



2107 North Decatur Road, Box 308
Decatur, GA | 30033
404-354-4432 | info@SustainableLiberia.org



2018 End-of-Year Update

Countering Hopelessness in Liberia



Is the *Why* of Sustainable Liberia Compatible with the Great *Why* of God?

Dr. David Platt in his book *Radical* raises the issue of the Great *Why* of God. As we reflect on the 12 years of ministry that started with Jessy's return to his native Liberia, the Board of Directors and staff are asking that question about the *why* of Sustainable Liberia. It continues to be the focus as we move into the 13th year and beyond.

Pastor Allen Taliaferro, who has been to Liberia several times, puts it, "*Sustainable Liberia tries to begin each project, initiative, or trip with the question of 'Why?' Why are we doing this? Why is this effort important? Why are we choosing this opportunity over another?*"

Over the years a few people have asked, "*Are you trying to do too many things?*" We would like to simplify the process, but a professor of management at Georgia State once told me, "*Some things cannot be*

simplified. They are complex by their very nature."



Bill and Jessy Meet With Village Elders and Cocoa Farmers in Gou

Community development by its nature has multi-channels and multi-participants with multiple needs and agendas. That is why we chose the leaf with leaflets for a logo. Many parts, but one whole. So it is with the sustainability model of community transformation.

Even if you manage to have all the necessary components, without God's wisdom, grace, and mercy, there is no peace and hope in the community.

As Dr. Platt says in his book, "*On one hand, we were created by God to enjoy His grace. On the other hand, God immediately followed His blessing with a command. ... God gave His people His image for a reason – so that they might multiply His image throughout the world.*"

Simple enough. Enjoy His grace and extend His glory.



We are in awe of how God is accomplishing this through your prayers and collaboration.

www.SustainableLiberia.org



Mission Statement:

Established in 2006, Sustainable Liberia, Inc. is a faith-based, nonprofit organization committed to serving rural communities of Liberia, West Africa. Our mission is to enable transformational development by investing in the dreams of the poor, so that they might be released from physical and spiritual poverty. The love of Jesus Christ being our primary motivation, we create opportunities for Evangelism, Education, Economic Empowerment, Infrastructure Restoration, and Leadership Development.

*From Ashes to Hope: Building a
Sustainable Liberia*

EVANGELISM & DISCIPLESHP



At Sustainable Liberia, we try to approach needs in terms of opportunities, rather than problems. We also try to begin each project, initiative, or trip with the question of “Why?” Why are we doing this? Why is this effort important? Why are we choosing this opportunity over another? Ephesians 4:11-14 says:

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (NIV)

Why do we do what we do? Out of the blessings God has given us, we are equipping His people for the works of service and building the body of Christ in West Africa. We believe that unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God are worthy visions for our efforts.

Everything else we do is subordinate to this heart for discipleship. As we rebuild broken schools, we bear witness to God’s generosity. As we empower through economic opportunities, we testify to the dignity and self-worth of God’s people. As we invest in leadership, we equip disciple-makers who help others attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

“Everything we do through Sustainable Liberia, we do for the sake of the Gospel. Everything we do is for the opportunity to share Christ with the people of Liberia.”

Jessy Togba-Doya
Executive Director

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



Leadership Development occurs organically within the ministry of Sustainable Liberia. The development of leaders begins with relationships built in the village, and also through job training programs. As the seeds of hope are planted and nurtured, they begin to flourish in the hearts of Liberians who begin to dream about ways they can make a difference in their community. Thus, leaders are identified across all areas of ministry.

We discover people who have the desire and capacity to further their education and return to their community to serve. Whether it is agriculture, business, nursing, or teaching, we scholarship these students and look forward to their impact when they return to the village.

The informal part of leadership development is working with the existing village leaders, as well as those we meet who have a desire to lead, mentor, and serve within the community. By nurturing relationships with these leaders, we are able to recognize their needs and those within their sphere of influence. In turn, this allows us to connect them with other leaders who are local or visiting. Often, we find these relationships develop rapidly and leaders grow into mentors who share their valuable expertise and experience.

Jerome Tulwon is God’s answer to prayer. He joined the staff at Gbansue Elementary School in 2017 and currently serves as Lead Teacher. Prior to bringing Jerome on board, Gbansue School desperately needed a trained teacher to supervise and oversee the curriculum, lesson plans, and instruction. Jerome brings more than ten years of teaching experience and supervisory skills to our team.

In August of 2018, he organized a training workshop for teachers at Gbansue and Gou Elementary schools. More than thirteen teachers attended the workshop, gaining valuable knowledge, skills, and priceless training for the school year ahead.

Although Gou School was demolished by a storm in 2017, the people of Gou and other partners are making plans for reconstructing it. In the meantime, Jerome is training the teachers while materials for the reconstruction are being sourced. Please pray for Jerome and the Gou teachers as they train and make plans to rebuild.



INFRASTRUCTURE RESTORATION

In a country with more than 80% unemployment, Drivers Education is a skill-set that provides jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities. 40% of the men in Liberia earn a living through employment as a private chauffeur or taxi driver. This is especially true for men who have not acquired college or professional education.



Marcus T. Nyanford is a strong believer in Christ and one of the outstanding students at the Drivers Education Program. Prior to enrolling, Marcus attended another driving school whose curriculum consisted of driving theory and application. The school charged a fee for driving practice, but had no cars to enable students to fulfill the practical driving requirements. Marcus is now doing his practice driving at the Sustainable Witness (Liberia) Drivers Education Program.

Upon graduation, he would like to start and run an airport taxi business. He hopes to earn enough money as a commercial driver to purchase a vehicle for himself and start his own taxi business.



Derrick is utilizing training he received from a 2017 mission team to make eye glasses for those in need and teach Walk Through the Bible to his Bible study and Sunday School. Derrick travels around to the villages performing eye tests and creating glasses, but he also reaches out to the slum in Monrovia near his church. Using the Bible as one of his vision testing tools, he has shared the Gospel with many and has encountered many outreach opportunities as he creates much-needed, affordable eye glasses. While Derrick uses his mobile vision clinic to help others see more clearly, he also shares his testimony and helps them see Jesus!

Infrastructure Restoration develops as an outflow of other areas of ministry to help support and sustain the community. Many infrastructure projects have emerged as a need over the years due to relationships built and maintained in the villages. We always partner with local leadership, villagers, and contractors.

Ministry to hearts often first requires physical needs be met in order for the doors to hearts to be open and ready for spiritual nourishment. Over the years, communities we minister to have been supported and sustained by infrastructure projects, such as constructing the demonstration gardens, school buildings and equipment, renovation of the Ministry Center, the purchase of ministry vehicles and farming equipment, rebuilding the Coal Pot Queens (CPQ) Restaurant and Training Compound, constructing the Cocoa Processing Facility, drilling a clean water well for the CPQ Restaurant, and more.



EDUCATION & JOB TRAINING

Liberia’s education system continues to struggle after the civil war that ended in 2004. The country currently suffers a massive shortage of trained teachers; especially teachers who are willing to relocate and teach in rural communities. Amidst these challenges, some teachers are committed to the teaching profession and volunteer their time to teach even without pay, many with very little education or resources of their own.

Sustainable Liberia supports the recruitment and training of much-needed teachers by mobilizing financial, human, and other resources to support primary schools in rural Liberia. Teacher workshops are conducted by local and visiting professionals that rapidly improve the skills of new and seasoned teachers.

Because unemployment is still a major issue, vocational and technical education is strongly needed to empower young Liberians who have limited formal education. The Vocational Training Program is designed to help Liberia’s hard-to-employ population who desire to enter the workforce or become entrepreneurs. The basic career tracks currently offered include: Agriculture, Food Services, Computer Training, and Drivers Education. Students enrolled in the programs are paired with mentors in their field of study for support, mentoring, and upon graduation an internship program to help them acquire real-world experience.



Ophena is the face of Coal Pot Queens (CPQ). She joined the CPQ family in July of 2018 and currently manages the grill and fast-food stand in the front yard.

Prior to connecting with CPQ, Ophena worked the graveyard shift at Palm Springs Hotel in Congo Town. The midnight commute on public transportation was very expensive, unreliable, and dangerous. She was quite vulnerable, surviving several robbery attempts by street gangs who monitored her work schedule. After several failed robbery attempts, Ophena decided that the job was not worth the risks.

Ophena is very happy with her new family at CPQ, which is within walking distance of her home. She is proud of her recipes and calls herself “Sweet Fingers.” Besides managing the grill, Ophena also mentors other young ladies who are learning to cook. She would like to expand the grill to include sandwiches and salads.



Several years ago, your partnership helped provide a college scholarship for Monica, daughter of one of the founding members of the Coal Pot Queens. Monica thrived in college and earned her business degree from the United Methodist University in Liberia. She is now an essential member of our Liberian team, working hard towards economic empowerment in her community. She assists Jessy in administration, accounting, inventory, and reporting for Sustainable Liberia, the Brendi Cocoa Company, and The Coal Pot Queens.



Jutomu is from the village of Balama and received a scholarship to attend Cuttington University, a nearby private school. He graduated in 2013 with a degree in Public Administration, and beginning in 2017, he helped launch the Brendi Cocoa Company. His background in community development has enabled him to build key relationships with village elders, leaders, and farmers to set up co-ops for the cocoa business. Jutomu works with the farmers to fulfill their agreements and continues to engage new farmers to grow the business.



Christopher is a 2013 Cuttington University graduate who received a Sustainable Liberia scholarship. He studied both Chemistry and Agriculture and is now a leader at the Brendi Cocoa Company. Christopher oversees the farmers to assist with crop growth and quality, and mentors them in farming techniques. He is responsible for the quality and oversight of the fermentation and drying of cocoa beans at the processing facility. Christopher also trains villagers in the community gardens, helping them learn how to grow a sustainable source of food for their families.



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Economic empowerment is key to developing community sustainability. Our goal is to see rural Liberian villages flourish in freedom, as together we build a sustainable infrastructure. While the economic impact provides jobs for employees, income for families, and industry for the community, a Christ-focused ministry is provided to everyone.

An example of Economic Empowerment in action is the Brendi Cocoa Company and its far-reaching impact. In 2017, a co-operative agreement was developed with the village farmers of Gbansue and the surrounding area. Brendi purchases their cocoa at fair market value and provides the initial tools, training, and resources to produce a quality harvest. A processing facility was built, where the cocoa is now dried and stored for sale and distribution. Profits from cocoa sales are invested back into the company and redistributed into community infrastructure and education.

The entire process, from planting to distribution to accounting and sales, is run and managed by and for Liberians. In fact, you may recognize Monica, Jutomu, and Christopher, all of whom received educational scholarships from Sustainable Liberia. You believed in them and invested in their education. Now, each one has come full circle and is investing their lives back into their community.



Should I Use My IRA Required Minimum Distribution To Fund Charitable Giving?

by James Underwood CPA, CFP

After the tax law changes created by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, there were many changes that affect charitable giving. With the increase in the standard deduction, many people who previously itemized their deductions and claimed a tax deduction for gifts to qualified 501(c)(3) charitable organizations will no longer itemize and will lose the tax benefit from the gift. If you will be taking the standard deduction, you can still receive a tax benefit from your charitable gift by making a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your IRA account.

A QCD is a distribution from your IRA account that is transferred directly to a charity. In order to qualify as a QCD and not have the IRA distribution included in your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), there are a few specific rules. You must be 70 ½ or older to be eligible, and the maximum that you can donate is \$100,000 annually. The IRA distribution check must be made payable directly to the charity and cannot be made payable to the IRA owner and then donated to the charity. An additional item to consider is that the distribution can count towards your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) for the year as long as it is made before the RMD is satisfied.

To complete a QCD, check with your IRA custodian about their procedure. Some custodians will provide you with a checkbook so that you can write the check directly to the charity from your IRA account. Other custodians require you to fill out an IRA distribution form where you can have them make the check payable directly to the charity. In both cases, make sure no money is withheld for taxes since the distribution will not be taxable.

A QCD can be a good option for someone who meets the distribution criteria and gives to charity but will take the standard deduction. For someone who will itemize their deductions, it may be a good solution if you need to minimize your AGI to stay under certain thresholds for Medicare or Net Investment Income Tax purposes. As with any tax decision, please consult your tax advisor before making any final decisions.



Mailing Address:

2107 North Decatur Road, Box 308
Decatur, GA 30033 USA

Donate Online: www.SustainableLiberia.org

Phone: 404.354.4432

Email: info@SustainableLiberia.org

facebook.com/SustainableLiberiaInc