

BEACON OF LIGHT ASSOCIATION (BeLA)

STRATEGIC PLAN

BeLA Three-Year Roadmap (2019 – 2021)

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

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This Strategic Plan was prepared for Beacon of Light Association (BeLA), in June 2018 by TheGateway Limited.

TheGateway is a **Social Innovation Hub** with mission **to build capacity and provide access to resources for social change**. The clients we serve include, but are not limited to, Social Enterprises, Nonprofit Organizations and Small and Medium Size Enterprises

In May of 2018, Beacon of Light Association retained TheGateway Limited – a management consulting social enterprise – to guide the planning process and develop a realistic strategic plan to inspire implementation and drive forward its mission.

After consultation with the Board of Directors and a thorough capacity assessment, TheGateway’s strategic planning team highlighted the following critical areas of high priority:

- Clarify its mission and establish an ambitious goal that is motivating enough to take meaningful development action.
- Develop a clear understanding of core strengths and organizational capacities.
- Draw from L
- BeLA’s external environment (ecosystem) to identify possible opportunities and potential threats to watch out for.
- Determine how growth and expansion relates to identified opportunities to achieve maximum mission impact.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is the maiden strategic plan of Beacon of Light Association (BeLA). BeLA is a grassroots non-profit organization founded in 2016 and officially registered in April 2019 with the competent authorities in Bamenda to respond to the needs of women and youth in Cameroon. Bamenda is located in Mezam Division, North West region of the Republic of Cameroon. The work and efforts of BeLA target all categories of women and young people with focus on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. The choice of this group of target beneficiaries is guided by the fact that most development efforts and interventions do not fully engage and mainstream women and youth in their interventions. BeLA's strategic focus is to facilitate a platform and create a safe space for women and youth to unleash and realize their potential while achieving lasting positive change in their lives while also engaging in community development.

BeLA seeks to empower women and youth by promoting basic human rights and providing appropriate information and skills so that they make informed decisions, thereby grooming a new generation of healthy, educated and highly esteemed women and youth who possess both hard and soft skills; are gender sensitive, actively participating in the economic sphere and are able to make the right choices and decisions at individual, family, community and national levels. To achieve this dream, BeLA strives to provide a wide range of holistic support services in-order to ensure that women and young people are fully empowered and exposed to opportunities for their individual and community success. The following thematic areas (intervention pillars) formulate the building blocks for BeLA's work; **(i) Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ii) Gender Based Violence (iii) Economic Empowerment and Social Integration**. The work of BeLA in all these thematic areas will be underpinned by capacity building and skills development.

The Gateway's strategic plan development team as well as the management of BeLA urge stakeholders to understand that this is not a static document. It is a flexible tool to inform and guide BeLA's everyday actions as she strives to build a more socially just world. Changes to this plan may occur. However, such changes should be informed and guided after due considerations based on, on-the-ground feedback gathered during its implementation. We see this plan as a trajectory that describes where BeLA hopes to be in three years, but also will continue to evolve and adapt as the Civil Society landscape changes. Additionally, as we encounter the challenges inherent in Social Change, we are committed to remaining connected to our mission and core values.

2. MANDATE AND SCOPE OF WORK

2.1 About

Beacon of Light Association (BeLA) is a grass root development, non-profit and nonpartisan organization founded and run by like-minded professionals who are passionate and dedicated to improving the lives of destitute and vulnerable women and youths. BeLA is a grant seeker (not a grant maker yet) with headquarters in Bamenda and governed by Cameroon law N°:90/053 of 19th December 1990. Founded in 2018, BeLA obtained her legal authorization in April 2019 following Registration N°: 32/E.29/1111/VOL.8/ALPAS with all its team made up of volunteers.

2.2 Vision

BeLA dreams of a world where women and youth feel safe and empowered to excel while impacting their community.

2.3 Mission

BeLA is on a mission to promote and protect the rights of women and youth while leveraging capacity development and sports to rescue, transform and engage stakeholders to build better and safer communities.

2.4 Objectives

- To provide women and youth with equal opportunity in life void of violence and oppression.
- To improve the livelihood of women and youth by reducing barriers that prevent gender equality and fundamental human rights.
- To promote sports for development as an instrument for social acceptance and integration.
- To promote sexual and reproductive health and right while combating gender-based violence in all its forms

2.5 Target Beneficiaries

Our efforts target mainly women and youth in both rural and urban settings.

2.6 Thematic Areas

The work of Beacon of Light Association focuses on the following four thematic areas:

- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
- Gender Based Violence
- Economic Empowerment and Social Integration

2.7 Core Values

The following core values inform our work and guide how we relate with stakeholders at various levels:

- **Empathy:** We focus on understanding the thoughts, feelings, and emotional state of those we serve.
- **Dedication:** We are fully engaged in whatsoever we do and are committed to doing better in all aspects of our work.
- **Ethics:** As agents of change, we respect the ethics and best practices that govern the conduct of our work at all levels.
- **Advocacy:** We are dedicated to the practice of supporting our clients to make their voices heard.
- **Teamwork:** We leverage collaboration through volunteerism to engage stakeholders achieve a common goal.

2.8 Guiding Principles

- **Gender Sensitivity:** BeLA believes in the elimination of all forms of discriminations, stigmatization, segregation, and stereotypes that negatively affect our members, staff, and other stakeholders, based on their gender.
- **Respect for human rights:** Respect for human rights is an inherent condition and held at the top of our priorities as agents of change.
- **Collaboration:** BeLA commits to fully engage her clients, host community, key stakeholders for a common purpose.

2.9 Approach and Model

The work of Beacon of Light Association (BeLA) is sanctioned by a bottom-up participatory approach to development. BeLA believes that reaching out to women and youths on a regular basis does not offer them a chance to maximize their full potential. That is why we leverage capacity development and providing access to equal opportunities for their individual transformation. That is why our work in all the three thematic areas is underpinned by capacity development and respect for human right. This to us is considered essential ingredients for success in today's ever-changing world.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Being a young and early stage organization, a participatory capacity assessment and reflection brought to light our key strengths and areas of (possible) growth as an organization. This assessment exercise also involved an analysis of BeLA’s external environment to determine possible opportunities that could be maximized and threats to look out for. All these has been presented in the table below.

	STRENGTHS (Positive)	WEAKNESSES (Negative)
INTERNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High Demand for our services in the community ▪ An emerging organization, legally registered and recognized by competent authorities ▪ Committed team members with passion to serve ▪ Availability of an office space conducive for work ▪ Fast growing reputation and brand ▪ Online (web) presence especially on social media platform ▪ Increasing awareness in operating community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Board of trustees & advisory not fully established ▪ Limited income/insufficient financial resources ▪ Unskilled staff/volunteer with limited capacity ▪ Insufficient office equipment and furniture ▪ Programs and services/operations not yet fully developed ▪ Insufficient resources for team motivation ▪ Lack of various organizational policy manuals
	OPPORTUNITIES (Positive)	THREATS (Negative)
EXTERNAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Possibility to develop links with the local business community and other engaged stakeholders ▪ Huge growth potential of the nonprofit sector (development industry) ▪ Possible technical support and partnerships both at local, national, and international level ▪ Availability of grants/funding opportunities for projects ▪ Possibility to work with skilled interns and volunteers from both within and outside Cameroon ▪ Possibility to collaborate with diverse partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existence of more established organizations carrying out similar work ▪ No financial reserves with limited assets ▪ Unprofessional and charlatan organizations discrediting the sector ▪ Negative publicity/possibility of down selling due to professional negligence and inexperience

4. STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND THEMATIC FOCUS

For the next three years (2019 – 2021), Beacon of Light Association (BeLA) has defined her strategic focus by clarifying its mandate and making thorough analysis of its internal and external environment. To ensure maximum community impact and sustainability, BeLA will focus on the following three strategic directions:

Thematic Focus #1: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

The rationale is to empower women to make informed choices about their lives and bodies, free from discrimination and coercion.

For sexual and reproductive health to be attained and maintained, the sexual and reproductive health rights of all persons must be respected, protected, and fulfilled. Sexual and reproductive health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence.

Thematic Focus #2: Gender Based Violence

The rationale is to raise awareness about the basic human rights and gender-based violence and provide women and girls with tools and resources to protect their rights as well as rehabilitate victims of Gender Based Violence.

Our consideration for GBV includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse or threats of such acts or abuse, coercion, and economic or educational deprivation, whether occurring in public or private life, in peacetime and during armed or other forms of conflict, and may cause physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or economic harm.

Thematic Focus #3: Economic Empowerment and Social Integration

The rationale is to enhance the capacity development of women and youths to gain relevant skills which can enable them to create sustainable enterprises to better their livelihoods and contribute to the economic development of their communities.

BeLA notes that social integration is more viable when societies move toward sound economic goals. As such, social integration is a highly desirable outcome that reflects the existence of social cohesion, a strong institutional foundation, and a culture of acceptance. Societies are better off if they promote social integration through inclusive policies that reduce economic inequality and poverty and promote sustainable and equitable development.

5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND KEY ACTIVITIES

During the next three years (2019 – 2021), the work of BeLA will be executed under each thematic area (strategic direction) as follows:

5.1 Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

Strategic Objective	What We Will Do (Anticipated Action)	What We Expect (Anticipated Outcome)
To empower women to make informed choices about their lives and bodies, free from discrimination and coercion.	Promote women and girls' access to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and HIV/AIDS friendly services and facilities	Strengthened capacity of women and girl's knowledge on SRH and demand/uptake of available services
	Provide adequate resources and information on SRH, forceful marriage and HIV/AIDS	Increased awareness by families and communities of the harmful effects of forceful marriage
	Promote behavior change and SRHR perception of adolescents and young women through adoption of healthy practices	Decreased incidences of SRHR especially Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) among teen girls and young women
	Engage communities and households to create a supportive environment for women and girls to practice healthy SRH behavior and end child (forceful) marriage	Increased awareness by families, communities, women and girls of the harmful effects of child (forceful) marriage and obnoxious practices
	Influence positive change in communities' beliefs, attitudes and social norms that drive early and forceful marriages and empower women and girls to prevent and respond to challenges	Decreased incidences of teen girls getting married early
	To empower teen girls and young women with adequate information and skills on sexuality, puberty, and menstrual hygiene to successfully manage menses	Increased knowledge on sexuality, puberty and menstrual health for young women and girls
	To create a supportive environment in which menstruation is culturally, religiously, and socially accepted	Increased active male involvement and support on Menstrual Health Management (MHM) issues
	To improve access to appropriate and safe sanitary products and sanitation facilities	Improved demand and use of appropriate and affordable menstrual hygiene management facilities and products by young girls and women

5.2 Gender Based Violence

Strategic Objective	What We Will Do (Anticipated Action)	What We Expect (Anticipated Outcome)
To raise awareness about the basic human rights and gender-based violence and provide women and girls with tools and resources to protect their rights as well as rehabilitate victims of Gender Based Violence.	Advocate for the state to reinforce response and policy for GBV victims to facilitate recovery and healing of survivors	Strengthened existing response, care and support services by the state and civil society in ways that are victim-centred and survivor-focused to facilitate recovery and healing;
	Provide holistic support system to victims of GBV to access needed psychosocial, material, and related support	Victims feel supported by the system to access the necessary psychosocial, material and other support required to assist them with their healing
	Strengthen community and institutional responses to provide integrated care and support to GBV survivors and their families that takes into account linkages between substance abuse and HIV and AIDS.	Institutional and community response to provide integrated care to GBV strengthened
	Intensive advocacy for law reform targeting legislators, policy makers, and other stake holders	Policy makes and legislators informed and engaged to action changes and law reforms

5.3 Economic Empowerment and Social Integration

Strategic Objective	What We Will Do (Anticipated Action)	What We Expect (Anticipated Outcome)
To enhance the capacity development of women and youths to gain relevant skills to create sustainable initiatives to better their livelihoods and contribute to the economic development of their communities.	Empower and ensure women and youth acquire knowledge and skills to enable them plan, start and manage their own Income Generating Activities (IGA)	Increased engagement of women and youth in IGA and sustainable livelihood initiatives/projects through the value chain
	Build capacity of women and youth and enhance ability to become entrepreneurs and self-employed	Women and youth can run profitable business in selected intervention areas
	Advocate for implementation of policies that promote women and youth engagement in gainful livelihoods and entrepreneurial activities	Increased participation and engagement of stakeholders in national and local policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and review
	Create platforms for knowledge and experience sharing at community, regional, national level and beyond with the aim of replication and upscale	Increased knowledge base and experience shared on best practices in the area of economic empowerment and social integration
	Leverage sports for development as a gateway to socio-economic development and enhancing social integration	Established and successful club activities in schools
	Strengthened interventions that addresses the restoration of human dignity, builds caring communities and responds to historic and collective trauma	Strengthened interventions in the area of human dignity restoration

6. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, PARTNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

6.1 Organizational Development

To build BeLA into a robust functional organization that provides the best quality sustainable development services to its target beneficiaries and community, the Board of Directors and management team are looking forward to:

- Maximizing strengths and work hard to improve on the organization's areas of weaknesses.
- Developing and implementing an organizational policy and operational manual to enhance productivity, transparency, and accountability. Manuals will include, but not limited to, Financial Management, Operational, Partnership, Communication, Employee Policy etc.
- Hiring highly qualified, experienced, and motivated staff (volunteers) to ensure segregation of duties and teamwork.
- Engaging or hire an independent external auditor to carry out audits and financial control annually.
- Preparing regular activities and financial reports (monthly, quarterly, yearly) to be approved by management and filed.
- Developing an operating, yet realistic budget to be reviewed annually.
- Holding quarterly Board Meetings as well as weekly/monthly team meeting for staff and volunteers.
- Organizing capacity building workshops, trainings and skill development for staff and volunteers to perform at best.
- Building a project bank or project proposals and current database of potential donors for possible funding.
- Negotiating new partnerships while strengthening existing ones, both at community, national, and international levels.
- Organizing fundraising campaigns and events as need arises to achieve set goals.

6.2 Partnership Development

In line with SDG #17 (Partnerships for the goals), BeLA will leverage collaboration and stakeholder engagement to strengthen her drive for social change. This will be by fostering partnerships with like-minded organizations (UN agencies, donors, research institutes, civil society, academia) and individuals with similar or same mission. BeLA envisages collaboration with the following partners in all the different thematic areas:

- Donors and development agencies. See list of possible (identified) partners in our partnership policy.
- Government Ministries: Public Health, Ministry of Women Affairs and Family, Youth and Civic Education, Employment and Vocational Training, as well as Basic and Secondary Education.
- Civil Society Organizations. See list of possible (identified) CSOs and NGOs in the appendix of partnership policy.
- Individuals: community leaders, business people, local elites, professors/lecturers, consultants, researchers, university graduates and others.

6.3 Sustainability Strategy

A sustainability strategy is important to see BeLA succeed in the long run. Sustainability is about continuity - the continued existence and functionality of BeLA. Continued resource mobilization is a must for every strategy to be realized and for the organization to remain functional. The following are key sustainability strategies.

Versatility: BeLA plans to venture into all thematic areas (intervention areas) vigorously. The organization will carry out wide research and ensuring programs are in line with the latest development initiatives. Within the third year a review will be done to ensure it still answers the needs of the community and if it is still viable to be stuck within the same geographical areas.

Capacity Strengthening: It is important for BeLA to continue capacitating her staff and volunteers to have a skilled team and at the same time create continuity in the organization. BeLA will also leverage the volunteer model and will capacitate with opportunities to employ some of them from the communities. Staff will also be capacitated through engaging in external trainings with universities and training institutions as well as seminars, workshops etc.

Partnerships: BeLA will make use of valuable win-win partnerships to enhance her intervention and impact. BeLA should create implementing partnerships with government and community leaders and provide more services to the community. Working with the community also enables the benefits to be sustained even if they decide to wean off communities.

Visibility: A visible organization stays in the mind of target beneficiaries, donors, stakeholders, like minded organizations, and partners. BeLA will always endeavor to enhance visibility to key stakeholders in order to be known at various levels, from community to international levels as a bona fide humanitarian and development organization.

6.4 Possible Funding Sources

In the next three years, management will seek a financially sustainable model, diversify BeLA's revenue streams, and grow a network of funders to fund planned programs/projects and build the organization's institutional and operational capacity.

Given the ambition of our mission, we shall strive to increase our internal revenue sources, leverage alternative funding methods, and ensure that they are flexible enough to fund our priorities and grow our impact. The sustainability of our income will be one of our priorities to enable us grow internally by generating own revenue, do crowd funding and so decrease the risk of over dependency on donors for funding. During the strategy period, therefore, significant attention will be given to developing these alternative sources of income.

Our expenditure during the strategy period will reflect our program priorities and where BeLA hopes to achieve the maximum impact. In addition, we will continue to comply with established practices for effective financial management at all times seeking highest standards of transparency and accountability.

7. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)

Monitoring and evaluation is an important management tool, which is part and parcel of the strategic framework. A robust M&E system enables an organization to assess the quality and impact of its work, against targets and performance indicators in the Strategic Plan. Monitoring is the systematic collection and analysis of information during program implementation, aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the program, vis-à-vis the targets set and activities planned during the planning phases of work (output results).

The board of directors and management of BeLA shall be responsible for monitoring the overall strategy and annual programs implementation. However, team members shall be designated to monitor the implementation of specific programs/projects. Importantly, the management team will develop pre and post program/projects surveys to enable the follow up of each program and activity to see the impact we create and potential areas of improvement. As an organization conscious of accountability to its stakeholders, BeLA shall prepare and publish reports of activities executed each year and as well make copies available to stakeholders in to enhance traceability.

During this three-years strategy implementation period, we will seek from time to time and upon request of a “donor” to have independent auditors to audit our financial statements for each year and provide us with an in-dept report on our financial performance, financial position and cash flow with recommendations for possible improvement.

The management team and board of BeLA will engage into strict Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) to establish the extent of deviation of performance from planned result indicators. This will enable BeLA to carefully reflect, learn, and adjust where necessary. In addition, to detect and address problems so that corrective action can be taken promptly, and performance by the organizations can be steered towards the direction of desired results, and provide early evidence of efficiency, effectiveness, and impact. For this to happen there needs to be a buy in from not only the board but staff/volunteer as well. As such, they can see the need to implement such a strategy as well as monitor and evaluate its progress. To determine whether the project results are being met, a monitoring and evaluation framework will be designed. To measure progress and performance during the Strategic Plan implementation, a systematic format will be outlined and strictly respected.

THANK YOU FOR READING!!!

Beacon of Light Association (BeLA) is on a mission to promote and protect the rights of women and youth while leveraging capacity development and sports to rescue, transform and engage stakeholders to build better and safer communities.

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