

Dear Patron,

I am writing to you as a representative of the youth of Liberia. My name is Hope White. I was elected Miss Teen Liberia in August of 2008. I want to do something to change the reality in Liberia. I want to make a difference for the children and youth who are currently suffering in my country. I need your help.

Liberia is a small country in West Africa. It is located on the the west coast of Africa just above the Ivory Coast.

Liberia is rich in diamonds and gold, but the people of Liberia are it's greatest resource. These are people who love family and community. They value and respect their elders. The churches are the center of communities. It is in the churches that the people find strength and courage to face the challenges of everyday life.

The communities have become isolated by a civil war which lasted 13 years. The war dislocated members of families. Many family members remain lost to each other as the children were separated at very young ages and are unable to identify their relatives.

Poverty currently separates communities. Hunger is an everyday reality for the majority of Liberia. A typical family may be able to scrape up enough food to cook and sell at the market so that their family can eat. If they are unable to do this, they must go hungry. Houses are very humble, without furnishings. There is typically no electricity or plumbing. Sanitation is a real challenge. People must walk to community wells for water. Typically families sleep on the floors. Poor roads and transportation systems limit visitation among family members

Diseases are very common among the general population. HIV is rising at a very rapid rate. Those diagnosed with HIV are typically taken to "the black gate." This is a community of HIV victims in exile. Voo Doo and Witchcraft are still common practices among the general population. The markets are not regulated and therefore sanitation is questionable. There is no one to oversee the quality of the goods exchanged. Many tricks are used to get money for nothing out of the consumer.

In 2006, Liberia elected the first woman president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Our hope, is that with a new government dedicated to non-violence, and rebuilding our infrastructure, we can create sustainable communities and sustainable peace.

We are asking for your help. We need to work with the Liberian communities to help them find a way to become sustainable. We need to work to rebuild safe neighborhoods and community structures. We need to educate the children so that they can overcome the challenges they face in this post-war environment. We need to create a basic health care system and educate the masses about prevention of infectious diseases.

By the grace of God two groups have come together to work with the Liberian government, and the local people to develop a basic medical system to educate and provide care. Project Helping Hands and West African Children's Lifeline have joined together to facilitate this work.

Project Helping Hands is a group of medical professionals dedicated to bringing medical care to remote communities with the goal of helping them become self-sufficient. West African Children's Lifeline has been very active in helping to build clean wells, create schools, and provide basic health care. We need your help. We need monetary donations to help support these groups of doctors and nurses. We need money to ship supplies and medical equipment to furnish our clinics.

Please help us change the reality of Liberia. Help us create a sustainable community of our children and youth. Please support our efforts so that we can continue to live in peace.

Sincerely,

Hope White, Miss Teen Liberia

Introduction to Liberia

Liberia is a small country in West Africa. It is located on the the west coast of Africa just above the Ivory Coast.

The land is very beautiful and diverse. Moving inland, the coastal region quickly turns to rolling hills and mountains with lush rainforests. The climate is very hot in humid with two seasons, the rainy season and the dry season. Average temperature is hot at humid.

Our trip is planned for April which it the beginning of the rainy season. You can expect rainfall in the early evenings for a few hours and then sunshine and hot weather.



About our Host

Cuttington University College, located 120 miles north of Monrovia, is the oldest private, coeducational, four-year, degree-granting institution in sub-Saharan Africa.

It issues degrees in the liberal arts and a number of technical studies. It has educated generations of leaders for the nation of Liberia and indeed for West Africa.

Its roots lie deep within the history of the nation, the relationship between Liberia and the United States, and the Episcopal Church.

West African Children's Lifeline

www.westafricanchildrenslifeline.com/

This organization is made up of Americans and Liberians working together to help provide education, safe drinking water and medical systems. This organization has been working with the Liberian government and currently has members in Liberia working to lay ground work for our trip.

Liberia Information and History

Freed American slaves began settling on the West African coast in 1820. In 1847 Liberia was declared an independent republic—Africa's first—under a constitution modeled on that of the U.S. In 1989 civil war erupted, ending seven years later with the Abuja Peace Accords. In 1999 the government of Charles Taylor was accused of supporting rebels in Sierra Leone, and it fought a border war with Guinea in 2000. Taylor was forced into exile in 2003, and the new government works to rebuild the nation.

ECONOMY

Industry: rubber processing, palm oil processing, timber, diamonds.

Agriculture: rubber, coffee, cacao, rice; sheep; timber.

Exports: rubber, timber, iron, diamonds, cacao.

Text source: *National Geographic Atlas of the World*, Eighth Edition, 2004

Population

3,283,000

Currency

Liberian dollar

Capital

Monrovia; 572,000

Life Expectancy

49

Area

111,370 square kilometers
(43,000 square miles)

GDP per Capita

U.S. \$1,000

Language

English, 20 ethnic
languages

Literacy Percent

58

Religion

Indigenous beliefs,
Christian, Muslim