
Friends Of Liberia

2019 Annual Report



FOL appreciates use of this beautiful photo identified as the Mesurado River from above Paynesville, with Monrovia on the horizon at the coast. Sweet Liberia.



Family Literacy Initiative Graduation Day Program, Duazon

Table of Contents*

Greetings from the Friends of Liberia (FOL) President	3
About Friends of Liberia	4
Strategic Plan (cover)	5

Section I: Program Committee Reports

• Education: Family Literacy Initiative (FLI)	6
• Health	10
• Small Grants/Entrepreneurship	12

Section II: Governance, Outreach, and Operations

• Organizational Chart	17
• Membership and Outreach	18
• Communications	21
• Development	21
• Finance	22

Contact Information	23
----------------------------	-----------

** Special thanks to Erica Dickinson for assistance with the Annual Report*

Message from the President and Board of FOL

Dear Friends,

We have followed events in Liberia during 2019 not only through media reports, but also through the eyes of members who traveled "home" to monitor projects, see family and friends, and participate with international and local organizations to support the quality of life of Liberians. Some reported that the middle class was increasing and more nice houses and new buildings, including schools, were found even outside of Monrovia. Others saw the disparity between the poor and the wealthy growing greater than ever, the exchange rate of the Liberian dollar to the U.S. dollar worse and inflation greater, supplies of gasoline unavailable, the scandal over millions of dollars of lost currency as unresolved, salaries of teachers and health workers that were months behind, and banks that were closing upcountry. Before 2019 ended, Peace Corps Volunteers upcountry were brought to Monrovia and either reassigned closer to the capital or sent home. FOL was in contact with the Peace Corps Liberia Country Director, who provided evacuated Volunteers (EPCVs) with information about FOL and our desire to assist them as they returned to the United States. And all that was before 2020 brought the changes caused by COVID-19 pandemic, which is also affecting FOL projects.

Thanks to your support and a concluding grant from Open Society International, in 2019 the Family Literacy Initiative (FLI), implemented by the WE-CARE Foundation in Monrovia, concluded its fourth year helping preschool children be prepared for success when they enter primary school. The Adult Literacy Program component of FLI was a popular and successful addition for two groups of parents. Please take time to read about the impact on education *your participation* made possible in 2019.

Through your donations, FOL has also continued its award of small grants to Liberian non-governmental organizations that are advancing goals shared with FOL. We thank Dr. Bledi Stemn for his distinguished years of service leading the committee that carefully reviewed the many proposals submitted. His shoes are proving hard to fill! Accountability to you, our members, is one of our highest values.

In 2019 the Health Team finalized plans to implement their first in-service workshop for instructors from 20 Liberian schools of nursing and mid-wifery. Read more within and look for results of the impact of that workshop, held in January 2020, in upcoming bulletins to FOL membership!

We thank all Friends of Liberia members for their support, both financially and by participating on FOL committees. FOL members in the United States and worldwide also advance peace, health, education, economic security, and better understanding among cultures as professionals in international NGOs, government, business, academia, medicine, religious groups, and as volunteers. We would love to sing your praises, too; you are heroes every day. Thank you for your service. We share sorrow with the Peace Corps Volunteers who had to leave their Liberian assignments, homes, and friends in March, 2020, pledge our support, and thank you for wanting to learn from and work with "Mama Liberia," as we did.

Please contact <liberia@fol.org> with any questions, ideas, or recommendations you may have.

Respectfully yours,

Sarah

Sarah C. Morrison, President and Board Chairperson, Friends of Liberia

WHO WE ARE

Friends of Liberia (FOL) began 35 years ago as a way for former Peace Corps Volunteers who had served in Liberia to maintain relationships with those who had similar experiences. It grew to include academics, health professionals, diplomats, missionaries, development workers, and Liberians, as well as RPCVs (Returned Peace Corps Volunteers), and was formally organized as a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation in the District of Columbia. FOL helps support Liberian-led non-profit organizations and groups to meet needs and aspirations congruent with FOL's mission and resources.

Over the last 30 years, FOL has worked to improve education in Liberia. FOL trained more than 300 primary teachers after the civil war in five of its largest counties, conducting workshops and participating in conferences, renovating schools, and sending supplies and appropriate books for school children. Its training of primary school teachers from 1999-2013 helped to introduce the concept of Early Childhood Education (ECE) to Liberia, which now has an ECE Bureau in the Ministry of Education. During the Ebola crisis, FOL raised over \$100,000 to support community-initiated education, prevention, and treatment programs related to Ebola, and has since utilized its Small Grants Program to address long-term challenges communities and survivors have faced in its aftermath. FOL has twice received the National Peace Corps Association's annual Loret Miller Ruppe Award for outstanding service, most recently in 2016.

FOL members, who now number over 2000, communicate through newsletters and social media, attendance at Board meetings, learning opportunities such as panels on Liberian issues, and social events organized by individual members in various regions or by FOL itself, usually held in the Washington area in conjunction with a Board meeting. FOL plans to hold events in conjunction with the 60th anniversary of the Peace Corps in 2021 (probably September in Washington, DC) and welcomes any FOL members to serve on its planning committee.

All who support our vision, mission, and values are invited to become members. Though membership fees are not assessed, participating members are considered those who contribute at least annually to FOL. Our members live throughout the United States and in several foreign countries, including Liberia.

The FOL Strategic Plan provides our guidance as we make decisions and stay focused on what role we can best play as a volunteer organization dependent primarily on individual donations. It was revised and adopted during 2018 for the years 2019-2021. The cover page follows, but the full plan (which will be updated as needed) can be found on our website, <http://fol.org/strategic-plan/>

Vision

Our vision is for Friends of Liberia to be an effective organization helping Liberia in its quest to be a peaceful and just country in which every Liberian has opportunities for quality education and employment, and access to adequate health care.

Mission

FOL is a non-governmental, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization registered in Washington, DC that seeks to positively affect Liberia and Liberians through education, health, economic, and humanitarian programs, and through advocacy efforts in support of shared values between the people of Liberia and the United States.



VISION:

Our vision is that Friends of Liberia be an effective organization for helping Liberia in its quest to be a peaceful and just country in which every Liberian has opportunities for quality education and employment, and access to adequate health care.

MISSION:

FOL is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that seeks to connect and engage interested parties in Liberia to positively affect Liberia and Liberians through education, economic and humanitarian programs and through advocacy efforts.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2019 - 2021

STRATEGIC ISSUE 1: PROGRAMS

01

What programs can we support with a large impact that draw on the expertise of FOL membership, capitalize on FOL's comparative advantage, and support Liberia's long-term development strategy?

STRATEGIC ISSUE 2: FUNDING

02

How can FOL diversify, increase and sustain its financial resources to support programming for bigger impact on Liberia and more engagement of members?

STRATEGIC ISSUE 3: GOVERNANCE & OPERATIONS

03

How can FOL organize itself for more efficiency and effectively management of its work in the U.S. and in Liberia?

STRATEGIC ISSUE 4: MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

04

How can FOL recruit new members and engage more members in its work by offering opportunities to carry out FOL's mission?

CORE VALUES:



Service:

We are committed to timely and reliable service based on mutual respect. We engage in programs and activities that respond to needs identified by Liberians and that help them shape solutions.



Partnerships:

We value collaboration and seek partnerships with like-minded organizations and individuals. We build strong working relationships and coalitions to help ensure self-reliance and sustainability as ultimate goals of our work.



Accountability and Transparency:

We follow the highest ethical standards, and demonstrate honesty and fairness in every action that we take. Measurable outcomes and sound financial management are important elements of our accountability. We expect the same from our partners and those we serve.



Integrity:

We are responsible to our members, board, donors and the communities and country we serve for ensuring that our programs and activities meet the highest standards of professional and personal integrity.



Stewardship:

We are able to accomplish our mission through the generosity of our members and others. We respect donors' intentions on the use of their gifts, and are responsible stewards of the resources they entrust to us.

SECTION I: FOL Program Committee Reports

Education Committee

Overview



Our flagship program, the Family Literacy Initiative (FLI), was launched after FOL members did a nationwide survey of education programs that indicated the greatest unmet educational need in Liberia was for preparation of preschoolers to have a quality educational experience. Several preschool preparation programs were researched for suitability to Liberia, and the HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents and Preschool Youngsters) model was selected, which recognizes that parents are a child's first teacher and learning begins at home. A three-year pilot project was developed through effective partnerships with WE-CARE Foundation in Monrovia and HIPPY International and implemented in November, 2015. Propelled by positive Year 1 evaluations in 2016 and fueled with a generous Open Society Foundations grant, FLI completed its second successful year in 2017, and in 2018, 45 children completed the three-year FLI/HIPPY curriculum. Approximately 180 families from

four communities participated in Year 4 of the program, including new first year children who replaced those who finished the third year. Details on FLI and reports on the program's impact may be read at <http://fol.org/programs/literacy-initiative/>.



What can be happier (even if it's common not to smile for photos) than parents who have helped their young children prepare for a successful school experience, and increased their own literacy as well?

2019 Developments

The Education Committee is pleased to report that Eddie Socker, an LR-8 who served in Tahn, Grand Cape Mount, will be joining the committee to help with updating the Education page on the FOL site. (LR-8 = eighth group of Liberia Peace Corps Volunteers since the Peace Corps resumed operations after the civil war.)

In Year 4 of the FLI program, 180 children between the ages of 3 and 6 participated from four impoverished communities. Twenty-one trained home visitors worked each week with families under the supervision of Gbima Bahtokpah and assistant coordinator David Sonjor. HIPPY International and its director, Miriam Westheimer, continued to mentor, coach, and provide resource and technical support and advice. Grants from the Open Society Foundations International, the International Foundation, and the Rolander Family Foundation, as well as FOL member support, have made this pilot program possible.

FOL recognizes and is committed to capacity-building as an essential element to success and sustainability. All three partners work collaboratively to ensure the transfer of skills and knowledge to implementing staff. The one-week training program for Home Visitors at the beginning of this program year was planned and delivered entirely by WE-CARE, and the Bracken School Readiness Assessments were also conducted entirely by them. In turn, the WE-CARE coordinators developed the exceptional parents in the program who had some education and much enthusiasm into home visitors, expanding



Assessing progress of FLI pre-school student

the

employment opportunities and impacting the family economy. They are proving to be dedicated, and relate excellently to new program participants, parents like themselves. Some of the home visitors who began with decent high school educations are making plans to become accredited teachers.

The three partners are exploring ways to make the service delivery model more cost-effective without compromising the impact, such as by working with several parents/caregivers together during one longer weekly session instead of making individual home visits to every parent every week.



FLI Home Visitor working with parent on week's lesson

Getting the HIPPY materials from the U.S. to Liberia has been an ongoing problem. In 2019 we used airfreight to transport the materials directly from the publisher to Liberia, and now would like to see WE-CARE do the ordering directly. Ron Mertz and Ruby Joseph work with WE-CARE staff monitoring and evaluating the program. This year the evaluations showed that the children did exceptionally well. In a conference call with Gbima Bahtokpah, she explained new strategies that were being used that may account for the extremely positive results.

The curriculum cultural-adaptation work ("Liberianizing" the HIPPY materials) is a continuing and highly praised initiative. We are awaiting the completion of several new student books by WE-CARE staff. It is an added cost, but changing references of things like snow to rain and illustrating African children and habitats helps students identify with stories and feel important.



WE-CARE/FOL/HIPPY: Family Literacy Initiative closing program in the Neezoe Community

A strategy to transition and track children leaving the FLI program as they move on to kindergarten and first grade is being implemented. Several FLI mothers have now become quite vocal advocates for smaller class sizes, more resource materials, better attendance and engagement by teachers, and more involvement by parents in the public schools. Empowerment has been a positive byproduct of FLI participation.



Monitoring and evaluation is ongoing under the leadership of Ruby Joseph and Ron Mertz. A Liberian evaluator is being trained to do some of this work in country. The FLI program is evaluated using a variety of tools, including test scores and reports, observational visits, and quarterly coordinator reports. FOL's Education Committee is available to answer any questions about the results of testing and the secondary impact of FLI on the families involved and their communities. As noted, reports on the program's impact may be read at <http://fol.org/programs/literacy-initiative/>.

FLI operations were observed on site by FOL members during the year, including this past fall when Stephanie Vickers spent several days working with WE-CARE staff in a variety of ways, including preparing the budget.

Adult Literacy Pilot Program (ALP)

Since Year Two of the FLI program, many parents have expressed a desire to improve their own literacy. A survey of participating families found that 68 percent of respondents thought adult literacy classes would be very useful in helping them educate their children, and also to develop skills for employment. In 2019, David Rosen and WE-CARE director, Michael Weah, led the pilot year of the Adult Literacy Program (ALP), which was developed by FOL and WE-CARE with an expert consultant. Reports have been very positive and participants are asking that the program continue.

Thanks to SueDee Shen's donation and HIPPIY International, the adult literacy curriculum developer has completed the major portion of the adult literacy curriculum -- only the proofreading remains to be done. The ALP curriculum was designed to support parents/caregivers who have children in the program. Miriam



Westheimer, David Rosen, and Mary Gemignani are working on obtaining a Creative Commons license for the ALP curriculum. A Creative Commons license enables the free distribution of otherwise copyrighted work



WE-CARE/FOL/HIPPY: Adult Literacy closing program at Duazon

Liberia Literacy Landscape Paper

The Literacy Landscape document has been updated thanks to the efforts of Jinny Hesel and provides a perspective on the groups providing various types of literacy programs and their locations in Liberia. This year a technology literacy group was added. Mary Gemignani updated the map and is working on reformatting it. The latest version is available on the FOL website.

Looking Ahead

The Education Committee is awaiting confirmation of funding to support an FLI site upcountry. In the meantime, we are continually looking for new sources of support to continue these much-needed pre-school and adult programs. The Ministry of Education supports them as a needed component, but does not have the budget to make such programs available across Liberia.

Health Committee

Introduction

Friends of Liberia Health Team assessed the need for an education-focused health project designed to help improve the knowledge base and competency of faculty at the Liberian schools of nursing and midwifery. Since nurses and midwives provide the bulk of the health care in Liberia, it is extremely important that these health care workers in Liberia receive the best quality of education while obtaining their initial instruction and throughout their nursing and midwifery careers.



Goal

The goal of the project is to identify specific areas where faculty members from the schools of nursing and midwifery need to improve their teaching competencies. This will help them do a better job of preparing nurses and midwives to work in Liberia, and in turn improve the level of health care in Liberia.

Background

The first step for the project was to develop a needs assessment to identify specific areas of knowledge needed by the nursing and midwifery faculty to improve their teaching abilities. In 2017 a needs assessment was conducted by the FOL Health team in Liberia with faculty members from eleven (11) Liberian nursing and midwifery schools. Focus groups also served to clarify and expand upon answers to the needs assessment instrument. The data was tabulated and analyzed. The review of the data demonstrated that there is a strong need for continuing education workshops to increase and improve the teaching skills of the faculty at the schools of nursing and midwifery.



2019

In early 2019 the FOL Board approved the Health Team moving forward with the development of a continuing education project proposal for nursing and midwifery faculty. In the fall of 2019 the FOL Board approved the submitted pilot project proposal for a weeklong workshop to be held in January 2020 at Phebe School of Nursing in Bong County. Twenty (20) faculty members from the schools of nurse and midwifery will be invited to attend the pilot workshop.

Instruction will be provided by the five members of the FOL Health Team in Liberia. The Liberia Team obtained the support of the Liberia Board of Nursing and Midwifery and the Liberia Ministry of Health and Social Welfare for the project.

Funding for the 2020 workshop was obtained from a grant from the FOL Board and donations to FOL designated for the Health Project.

Health Project Team

The Health Committee is composed of a team in Liberia and a team in the U.S.

The five (5) members of the team in Liberia are graduates of the Masters of Nursing Education program at Mother Patern College of Health Sciences in Monrovia. The members are: Edwin Beyan, Harriette Mondaye, G. Clinton Zeantoe, Humphrey Loweal, and Peter Wainpa. The thirteen (13) members of the team in the U.S. are: Dr. Karen Hein, Roger Kropf, Sarah Morrison, Richard Nisbett, Beth Fischer, Bob Fischer, Joe Franta, Chris Piccione, Pat McGeorge (chairperson), Jim McGeorge, Madeline Farron, Laura Ridge, and Dr. Cori Maund.

How You Can Help

You can support the FOL Health Project by designating your donation to FOL for the "Health Project" at FOL.org. Any amount helps.

Small Grants Committee

Many more proposals were received in 2019 than there were funds budgeted for them. The Board agreed to add enough from the general fund to assist a few more groups that presented feasible plans for accomplishing objectives which further the current goals of FOL. These came with particularly high recommendations from the Small Grants Committee, under the exceptional leadership through the end of 2019 of Dr. Bliidi Stemn. When an organization has a proven track record or can be supervised by someone an active FOL member knows, who is living in Liberia, its proposal is given extra consideration since, if selected, it can be mentored and monitored to ensure success. This has been an ongoing concern, and FOL is happy to report that an in-country team began to meet in 2019, whose purpose included how to best fulfill this role. Unfortunately, the majority of this team was evacuated from Liberia about the time the remainder of the Peace Corps Volunteers were withdrawn in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

2019 Funded Projects

Human Empowerment Livelihood Programs Foundation	John Moiwoh, Executive Director Phone#: +231 -775710742 Email: moiwohj@gmail.com	To construct a Hand Pump on Yongor Yoko School campus known as HELP Foundation	\$2750
Women of Change	John P. Gibson, Program Manager Phone: 231777977624 Email: johngwomenofchange201@gmail.com John Kucij Phone: 518-372-9578 Email: Lkucij@gmail.com	To establish a small Ice Cream Business in the Monrovia area which will generate revenue to help meet the basic needs of 32 orphans under our care.	\$2350
Village Improvement Project, Inc	Dr. Leroy Boikai, President Phone #: 558-4348 Email: admin@vipinc.org	Seed money to be used to edit a school book for cultural correctness, design book cover, pay for the first run of the book, provide copies for FOL Family Literacy Initiative.	\$3000
Cua Pa Ngiamah Deddeh Kekula,	Ma Tarta Bondo, Chair lady Kakata. Phone#: 011 231-770296976	Funding to rehabilitate piggery house for income generation geared towards women empowerment.	\$2974

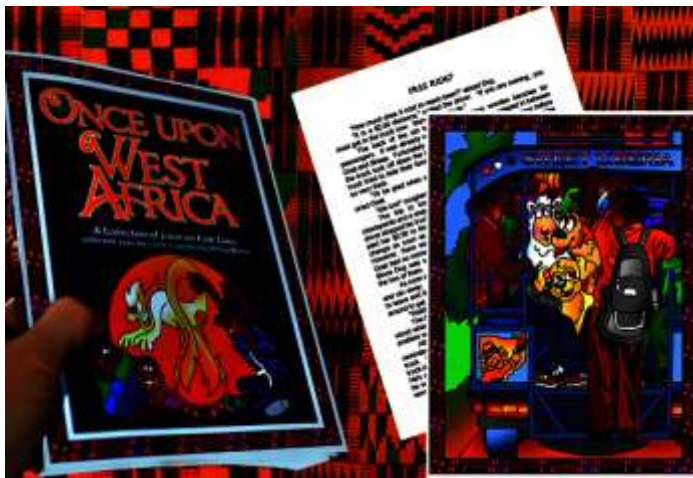
AgriLife Liberia	AgriLife Liberia Contact: Mr. Kumeinu Da-Tokpah Phone: 0881055654/0880428712 Email: kdatokpah@gmail.com	Establish a school poultry farm at Koon Town Public School in Todee.	\$2382
Bosh Bosh	Yamah Zawu Salala, Liberia BoshBosh.org Email: info@boshbosh.org	Associated costs to the after-school program associated with Bosh Bosh scholarship program for girls. Includes sewing skills, tutoring, and needs to ensure well-rounded success.	\$3000
Foundation for Women & Children Empowerment (FOWACE)	Haja Talawallay Phone: (+231) 775-136-556 Email: fowace001@gmail.com	To empower women directly affected by the Ebola outbreak, providing them with skills in soap production to enable them to become self-sufficient in the long term.	\$3000



HELP FOUNDATION INC. in partnership with Friends of Liberia constructed one water hand pump for school children at the Light Academy (Yongor Yoko School System) Rehab Community, Paynesville, Montserrado County Liberia. The project was implemented from 9/18 - 10/ 11, 2019



Thanks in part to the grant from FOL, **Women of Change** began an ice cream business providing vulnerable women with jobs and revenue to provide for the care of 32 orphans. The women did not have a marketable skill or education or network to be able to find jobs to support themselves and their families.



With a FOL grant, the **Village Improvement Project** published the first copies of Once Upon West Africa, a series of Liberian folk tales to improve reading skills. The Chairman of the Board, Dr. LeRoy Boikai, was recently in Monrovia, Liberia to pursue getting the text approved and used as a curriculum material by the Ministry of Education.

Based on feedback from leading private school administrators, VIP redesigned the book from one large book to a series of 25 books to accommodate the reading needs of pupils in Liberia. Each book in the series contains two Liberian folktales with vocabulary.

accommodate the reading needs of pupils in Liberia.

Let's feed Liberia

AgriLife Liberia collaborated with the Koon Town Public School to construct a six-room poultry house for the production and sales of eggs and poultry. The goal is to generate income for the school and provide scholarships for low income students, as well as instruct students and the community in agribusiness management skills and connecting farmers to markets for their organic products. A grant from Friends of Liberia was the key to starting the project!





Bosh Bosh is a nonprofit and ethical fashion brand that empowers Liberian women and girls through the design, fabrication and sale of handbags and other accessories. Bosh Bosh provides employment and educational opportunities for females, offering a wide range of programs in after-school education and granting full scholarships to female scholars. Bosh Bosh currently employs over 22 team members, including 23 female scholars. Bosh Bosh is about transferring skills and empowering girls and women and stands for free education,



vocational training, and the preparation of Liberia's next generation for a better future. A Peace Corps Volunteer was instrumental in starting Bosh Bosh and PCVs have stayed active in assisting Bosh Bosh in various ways. FOL has helped support the after-school skills training program that provides the scholars a way to help their families and also helps provide a way for them to do service projects themselves.

(Bosh Bosh has been making masks to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Anyone can order products or help support Bosh Bosh scholars online from their website.)



Foundation for Women & Children Empowerment (FOWACE) has been a wonderful partner in 2019, with good



reporting, accountability, and lots of pictures and stories about their accomplishments. FOWACE has thanked you, our FOL members, for being a key partner for their vulnerable women empowerment programs in Liberia, transforming the lives of Ebola affected women and girls through the acquisition of skills to make and market soap products.

How is soap made? Watch! More on their Facebook site.

<https://www.facebook.com/fowaceempowerment/videos/2480062052214531/?t=11>



FOWACE wrote: *We are pleased to share with you an update from one of the project beneficiaries. Yassa Mulbah is one of the 25 Ebola affected women that were trained in soap making with funding from Friends Of Liberia. Our team visited and talked to her about the outcome of the training. According to Yassa, she had no source of income after the Ebola crisis. Her story was changed as a result of the six month training program funded by FOL. She received start up materials after the training and today she is sending her children to school and providing them with basic needs through the soap making. Our team met her selling a locally made soap dust.*

(Recent news is that these women are producing lots and lots of extra soap and FOWACE is buying it to distribute to families, leading local efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19.)

These pictures show how your support is transforming the lives of Ebola affected women and girls in the Voinjama area who once felt that there was no hope for them after losing their husbands and other relatives to Ebola. Today, these women can provide food for their families and send their children to school through the soap making skill they acquired. You made it possible.



SECTION II: FOL Governance, Operations, & Outreach

Friends of Liberia complies fully with the District of Columbia Code for Incorporation as a Nonprofit, and has been recognized since 1988 by the Internal Revenue Service as a Section 501(c)(3) non-profit, charitable, and tax-exempt organization. The governing board trustees include the FOL officers, committee chairs, program heads, and at-large members. FOL revised its bylaws in 2016 to adopt the organizational structure shown in the following diagram, with a flexibility that allows FOL to make several structural changes as needed to address changing needs and member participation.



FOL gratefully acknowledges the dedication and integral leadership of Dr. Blidi Stern over the Small Grants Committee through December of 2019. The contributions made by Latisha Pledger as Secretary and Myrna Petors as head of the Communications Committee through 2019 brought FOL fresh perspectives and are appreciated greatly.

The Board meets quarterly, at least once a year in person and at other times either in person or via electronic participation. Some Board members who are not able to come in from other states or countries join us by telephone conference call or a widely available video app for meetings.



December 2019 Board Meeting (partial group +SM; others on Zoom)

Board meetings may be called at other times. A quorum must be present for official decisions to be taken, such as budget allocations, changes in structure or Board membership, and project additions or major changes. Program and management committees confer often, and communication among committee members is frequent between official board meetings. Hundreds of hours a year are dedicated by these Board volunteers and committee members to ensure that FOL operates efficiently and effectively.

FOL members are welcome to attend Board meetings and share opinions at any time. Members interested in serving on the Board or on a committee should contact Don Drach, at membership@fol.org. He can answer questions

about position qualifications, expectations, or forward your expression of interest to the proper person.

Membership and Outreach

The membership committee began the year by developing a 3-year action plan with specific projects and activities around three goals: (1) Develop strategies for identifying and recruiting new members; (2) Identify and offer programs for members to participate in; and (3) Maintain a robust membership and donor database. The plan also includes two cross-cutting goals related to coordination with the communications committee and social media.

Since the plan was adopted by the board in early 2019, the committee has focused on two high-priority activities: establishing an in-country committee, and strengthening the relationship between Peace Corps-Liberia and Friends of Liberia. We have made good progress on both.

Membership co-chair Rebecca Martinez is working with Monrovia-based FOL members to establish an in-country team which can help increase FOL's visibility and reach in Liberia, support our program partners there, and strengthen our ties with Peace Corps-Liberia.

As to our relationship with Peace Corps-Liberia, Sarah Morrison and PC-Liberia director Kristi Raube were in touch to discuss ways that FOL can support returning volunteers, particular those evacuated in December due to the banking liquidity problem. Kristi notified all returning volunteers about our offer, and a number of them contacted us and were put in touch with FOL members in their geographical area. As a result, many of them have joined FOL and some have joined committees. We have also begun a

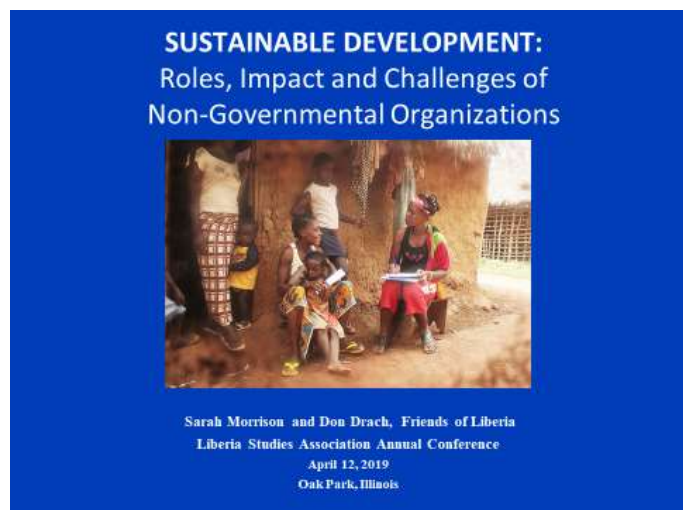
liaison program, identifying a member of each Peace Corps going back to Group 1 in 1963 to the present, who will serve as the membership committee's liaison to their group.

At the end of 2019, FOL had 2179 members, a 2% net increase over 2018.

Approximately 17% of our membership donated at least once in 2019, and approximately 2.6% of our membership donates more than once a year. The number of members giving automatically on a monthly basis is increasing and is certainly encouraged. Studies show that members tend to forget when they last donated and think it was more recently than it really was -- especially if one does not itemize deductions.

Outreach

FOL Board members and friends utilize opportunities to let others know what FOL is doing, contribute to relevant studies, show support of Liberians and their organizations in the U.S., and nurture both old and new friendships with others who care about Liberia. In 2019, activities to do this and potentially increase membership included these below.



In April, Don Drach and Sarah Morrison were presenters at the annual conference of the Liberian Studies Association. The 2019 conference was held outside Chicago at Concordia University with the theme *Beyond Transition: Sustainable Development Challenges for Liberia's New Administration*. Sarah presented research and propositions on the role of small non-governmental organizations in post-crisis countries, while Don presented FOL's Family Literacy Initiative as a practical example of what can be done



Also in April, FOL President Morrison represented FOL on a discussion of the draft report on the Liberian Diaspora by the UN International Organization on Migration.



In May, FOL joined RPCVs who had served under the late Vince Groh to honor Vince's memory by planting a memorial tree in a Washington, D.C. park. As Peace Corps Liberia country director from 2011-2013, Vince was a friend and role model for many of the volunteers who served during that time. To honor his memory, several Liberia RPCVs organized a tree-planting ceremony at Dakota Playground in

Washington, D.C with the non-profit organization Casey Trees. On May 11th we gathered, along with Vince's mother and sister, to plant the tree, install the plaque, share memories of Vince, and enjoy a picnic lunch provided by FOL.

The Liberian Ambassador to the United States, H.E. George S.W.Patten, at the annual reception to celebrate Liberian Independence Day July 26th, honored the contributions of two FOL associates for their contributions to mutual understanding and the Liberian people: **Sia Barbara Kamara**, an early childhood education globally-recognized authority, who has been instrumental in the work of the FOL Education Committee and FLI; and James Butty, Voice of America Managing Editor, English to Africa Service and Host of "Daybreak Africa," the very popular program that has been a reliable and much-loved source of objective reporting on Africa for decades under his leadership. James also helped facilitate the panel at NYU/DC that FOL organized prior to the 2017 Liberian presidential elections. FOL was represented by its president.



In September the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC opened its new annex and grounds, called the REACH Center for its goal of reaching out to expanded audiences. The final day of its opening was dedicated to the Peace Corps, in honor of JFK's most loved and lasting contribution -- at least in our humble opinion! Sarah Morrison, Pat Reilly, and Don Drach volunteered at affiliate group "booths" to share information about Peace Corps and FOL, NOVA RPCVs, and the PC Community for Refugees.

On Friday November 22, 2019 Ruby Joseph and Mary Gemignani, Ed.D. (chair of the FOL Education Committee) presented a paper entitled *Family Literacy Initiative: An International Partnership Brings Success to Parents and Preschoolers* at the **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)** Conference in Nashville Tennessee. Two prominent Liberian educators were in the audience: Felicia Sackey Doe-Sumah, Assistant Minister of the Basic and Secondary Education (and Coordinator of the Teaching by Radio and Girls Education), Liberian Ministry of Education, and Florence Baby Koroma, Dean of the School of Education at Stellar Maris Polytechnic University and Coordinator of the Early Childhood and Higher Education Consortium. Also in attendance was one of the collaborators on the Family Literacy Initiative, Sia Barbara Kamara, Consultant, Mentor and Coach, Open Society Foundations /OSIWA, Liberia. NAEYC is the largest early childhood conference in the U.S.



Looking ahead to 2021 when Peace Corps celebrates its 60th anniversary, we are seeking members to work on a committee to organize a variety of related programs, as we did for Peace Corps' 50th anniversary in 2011. For more information about membership programs and activities: membership@fol.org

Communications Committee

In 2019, FOL continued to communicate with membership through periodic email updates, twice yearly mailed appeal letters, and regular posts on our Facebook page. We post regularly to our blog, highlighting the work being done by FOL and its partners as well as noting Liberian news items that might be of interest to our membership. In 2020, FOL hopes to continue to increase engagement with our membership through an expanded social media presence and work on a more holistic communications strategy. The Membership committee is working with this committee to produce a brochure describing FOL's mission and programs.

Development Committee

At the end of 2019, unfortunately, we lost a major funder, Open Society Foundations, whose program priorities changed. We are grateful for their support, which had enabled us to scale up the Family Literacy Initiative over the past couple of years. We were grateful to receive money from the International Foundation and Rolander Family Foundation to support FLI and ALP. We would like to

thank SueDee Shenk and the Gerald Schlosser Family Trust for their generous donation of \$40,000 to fund the Adult Literacy Program for 2020.

Our connection with the Rotary Club of Indianapolis proved fruitful with a grant of \$5,000 for the contextualization of 3 textbooks for the Family Literacy Initiative. WE-CARE will provide a final report in March with copies of the three books they have produced.

FOL has received a bronze level for transparency for its listing on Guidestar, a site that donors and funders often use to learn more about organizations that they wish to support. GuideStar has been merged with the Foundation Center and is now called Candid.

FOL hopes to pursue crowdfunding using Global Giving. We have been accepted to present a request for a project, which the Global Giving site may then promote. This would open the opportunity to appeal to a wider audience and attract new donors.

The committee updated the donor intent form for Legacy Circle to make it more accessible to those looking to add FOL in their will and indicate to us that they have chosen to designate FOL as a beneficiary. All FOL members are encouraged to remember FOL in their wills in whatever amount is feasible, and to think about letting their families know they would like to be remembered by donations to FOL in their name. More detailed information is available on our website at <http://fol.org/donate/legacy-circle/>.

For the year-end appeal, we updated donation forms so they are mobile friendly and donors can designate specific programs. Although annual donations are not a requirement for membership, a monetary contribution demonstrates active commitment to and participation in FOL projects.

The FOL development committee is pleased to report that the numbers of individual donors AND donations increased in 2019. Because of YOUR support, FOL has been able to continue FLI and ALP for 2020 -- thank you!

Finance Committee

Friends of Liberia (FOL) started 2019 with \$252,000 (rounded to nearest thousand) on hand, of which \$158,000 was unrestricted [not allocated to a specific program by the donor]. At the end of 2019, FOL accounts totaled \$331,000, of which \$158,000 also remains unrestricted. Unspent funds are carried over to 2020, and those allocated to projects will provide bridge funding during periods when decisions about grant awards are pending.

During 2019, FOL received donations of \$233,000 (rounded to nearest thousand), of which \$100,000 was a grant from the Open Society Foundations International (OSFI) for FLI. Another \$75,000 were formal grants to our Literacy projects from four other donor entities. Earmarked grant donations to Literacy projects increased \$45,000 in 2019 or 150%. Individual member donations were \$58,000 in 2019, or 24.8% of the total. Compared to individual member contributions in 2018, 2019 saw a 17% increase of \$8,600.00.

Total Expenditures for 2019 totaled \$154,968, an increase of 17%, driven by a 19% increase in Direct Program spending, which included the new adult literacy program and increased number of small grants awarded. The indirect costs associated with fundraising include printing appeal letters twice a year and postage. Total indirect costs were 6.3% of Total Expenditures, lower than 2018.

It should also be noted that hundreds, actually thousands, of hours of expertise are not included as in-kind income, but have been donated by the FOL members serving on committees and the FOL Board, as well as tangible gifts such as refreshments for various events and outreach materials. Please contact liberia@fol.org if you would like to request a copy of IRS 990 financial report.

We would love to hear your ideas about what you think FOL should be emphasizing after the restrictions due to COVID-19 are lifted. In the meantime, the FOL Board has operationalized a COVID-19 Task Force to support knowledge-based, accountable projects to help prevent the spread of the virus and address problems that are a result of this pandemic.

CONTACT INFORMATION

General: liberia@fol.org
president@fol.org
v-p@fol.org
treasurer@fol.org
education@fol.org
smallgrants@fol.org

health@fol.org
membership@fol.org
communication@fol.org
folrep1@fol.org
folrep2@fol.org