

BACKGROUND

The country of Liberia has endured 14 years of civil war spanning 1990 to 2004. Apart from the destruction done to the country's infrastructures and programs, the civil war left the Republic of Liberia with an illiteracy rate as high as 80%. Hundreds of thousands of young people never had the opportunity of going to school or continuous education during the conflict. This misfortune is now giving birth to a high degree of economic dependency and social despondency. Now that the war has ended, these young adults **deserve to come to the knowledge of the saving grace of Jesus Christ** through participating in holistic programs aimed at improving their spiritual lives while developing their capacity to learn and apply vocational skills that will lead to self-reliance and self-respect.

CURRENT SITUATION

A peaceful, democratic election was held in Liberia in 2005 resulting in the election of a God-fearing, United Methodist woman of God, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Under her leadership, Liberia is on a long, winding (but certain) road to peace and economic stability. Idle, frustrated, young adults can lead to destabilization of the peace process in Liberia. Providing them with vocational skill training will offer up a skilled pool of individuals to assist in the country's long-term efforts towards infrastructural renovation and program revitalization.

According to a December 2006 UNESCO sponsored "Situational Analysis of the Technical, Vocational Education and Training System in Liberia":

"Poor access to and quality of education, as demonstrated by an illiteracy rate estimated by the Ministry of Education to be 75%, presents a major impediment to economic development, livelihoods, prosperity, and ultimate peace and security. Despite the government's efforts in supporting Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET), the cost is well beyond the available resources. Financing TVET is problematic. Since the 1960's, vocational training has been provided in selected educational institutions to empower youth and young adults between the ages of 15-35 for employment and to enable them play a meaningful role in society"

ROLE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF LIBERIA IN PROVIDING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

For many decades, the United Methodist Church of Liberia has addressed the need for the provision of vocational training opportunities through offering vocational classes in its junior and senior high-level schools. In today's post war Liberia, vocational skill training programs can equip youth and young adults with both educational and professional skills that will allow them to rise above their current station as societal liabilities. Skill training in industrial, agriculture, artistic, and home arts is vital to promoting and encouraging economic growth and development in urban and rural communities.

In 2008, the United Methodist Church established a Vocational Education Department (headed by a Director) with the two-prong goal of: (1) developing EXISTING vocational skill training opportunities in its high schools; and (2) establishing ten-month hands-on skill training extension classes in selected high schools to cater to un-educated and under-educated young adults.

"Quick Impact" vocational skill training is essential in addressing the need to provide training opportunities to the "lost" generation of present day young adults who were unable to attend school due to the civil war as well as today's, post war disadvantaged hard-core youths.

PLAN OF ACTION

The Department of Vocational Education has instituted a three-year general plan of action:

YEAR ONE:

1. Assessment of all senior high vocational training programs;
2. Development of a ten-month skills training extension program at Tubman Gray School in Gbarnga;
3. Search for resources and partners;
4. Evaluation.

YEAR TWO:

1. Development of existing vocational training programs;
2. Development of a ten-month skills training extension program at a site to be decided after the complete assessment;
3. Search for resources and partners;
4. Evaluation.

YEAR THREE:

1. Development of existing vocational training programs;
2. Development of a ten-month skills training extension program at a site to be decided;
3. Search for resources and partners;
4. Evaluation.

No formal education is required for acceptance in the ten-month extension programs; however, basic literacy classes will be offered to participants. Training will be done based on the apprenticeship model at a ten-month training duration.

REQUEST

Please continue to pray for the Lord's guidance as this ministry is developed and gradually implemented. Please pray about the possibility of coming over to assist us as an individual volunteer or part of a work team.

We are using the following Advance Special Project listing:

Swords Turned Into Plowshares, #14488A

An alternative, productive lifestyle and livelihood for young ex-combatants.

TO SUPPORT THIS ADVANCE SPECIAL PROJECT, FINANCIAL DONATIONS CAN BE SENT THROUGH THE GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES. MAKE YOUR CHECK PAYABLE TO "ADVANCE GCFA". ON THE NOTATION SECTION OF YOUR CHECK, WRITE "SWORDS TO PLOWSHARES # 14488A". SEND THE CHECK TO: ADVANCE GCFA; P.O. BOX 9068 GPO; NEW YORK, NY 10087-9068. PLEASE INCLUDE A SHORT COVER LETTER INDICATING "THE FUNDS ARE FOR THE SWORDS TO PLOWSHARES PROGRAM TO THE ATTENTION OF HERBERT ZIGBUO". FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES' SUPPORTED ADVANCE SPECIAL PROGRAM, INCLUDING OPTIONS FOR DONATING ONLINE, PLEASE GO TO THE FOLLOWING WEBSITE :

<http://new.gbgm-umc.org/advance>.

Presented by: Herbert Zigbuo, October 2008

EMAIL: umcliberia@yahoo.com

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF LIBERIA

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM



"LEARN A TRADE, EMPLOY YOURSELF"

ISAIAH 2:4

He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes from many people. They will beat their swords into plow shares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up swords against nation nor will they train for war anymore.

