We believe in community development that is transformative, holistic, fosters agency, strengthens collaborative capacity, and is sustainable. The ultimate goal of this development is to alleviate suffering and extreme poverty, allowing communities to become their own agents of change. Such communities are healthy, productive, just, equitable, secure and peaceful. In such communities, there is strength in diversity and conflict cannot take root. The potential for every human being is maximized.

We provide essential support to vulnerable children, and their caregivers, with timely and sustainable resources and activities that will protect their health and wellbeing, ensure access to education, and provide economic opportunities beyond school, thus providing a way out of extreme and enduring poverty.

NARROW-STRIP WEAVING

Traditional Craft Revived
Country Cloth is a traditional woven cloth in Liberia, named to distinguish it from imported cloth. It is made from strip weaving, native to Liberia and West Africa. Traditionally, a male craft, women have been reviving the art over the past decades in Liberia.

Narrow-strip weaving dates back centuries, as far back as the 10th century. Most often, the cloth was sewn together to create a wrapper, a large rectangular cloth wrapped around the body. The cloth was also used for a number of different uses, sewn together to make throws, wall hangings, hats, shirts, bags, and other items.

Historically, the cotton was grown in Liberia. Today, however, the thread used by the women weavers is imported from Guinea, since the cotton industry disintegrated during the Liberian Civil Wars (1989-2003).

THE WEAVE

The Product
The women in Kolahun are predominately weaving using the warp striping method, though some weavers have incorporated weft striping, creating a checker-board pattern, into their work. These are typical West African designs. The width of the cloth ranges from 4 to 6 inches. The lengths range from 10 to 14 yards.

It takes approximately 30-40 hours for a weaver to finish one roll of Country Cloth.

The patterns and colors chosen are those of the weavers, reflecting personal and cultural style.

THE COOPERATIVE

Supporting Emerging Female Entrepreneurs
The Women’s Weaving Cooperative (WWC) was formed in 2017. It was truly a grassroots initiative. Women attending a literacy class, offered by RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA (RHL), were discussing how they might increase their income, giving them greater power of the purse and the potential to support themselves and their household. These women designed a 6-month apprenticeship, initially with two of them instructing the 10-12 apprentices. At the end of the apprenticeship, the women could join the Cooperative.

As of 2020, there have been three cohorts of apprentices, and the total number in the Cooperative is 39, including 3 instructors.

The weavers come together twice a week to weave under the veranda of RHL’s Vocational & Educational Training Center, originally built to provide cover for the weavers so they could extend their weaving into the rainy season, which lasts from May to October.

RHL supports the weavers through Business Skills and Microfinance workshops. Every cooperative member has the option to borrow a microloan for purchasing supplies. RHL also provides the capital to cover the costs of apprenticeships.

As these women embark on their long journey to economic independence, we are working to secure markets, both in Liberia and internationally, where the Country Cloth can be sold at a fair price to ensure the profitability and sustainability of the Cooperative.
RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA donations are administered by the TIDES FOUNDATION.
The TIDES FOUNDATION 501(c)3 is a family of donor-advised funds that share a social entrepreneurship mission. Founded in 1976 in San Francisco, the TIDES FOUNDATION has worked with more than 15,000 individuals and organizations to make the world a better place.