

Dear Friends of Liberia,

Happy Holidays! Twice a year we reach out to our members and friends with an update on the activities you are helping support. We are proud to report on the impact FOL and its partners are making in Liberia. We also know that mailboxes are filled in December with appeals from non-profit organizations for your tax deductible donations. The world's needs are terribly huge, many organizations are doing wonderful work, and you, too, probably are torn by decisions where your funds might have the most impact. In a volunteer organization like ours, with little administrative overhead, every dollar makes a difference. Your moral support is essential; your donations make the projects in Liberia possible. We truly appreciate you, and wish to share a story about one FOL partner.

The gift of Literacy to Liberian families

In 1987, former Peace Corps Volunteer Sally Humphrey published a book called "A Family in Liberia" about a 10-year-old Kpelle boy and his family in Salala District, Bong County, where she served in the '60s as a teacher. The thin hard-back volume, published by Lerner Publications and illustrated by Sally's photos, is a charming and very loving account of day-to-day life upcountry. Actually, despite years of civil war and political crisis, it could be a snapshot of village life today. One theme that runs through it is the importance of education.

Almost thirty years after that publication, as Friends of Liberia cobbled together the seed money for the Family Literacy Initiative (FLI), we announced to our members that we were short of the goal we needed for the first year. One very generous donor sent exactly that amount. Not only were we grateful for the 11th-hour assist, but also honored that our patron was the author of "A Family in Liberia."

"I have supported FOL since its beginnings. Working and bringing up a family didn't allow me to physically help in Liberia, so I let the FOL team do that for me," said Sally when contacted at her home in England to thank her. "Having worked in education all my life, I am particularly interested in the Family Literacy Initiative. I keep hoping that every child in Liberia will be able to go to school and will have a valuable school experience. I am very impressed with the number of projects FOL members are involved in and the amount of expertise FOL volunteers have developed."



In the accompanying photo, Sally is showing her book to a class in Salala during a visit to Liberia in 2012. Their teacher (at right) was her student in 4th grade when last she saw him.

Sally's continuing support, and that of other "angel" contributors, make our efforts so unique. Liberia and our partners know that FOL is in the literacy effort for the long run.

The successful completion of that first year of teaching families to do learning activities with their children at home attracted a major international donor, Open Society Foundations, for the second year. The professional educators and evaluators who designed and evaluated the project to the level where it could be appreciated by the Ministry of Education and professional development funders are members who volunteer their services. We are so fortunate to partner with [HIPPY](#) (Home Instruction for Parents and Preschool Youth - International) and the [WE-CARE Foundation](#) of Monrovia, also family-based,

which administers the project. (Don't miss the inspiring video about Liberia on the [HIPPIY](#) home page!) In its third year, which has already started, FLI is in four communities -- West Point, Caldwell, and Pipeline in Montserrado County and Duazon in Margibi. This year more than 160 families will be on the road to intergenerational literacy. At the request of many of the parents, we are adding evening adult literacy classes for the parents and caregivers participating in the program. Check out [the reports](#) of evaluators and coordinators of FLI for more information.

Small Grants and Entrepreneurship



In a continuation of our successful community approach to solving Ebola-related problems, the Small Grants Program awards funds to recognized Liberian non-profits to address challenges in their communities. (Photo at left is courtesy of [RESTORE HOPE: LIBERIA](#), a FOL grantee) The FOL committee that runs this program has noticed that many applicant groups have difficulty meeting the requirement for a formal proposal with measurable results. Committee chairman Dr. Blidi Stemn, who goes to Liberia several times a year to administer a personal project in Maryland County, has committed to run proposal writing workshops for potential grant candidates. This will be a big step toward making Liberian solutions more sustainable.

Improving Health for Liberians

A ten-person FOL Health Team in the U.S. is working together with a FOL Health Team in Liberia made up of recent graduates from a Masters in Science of Nursing (MSN) program in Monrovia. The FOL Liberia Health Team has completed a large needs assessment of nursing and midwifery faculty members in Liberia. The needs

assessment is evaluating the continuing education needs of the faculty members which will help them do a better job of preparing nurses and midwives to work in Liberia. The team is now tabulating the data for a report to the FOL Board that may suggest how a project can be developed. This project is the result of FOL members traveling and teaching in Liberia since the war. For more information, please send us an [email](#) with "Health Team" in the subject line.

Advocacy and Involvement

Have you been reading FOL's Election Bulletins? We have appreciated so much the contribution of a member who has excellently synthesized the Liberian election proceedings over several months. The decision made by the Liberian Supreme Court on December 7th was covered in Bulletin #14 -- the bottom line being that the runoff between the top vote-getters on October 10th (Vice President Joseph Boakai and former football star George Weah) should proceed. All are waiting for the National Election Commission to announce the runoff date, determined by when preparations can be ready and shortcomings during the "primary" corrected. It is still possible that this could occur before the end of President Sirleaf's term. The Election Bulletins are posted on our blog.

On November 17th, Friends of Liberia, in partnership with the U.S. Institute of Peace, held a panel discussion at the New York University Center in Washington D.C., "Electing a President: Examining Liberia's 2017 Experience." Panel members included the retired Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and Ambassador to Liberia Linda Thomas-Greenfield, whose comments were widely reported (sometimes out of context) in the Liberian press, and well-known and respected VOA journalist, James Butty. The FOL President was moderator. We were delighted to hear each of the panelists and all the



questions from the audience. The entire program is available on the [NYU website](#) if you missed it! We had many Liberian attendees and met many new friends, so we plan to have similar programs in the future.

The new Ambassador of the Republic of Liberia to the United

States, Lois Cheche Lewis Brutus, presented her Letters of Credence to President Trump on November 29, 2017. She serves at the pleasure of the Liberian president, so might be replaced after a new president is elected. Still, we look forward to meeting Ambassador Brutus and discussing FOL's projects in Liberia.

In its 31st year, FOL continues to find ways to support Liberia's progress toward a better life for all her citizens. Please become a mission partner by including us in your holiday giving. Why not give in honor of the first person who helped you to read? Or a favorite teacher or Peace Corps volunteer? Or in memory of a loved one? As other organizations have found, a monthly giving plan through PayPal on our [donation page](#) is a great way for us to be able to plan ahead, and is simple for you, too. Or if you prefer, a form to send back with a donation and comments is available on that page as well.

Most of all, *thank you* to those of you who have given in the past, and particularly those who set up a monthly contribution to sustain the organization throughout the year. We also honor those who have named Friends of Liberia in a bequest. More on that in the year ahead.

We hope you will also find a place for your expertise in FOL. You would be welcomed from anywhere in the world into one of working groups that convene by phone to plan and monitor FOL's work in Liberia, or if you have the appropriate experience, into a position on the Board. If interested, please do write us at liberia@fol.org.

As the organization reaches for higher goals with each passing year, we are reminded of what the late anthropologist Margaret Meade said: *Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have.*

Thank you for partnering with us.

Sincerely yours,

Sarah

Sarah C. Morrison, FOL President