in activities in my community and organisation. These key elements have become my guiding principles and have contributed to making me who I am today,” says Sidiki Aminata Diakite, a 2017 CSLI Fellow.

Sidiki is the President of Thurgood Marshall, a non-governmental organisation that collaborates with other organisations to enhance the lives of citizens through science. It was crucial for him to boost his leadership capacity to empower him to guide his team to implement these community projects.

“The CSLI programme fuelled my understanding on leadership. Leadership I came to realise did not end with leading others but my ability to lead and manage myself first. This training has enabled me to utilise different approaches to make innovative decisions within our projects. This has helped us immensely in our partnership with Feed the Future supported by USAID,” Sidike shared.

A year after CSLI, Thurgood Marshall hopes to bring together young people involved in scientific development to imbibe the leadership skills their President garnered from WACSI’s leadership training to influence change on the continent.

“Thanks to CSLI, our organisation has taken the step to lead young leaders working in the area of scientific development to formulate ideas using science to solve some of the challenges our continent faces,” he excitedly explained.

Presently, Thurgood Marshall has adopted an inclusive organisational approach an aspect of people management that was highlighted during Sidike’s participation in the leadership programme. This gives each member of the organisation the opportunity to take up responsibilities, fostering a team spirit in an environment that promotes multicultural values.

“Our team is well positioned now to be incubators of innovation for the youth in our community through the application of technology,” Sidike added.
RESHAPING THE NARRATIVE

A CSLI STORY OF MOUSSA HASSANOUSSEINI
“I was prone to outbursts, lacking tact and an unapologetic disposition”. Moussa shared this feedback from his colleagues when asked what they thought of him. Moussa Hassan Ousseini, a Programme Manager at Youth Volunteer of Environment Niger (YVE-Niger), realised the negative effect his attitude was having on his relationships with his colleagues and their work. It was time to make a change.

“I needed this leadership training for the next level of my career. Prior to WACSI’s Civil Society Leadership Institute (CSLI), I did not give any room for the people I supervised to make mistakes and grow from it. I thought barking orders and shouting at them, would cause them to do their work more efficiently,” Moussa lamented. “However, that only intimidated them and stifled the productivity of YVE-Niger. Now I know better, I attribute this growth to the CSLI training which has helped me to better manage my emotions and my sense of leadership.”

Moussa now boasts of a complete change in his personal development and career. He is now able to manage his reactions during moments of pressure and his colleagues can feel the change. Work has never been better.

“Thanks to the CSLI, I now mentor the colleagues I supervise, guiding them to execute their tasks much better than before. Today, I can brag of an efficient team, where every opinion counts,” he shared proudly.

“One of my major challenges was anger management. The skills I acquired from the training, have made me emotionally grounded and I can now manage myself during moments of anger,” Moussa added.

Employees of YVE-Niger have each been taken through a session on the importance of emotional intelligence. New staff members are also taken through the same during their orientation.

“We all work with confidence now. Everyone is unafraid to express their views because they are assured it will be respected and welcomed. Middle management colleagues are no longer nervous when executing their tasks because they are assured of the space to make mistakes and learn from them,” Sani Ayouba, the Executive Director of YVE-Niger, shared with the CSLI team.

Thanks to the CSLI, I now mentor the colleagues I supervise, guiding them to execute their tasks much better than before. Today, I can brag of an efficient team, where every opinion counts.
REDEFINING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

A CSLI STORY OF CHIZOBA UZOAMAKA OBIDIGBO-EGBO
“An attribute of a good leader is the ability to empathise when the need arises. Though I had the requisite qualities a good leader needed, I had not yet mastered the art of emotional intelligence. This caused friction amongst my team because I did not consider their opinions and concerns before making decisions. In my daily routine in the organisation, I insisted on my suggestions above that of my colleagues in every situation,” Chizoba confessed. “The CSLI training redefined my thinking on this and ingrained in me the skill of emotional intelligence. Now in my organisation, I have shifted from using the word staff to colleagues. I could never have achieved this without going through WACSI’s leadership training.”

Chizoba Uzoamaka Obidigbo-Egbo is the Executive Director of k’odimma Initiative for Human Development.

“In 2016, I read an article in a 2004 Harvard Business Review that described emotional intelligence as the ability to understand your effect on others and manage yourself accordingly. After this discovery, I had to master this skill because I had seen evidence of its impact in the lives of young professionals,” Chizoba admitted.

“Esi Sey, a faculty member of CSLI, introduced us to the concept of emotional intelligence. This created a hunger in me to not only develop this skill but to immediately apply it to my work to ease the sometimes-tenuous atmosphere in my organisation,” she confessed.

“As a leader, I am now convinced that emotional intelligence is one of my greatest weapons. Before the CSLI programme, I found it difficult to empathise with, relate to and accept suggestions from my colleagues. The programme transformed my perspective. I now find myself actively listening, understanding and empathising with them in ways I could not do before the programme,” Chizoba reiterated.

Weeks after the Fellowship, k’odimma Initiative for Human Development organised and executed their first leadership summit within the peri-urban area of Enugu State, an area where a lot of Nigerian NGOs do not usually focus on. The organisation defied all odds and numerous challenges by leveraging on the leadership skills of Chizoba. Her leadership was now making a tangible difference in her work and organisation.

“The best practices from the CSLI have trickled down to my colleagues and staff, translating into improved team work and effective, constructive communication throughout the organisation. My emotional growth and intelligence has even gone beyond the professional, allowing me to be there for my staff during personal situations,” she stated proudly.
A NEW PAIR OF LENS

A CSLI STORY OF ALEXANDRE WILLY KOTIA
Effective planning is an essential component of any thriving organisation’s module. It is no wonder that Winston Churchill says, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail”, Alexandre Willy Kotia had not been excelling on executing his organizational goals because he did not know how to plan.

This contributed to the failure of some of Children’s Dream Foundation’s projects, affecting their image and impact in their community. It became imperative for their Country Director to boost his capacity to enable him lead them properly.

“My major challenge before the CSLI, was how to plan properly, especially how to anticipate the risks that can affect the implementation of our activities,” Willy remarked.

While taking part in the training, Willy realised that the Children Dream Foundation lack of performance was due to the missing elements of its organisational theory of change.

“The CSLI helped me to better understand the strategic management of the organisation’s resources and helped me identify the loop holes in our Theory of Change. The training guided me to refine it to truly reflect our organisation,” he admitted.

“Our overall productivity has drastically improved after I implemented the things I learnt from the training especially mapping out our goals and outcomes,” Willy added.

Today, Children’s Dream Foundation is more focused in their approach in the implementation of their work, clearly aligning their goals to the organisation’s strategic objectives.

“There is no activity we undertake without a plan that indicates which actions to take at every stage of the project, assigning tasks to each team member which has caused them to take ownership of the projects. Now, we undertake midterm assessments during our activities, we are aware of our expected results. This new development can only be attributed to our Country Director’s participation in the CSLI,” Jean Pierre BRIN the Deputy Program Director affirmed.

Alexandre cannot imagine how his year 2017 would have been if he had not participated in the CSLI. The knowledge and networks he gained from the programme have boosted his professional skills.

“Overall, the sharing of experience, the stories from the other Fellows and various sessions building helped to clear certain notions about leadership that I had. But today, I am a very determined person because the CSLI opened my mind to understand that leaders face challenges daily, surmounting them makes all the difference.”
The Rockdale Foundation is a private, family foundation established by Bob Pattillo and Katy Barksdale in 1994.

After conducting site visits to several Sub Saharan African countries, Sierra Leone was chosen as a geographic focus. A country which had survived a brutal civil war and was poised for development, the Foundation began grantmaking in Sierra Leone in 2011. The Foundation does make grants elsewhere in Sub Saharan Africa in order to gain knowledge for the work in Sierra Leone.

The Ford Foundation for West Africa is based in Lagos, Nigeria. Since its foundation in 1958, it has made over 600 grants totalling approximately $250 million to institutions and individuals throughout the region.

The Foundation’s mission has been to reduce poverty and injustice, strengthen democratic values, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement.

WACSI is a civil society knowledge sharing hub and a credible centre of learning with international recognition and accreditation. We envision a veritable civil society resource centre that caters for the capacity development needs of civil society organisations in West Africa.

The West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) was established by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) in 2005 to reinforce the capacities of civil society in the sub-region. The Institute became operational in July 2007. The institute strengthens civil society in West Africa to be responsive, collaborative, representative, resilient and influential through knowledge sharing, learning, connecting and influencing.