

October 2017

Dear Friend,

Like many of you in the U.S. during Presidential elections, the Liberian people have been apprehensive about the Presidential election that was held on October 10 of this year. However, the Liberian's apprehension has focused on the possibility of violence and uncertainty, borne of the 30 years of violence and political turmoil prior to the United Nations monitored election of 2005 resulting in Madame Ellen Johnson Sirleaf becoming the first female head of state in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2011 she was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work." The October 2017 election that had 20 men running for the presidency will be decided in a run-off. Former soccer star George Weah won the first round of Liberia's presidential election with 38.4 percent of the vote, 10 points ahead of Vice President Joseph Boakai who will face him in the run-off on November 7. Many Liberians credit Madame Sirleaf with creating the conditions that allow this election to bring Liberia's first democratic transfer of power for seven decades, but she has not managed to effectively tackle corruption or lift millions out of poverty.



We continue to pray for a peaceful transition of power and progress in the coming years to address the issues of corruption and economic empowerment of millions of Liberians.

Last Fall, I shared with you that we were starting to put into practice the development of small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs). These SMEs will be the foundation of our economic empowerment strategy. While the nation is focused on the election, we are celebrating the start of two of these businesses – the Coal Pot Queens Training Restaurant and the Brendi Cocoa Company.



The Coal Pot Queens, as they are called, were taught how to cook for Americans, Europeans, and Africans by BDA back in 2007. The Coal Pot Queens are exchanging their outdoor cooking fire for an indoor stove in their new restaurant that opened on October 16. Young women, who have recently been in exploitive or vulnerable situations, will be given a fresh start in life as the Coal Pot Queens train them to cook and serve, along with other job and life skills.

Earlier this year, BDA developed a co-operative agreement with the cocoa farmers of rural Bong County to purchase their raw cocoa, process it, and sell it so they can get fair market value for their crop. The Brendi Cocoa Company was formed to build the necessary processing and storage facilities, build and manage the relationships with the cocoa farmers' co-ops, and market the dried cocoa at the best price possible. We are blessed to have three of our college scholarship graduates running the day-to-day operations. They have done an outstanding job as the cocoa harvest begins slowly this month and picks up speed as we approach year-end. All the buildings, co-op agreements, and markets have been finished or identified as we start this new venture.

In order to manage these new opportunities and continue empowering our Liberian brothers and sisters, we have worked with our Pro Bono legal counsel in Atlanta and a Liberian firm to set up a Liberian non-profit. I will be the Board Chair and have enlisted three very talented Liberians to be on the board. The name of the non-profit in Liberia is Sustainable Witness. We will share more about this soon.



As we lean into all that God is providing for BDA, we see a sustainable Liberia emerging from the ashes of the long civil war and the ravages of the Ebola plague. We are encouraged by the impact that discipleship, education, and economic empowerment are having on the communities where we work.

The lessons we have learned over the last 11 years point to the need to continue to encourage, equip, empower, and evangelize these and other communities so the grace and peace of Jesus Christ will drive out the darkness that has had a hold on Liberia.

Please pray for our team as we strive to empower people to transform their communities through economic and agricultural development and education.

Your prayers and support are critically important to BDA's work and are absolutely essential to overcome the spiritual warfare we experience daily.

Sincerely in Christ,



Jessy Togba-Doya
Founder and Executive Director

Countering Hopelessness in Rural Liberia