



May 9, 2019

Hon. Professor Ansu D. Sonii, Sr.
Ministry of Education
3rd Street at Tubman Blvd.
Sinkor, Monrovia

Dear Honorable Sonii:

Please accept our compliments and best wishes to you and the entire Ministry.

As the school year nears its conclusion and in advance of transforming More Than Me (“MTM”) into a Liberian-governed organization, the Global and Liberian Advisory Boards of More Than Me (“MTM”) wanted to provide you with an update in which we acknowledge—and apologize for—past failures and inform you of all we are doing to ensure that MTM students are safeguarded.

In addition to taking the actions detailed below, MTM’s Global and Liberian Advisory boards are providing you with McLane Middleton’s Safeguarding Audit. McLane Middleton, a US-based law firm with deep education and investigatory expertise, was retained to conduct an in-depth external audit of our organization as it exists in 2019, including our governance structure and administrative policies and practices. Their audit outlines specifically the current safeguarding practices at More Than Me, as well as findings and recommendations as to how the organization might further improve its governance and administration. The full audit is posted on More Than Me’s website at <http://www.morethanme.org/safeguarding/> and is also attached to this correspondence. We also wish to inform you that we have received a report from the special Investigative Panel, which we are currently using as an internal document, although we have not yet concluded when and how it can be released. All of our decisions are being made as fiduciaries for, and in careful consideration of, the best interests of MTM’s students and the organization.

We wish to express our respect and gratitude to both the special Investigative Panel, chaired by Cllr. T. Negbalee Warner, and McLane Middleton. We commend them for their dedication and intensive work and thank them for the insights and recommendations they provided, which are comprised wholly and entirely of the respective authors’ own independently-developed opinions and beliefs based upon their good faith efforts to investigate, interview those with knowledge, and review relevant materials. All statements represent the respective authors’ own conclusions informed by their opinions and beliefs, and based upon disclosed information discerned through their efforts.

Great Strides in Child Safeguarding: More Than Me Today



While the Panel and McLane Middleton have each informed us that significant changes must be made, they also highlighted the importance of the work More Than Me is doing in Liberia and the substantial strides made in addressing safeguarding since 2014. Both recognized that MTM has adopted many of the policies it should have had in place prior to 2014, and effected substantial changes in its operations and overall governance that are adequate to prevent or ensure the timely discovery of any actual or threat of abuse. In particular, McLane Middleton emphasized that “MTM is doing important work in Liberia and we believe that with changes to governance and administration, the organization can continue to fulfill its mission. At [MTM Academy (“MTMA”)], the students and parents are extremely grateful for the school and appreciate the education that the girls are receiving.”

We are employing a new paradigm for child safeguarding in all of our programs, and we are determined to learn all that we can from this painful chapter and to continue to support the girls who were victimized. We hope that in close partnership with the government of Liberia, as well as the communities we serve, in the future we will continue to improve the educational opportunities for all students.

MTM’s Actions in Response to the Panel Investigation and the McLane Middleton Audit

Since October 2018, MTM has undergone an intensive self-evaluation and has taken further proactive steps to improve our practices and policies to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our students. The work of the Panel and McLane Middleton, which was conducted with input from staff, students, parents, and government authorities, represents an important opportunity for More Than Me to continue to hold itself accountable as we strive to provide a safe, quality education for our students. The changes implemented since 2014 can be found on the More Than Me website: <http://www.morethanme.org/safeguarding/>.

MTM is now taking further action:

- The Founder of MTM, Katie Meyler, has resigned. This clears the way for new leadership who can continue to carry our important mission forward, while ensuring students are safeguarded as they pursue the quality education that MTM offers.
- We are in the process of restructuring More Than Me’s governance and leadership to include significant Liberian representation. Programmatic oversight of the More Than Me Academy and LEAP schools will be overseen by local Liberian Trustees. US-based Trustees will be primarily focused on fundraising.
- We have recently hired a new Country Director, Margretta Smith-General, a Liberian citizen who has extensive management and education experience to oversee our organization.
- In late 2018 we hired an Academy Director of Safety, Sylvestine Gbessagee, also a Liberian citizen, with 20+ years of experience who is developing deeper psycho-social support systems for our students and overseeing MTMA staff and parent safeguarding



training. Ms. Gbessagee has retrained 100% of our staff since she joined the organization.

- In addition to the newly hired Director of Safety, we are also committed to hiring a Safety Manager in 2019 to support staff capacity building, become the main point of contact for government authorities on safety related issues, and oversee incident reporting and follow ups for LEAP schools. We expect to have this position filled prior to September when the new school year commences.
- We are working toward the goal of holding a Safeguarding Summit, ideally in conjunction with the Liberian Ministries of Justice, Education and Gender, Children and Social Protection, during the 2019-2020 Academic Year. The objectives of this Summit would be to raise awareness about the prevention and reporting of child abuse, highlight important progress being made by Liberian organizations, share current policies and practices and provide further updates on our improved governance and administration.

We are committed to continuing to support the 11 survivors who have come forward. We are working closely with the Ministry of Justice to understand how best to support these young women—now and in the future—and to formulate a plan with the Ministry to provide for their ongoing education and care.

We have taken great strides academically: An independent evaluation conducted in 2017 by the Center for Global Development and Innovations for Poverty Action showed that students in LEAP schools operated by More Than Me learned 110% more than students in traditional public schools. In the first year of the LEAP program, More Than Me was also given an "A" rating based on the Ministry of Education's assessment of our work. Additionally, an external evaluation conducted in Spring 2018 that employed the Stallings Method of classroom observations found that teachers in More Than Me-supported schools spent more time on academic activities (73%), then those in countries such as Peru, Brazil, Mexico, and Columbia (52%-65%).

Should you so desire, we would be happy to share additional information about the governance and safeguarding steps underway, as well as metrics on the academic performance of our students at MTMA and LEAP Schools.

Conclusion

The extent of Macintosh Johnson and Cyrus Cooper's heinous acts has now been established, as well as MTM's failures in preventing them and/or recognizing that they were occurring, and we are deeply troubled what we have learned. No child should ever have to endure sexual abuse, and we are profoundly sorry some of our students were victimized. We sincerely apologize to those who were harmed, and we deeply regret their suffering.



We also recognize words are not enough, which is why we are undertaking these important changes to the organization to ensure a safe learning environment for our students. While More Than Me has already made numerous changes to more effectively safeguard our students, there is more to be done and we are taking decisive action.

It is with our most humble gratitude that we submit this update to the Ministry of Education with the expectation that all stakeholders will continue to work together in the interest of the children of Liberia.

Sincerely,

The Global and Liberian Advisory Boards
More Than Me Foundation

Enclosures:
McLane Middleton MTM Safeguarding Audit