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Profile in Public Integrity: Lawrence Yealue

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Profile in Public Integrity:

Lawrence Yealue

Accountability Lab - Liberia



Lawrence Yealue is the West Africa Representative of [Accountability Lab](#), an incubator for local-level integrity initiatives with an emphasis on generating sustainable development. Based in Monrovia, Liberia, Yealue's career has centered on community-driven approaches to responsible reform. His previous work includes serving as Electoral Commissioner for the Liberian Student Association-Ghana, National Coordinator for the World Youth Spirit Council, Project Director for the Rotary Club of Wisconsin, and as a volunteer for Africa Peace's HIV/AIDS Education & Peace Initiative. Yealue also founded and directs the Liberian Youth for Peace & Development community group. Yealue holds a B.A. in Human Resource Management from the Wisconsin International University College in Ghana.

Why did you decide to work on promoting accountability in West Africa?

I am a global citizen lucky to be born in a beautiful green country full of possibilities—Liberia on the West Coast of Africa, in 1979. I love promoting peaceful co-existence, human rights, good governance, transparency, integrity, equality, and accountability. These are crucial for the development of democracy. I decided to work on promoting accountability across West Africa because we have similar issues in terms of injustice, social deprivation, bad governance, and lack of accountability, which have led to huge corruption by politicians and community leaders. I am convinced that using a citizen-based creative approach can change this situation.

The Accountability Lab promotes public integrity by supporting "accountrapreneurs." What is an accountrapreneur, and how can accountrapreneurs help fight corruption?

Accountrapreneurs are social entrepreneurs who carry out accountability-oriented projects. They are citizens who are passionate to change their communities for the better, using very many approaches to promoting accountability in their community, to fight corruption, promote integrity, and build better systems. For example, one accountrapreneur is using film for social change in our accountability film school which has now grown into the Liberia Film Institute.

Another example is our community justice team, which works in the communities of West Point and Logan Town and will soon expand to another community known as Peace Island. Our team members are trained mediators who are living within those communities and as community members they understand their communities better than any outsiders. They mediate cases that are not criminal in nature like debt, domestic violence, assaults, and even cases related to witchcraft. They work 24 hours per day since they live within the communities and some of the cases take place in the night and over the weekend.

The Accountability Lab raises awareness about corruption in Liberia through many activities not often associated with the anti-corruption movement, like film, hip hop, and sports. Why are these innovative efforts important?

The traditional anti-corruption approach of naming and shaming is not working. Hence, there is a need to use the other side, using good things which resonated with the people. People here love watching films, so we started using film to promote social change for accountability. People also love music and music is part of the culture here; hence, we use music which talks about the everyday situation of the people. Finally, the love for sports is huge and that is why we are using sports like soccer. All of our approaches are what the people know best and love, so we are making a deeper impact.

More than 10,000 Liberians died in the country's recent Ebola crisis, during which many communities were unable to depend upon government help. How can greater government accountability help to prevent or contain future outbreaks?

I think there needs to be proactive approaches. When there is more information accessible to the people, and accountability is not only seen as the responsibility of government alone, than we are on the right path to solving many of these problems. Monies directed to the right source should reach the targeted population. The government needs to build better health care centers and make health care accessible and affordable to the common people. There should be constant monitoring and evaluation of every healthcare delivery centers in the country and steps taken to mitigate any risks of the reoccurrence of Ebola or any health-related issue.

Do you have any lessons from your work that you could share with others working to promote accountability in emerging democracies?

I think that working with citizens is best achieved by listening to them. It is best first to go and listen to the citizens and when you enter their communities to speak less, work hard, never say their ideas do not work, and put them in the center of your work without deviating from your organizational objectives. Working to promote accountability does not yield impact in the immediate future but it is gradual. Simply be patient and hopeful to see the change you are working towards.