

## Project Description

Project Name: Launching an agricultural project in Liberia

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

**Project Description:** The project consists of four main parts: a *co-operative project*, an *educational project*, an *agricultural project*, and a *health project*. Although the four projects are interconnected, they remain three independent projects, each with their own specific goals and with separate budgets.

After a long and devastating civil war, Liberians are now working on rebuilding their society within all mayor sectors – including the agricultural sector. Liberia is an economically poor country, but it is also a country rich on resources and people who wish to take an active role in improving their own situation, and thus assist in rebuilding and developing their country. The tools and opportunities with which to do this, however, are severely lacking. With an unemployment rate of about 85 percent, it can be difficult to mobilize the resources to do something for oneself. There is a significant need for projects and initiatives, that give Liberians opportunities to do something active to help themselves. It is such opportunities that Liberty Agriculture wishes to offer.

The agricultural sector is an important aspect of Liberia's development, but also in consolidating the peace after the civil war. Full stomachs are more patient than hungry stomachs when it comes to political change, as the Assistant Minister for Technical and Vocational Training, Yonton B. Kesselly, said. Furthermore, developing and strengthening the agricultural sector is a vital part of overcoming Liberia's dependency on international development aid. As Vice President Joseph Boikai said, a nation that cannot feed itself will never be truly independent.

By establishing a *co-operative project* Liberty Agriculture wishes participate in bringing about an agricultural development in Liberia. We will do this by providing Liberian farmers with the practical, theoretical and physical tools necessary to make agriculture in Liberia be a job and income generating occupation – and on top of that, to contribute to making Liberia less dependent on outside aid. The co-operative project will be in charge of establishing a number of different co-operative societies necessary to be able to implement an effective agricultural production. To begin with these societies will primarily consist of a machine station and a manufacturing plant to process crops such as corn, rice and other food crops. In time, more co-operative societies can be established, such as a dairy, a slaughterhouse, etc., depending on the needs that will arise in connection to the agricultural production. The co-operative is a relatively long-termed project. It is difficult to set a date for when the farmers will be able to successfully run the co-operative, as such a date is highly dependent on the Liberian farmers capacity to run the co-operative project. It is therefore difficult to set up assessable and date-specific goals for the co-operative project if they are also to be specific and realistic.

Without the relevant knowledge, Liberian farmers will not have the capacity to get as much as possible out of the different offers the co-operative project will present them with. It is therefore important that they have the opportunity to take a relevant agricultural education, that will enable them to make use of Liberia's natural, agricultural resources, as well as the advantages they will get through Liberty Agriculture, in the most sustainable way.

By establishing an *educational project*, Liberty Agriculture wishes to offer Liberians a practical education that they can make use of here and now. The *agricultural school* will target women as well as men between the age of 18 and 25. We wish to promote rights and opportunities for all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or religion. The education will have both theoretical and practical aspects, and is expected to take about seven years to complete. After seven years the students will graduate with an excellent agricultural education that will enable them to take advantage of Liberia's natural resources in a sustainable and ecological way. Seven years is a long time go to school, and it is therefore important that the students have means and the desire to stay in school for that period of time. Therefore, as a part of the practical aspect of the education, Liberty Agriculture will employ the students on a farm we will establish. This farm will, in time, provide the necessary finances for the co-operative and educational projects as well as the health project. Through their employment, the students will receive a payment consisting of two parts: one part of their payment will cover the

expenses in connection with their education. The other part will be put aside on a savings account. This second part will only be given to the graduated farmers to cover expenses in regards to establishing a farm of their own – maybe restricted to a certain geographical location. Liberia is currently faced with the problem that those youths that take an education have a tendency to avoid technical and practical educations, and instead choose a more theoretical university education. As a result of this, many youth choose to leave their homes and move to the larger cities, primarily Monrovia. Once they have completed their education, they don't have much incentive to go back home, which is a contributing factor to the lack of development outside of Liberia's largest cities. It is therefore important to give young people incentives to go back to their homes, once they have taken an education, and thus participate in developing the rural areas. By earmarking the savings account to cover expenses in connection to establishing their own farms, potentially in their home counties, it will be ensured that the graduated farmers also engage themselves in farming, and are thus not only participating in developing their home county, but also in developing the Liberian agricultural sector.

Besides the agricultural school, an elementary school will also be established. This school will be for children in the area where Liberty Agriculture will be situated. To begin with, it will be a school providing education up till sixth grade. In time, however, the school can be expanded to also provide education up to high school. We plan to open both school in the fall of 2008.

By establishing an *agricultural project* Liberty Agriculture wishes to give the students at the agricultural school the opportunity to earn money and make a living – during their education as well as after they have completed their studies. The agricultural project will make land and – insofar as it is possible and advantageous – farming equipment available for the practical aspects of agricultural education. These machines will be the first step toward establishing a machine station. To begin with, these machines will belong to Liberty Agriculture. But in time, they will be handed over to a co-operative owned and run by the farmers themselves.

A fourth project Liberty Agriculture will be engaged in, is the establishing of a *health clinic*. Besides ensuring that the students and farmers in connection to Liberty Agriculture have access to professional health care, the clinic will also assist in combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, reduce child mortality and improve maternal health, as well as meet local health needs in general. In this regard, it would be natural to secure clean drinking water for the local residents, if it proves necessary. Liberty Agriculture will provide finances for operating the clinic as well as for personnel. We are currently negotiating with a Danish doctor that we, for a limited period of time, wish to send to Liberia. The work and location of the clinic will be coordinated by Phebe Hospital, and the hospital will also be able to make use of the doctor.

On a recent trip to Liberia, where the purpose of the trip was to assess the possibilities and needs of implementing Liberty Agriculture's venture, we initiated negotiations with, among others, Phebe Hospital in Bong County, in regards to making use of their land to establish our farm. Phebe Hospital owns a sizable amount of land – approx. 1500 acres – that can be used for farming. Liberty Agriculture could potentially be given permission to make use of this land for our farm. In return for being allowed to make use of the land, Liberty Agriculture will help to provide food for the hospital's patients.

As the peace in Liberia is consolidated, Liberia's status as a nation receiving emergency aid is changing. International donors are increasingly focusing on development aid rather than emergency aid. A consequence of this for Phebe Hospital is that they will no longer receive the food allowances provided them by WFP thus far. By allowing Liberty Agriculture to make use of their land, Phebe Hospital can ensure that they will continue to be able to feed their patients.

By situating the farm and the agricultural school on Phebe Hospital's land, Liberty will have access to enough land to be able to establish a farm that, in time, will be able to finance Liberty Agriculture's other activities. Phebe Hospital's land is located next to the only paved road connecting the capitol, Monrovia, to the rest of the country. Therefore, the farm will be able to sell its crops on the market in Monrovia, more or less independent of the negative effects the rainy season has on Liberia's infrastructure on a whole. In the rainy season unpaved road become practically impassable – especially for big trucks. In close proximity to Phebe Hospital's land (under 5 km) there is both a university with an extensive agricultural program (Cuttington University College (CUC)) as well as an agricultural research institution

(Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI)). Both institutions are extremely positive in regards to potential cooperation as far as sharing teachers, education, knowledge, and so on goes.

On Phebe Hospital's land, there is an old leprosy colony. Although the residents – all of them descendants of people who suffered from leprosy – are no longer affected by leprosy, it is still a relatively poor society. The Leprosy Colony has a small elementary school, but it is being driven on voluntary help from the residents of the Leprosy Colony, as there is not enough money to pay a teachers salary. When there are enough teachers there are six grades. For the time being, however, there is only education up to third or fourth grade. As Liberty Agriculture wish to establish an elementary school as a part of the project, we are trying to enter into a dialogue with the colony and the school board in regards to strengthening and developing their school. By establishing our farm on Phebe Hospital's land, Liberty Agriculture will also be able to provide jobs to some of the Leprosy Colony's approx. 300 residents.

As Phebe Hospital always can use qualified doctors, the hospital can make use of the doctor we plan to send to Liberia to work on for the clinic when possible. Phebe Hospital has proposed to provide a house for the doctor.

As Phebe Hospital is relatively close (approx. 15 km) to Liberia's second largest city (Gbarnga – between 50.000 and 100.000 inhabitants), there is plenty of opportunities for the agricultural students to provide housing for themselves during their education. This will also help to keep the school's expenses down. Although they need to be renovated, there are a number of building on and around Phebe Hospital's land that Liberty Agriculture can make use of for administrator- and teacher housing, school buildings, etc.

The agricultural project will run on commercial principles. The money made on the farm is supposed to be able to finance the other aspects of Liberty Agriculture's activities, such as the agricultural school, the clinic, establishing and maintaining the co-operative societies, as well as paying the students working on the farm.

Until the farm is productive enough to finance the different aspects of Liberty Agriculture's activities, there is a need to get economic support from donor organizations. Help is needed for establishing the farm, the agricultural school, the elementary school and the health clinic. But in time, Liberty Agriculture will assume responsibility for financing these activities. And in the end the responsibility will, through the established co-operatives, be handed over to the Liberian farmers themselves. It thus won't be one certain organization that will end up owning or operating the activities Liberty Agriculture wishes to implement. Likewise, it is not the idea that the project should be handed over to our southern partner, but to the farmers that Liberty Agriculture will educate.

As the farmers' knowledge and capacity is strengthened, Liberty Agriculture will strive to have the farmers, by virtue of the co-operative project, begin to run and control the agricultural project. At such a time, Liberty Agriculture will begin to withdraw from the project, insofar as the farmers are capable of managing the projects responsibilities.

Local partner(s):

Liberty Agriculture will, through DEM and Leve Børnene, initiate a close cooperation with the Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL). DEM has close ties to this church and they have many years of experience with working together on different projects. Leve Børnene has many years of experience with working with children and youth in developing countries. LCL is a major participant in Liberian civil society – on the local grassroots level, but also on the national political scene. They have a clear idea of what is needed to help rebuild the Liberian society. They have also expressed the importance of an extensive agricultural project such as Liberty Agriculture wishes to build.

Liberty Agriculture is not an organization, nor do we want to be. Therefore we cannot get direct support from for instance Danida or other multi- or bilateral donor organizations. But without donor support it will be very difficult to implement our project. By cooperating with DEM, Leve Børnene and LCL we hope to overcome this hindrance. DEM, Leve Børnene, and LCL will, in cooperation, develop and establish an agricultural project, and thereafter ask Liberty Agriculture, in close cooperation with LCL and Phebe Hospital, to help with the implementation of the project. By getting Liberty Agriculture, an actual agricultural company, to help with the implementation of the project, it will be ensured that the farm and the agricultural school become as efficient and productive as possible. Phebe Hospital has wanted to use their land to generate extra income for the hospital for many years. But so far,

they have never gotten past talking about it, and they don't expect to move much farther than that for the next many years. By allowing Liberty Agriculture to make use of their land, Phebe Hospital will get a share in the farms production. Although it is LCL – and through them, also Phebe Hospital – who is responsible for implementing the project, it is a clear goal, that when the time is right, the venture will be handed over to the farmers, who will run the activities through a number of different co-operatives, without influence from DEM, Leve Børnene or LCL. All the involved parties have accepted this, and have also expressed satisfaction with the proposed outcome.

## OVERALL GOALS

Goals:

The Co-operative Project:

- To educate students in the advantages and possibilities of a co-operative, as well as to educate farmers on how they can participate actively in the democratic decision-making process.
- That the project in time can take over all of the agricultural projects responsibilities.
- The co-operative project is as much a declaration of intent as it is an actual goal. It is therefore difficult to set a date for when the farmers will be able to take over the direction of the agricultural project, as such a date is highly dependent on how quickly the educational and agricultural projects can build up the farmers capacity to take over the agricultural project. It is therefore difficult to set up assessable and date-specific goals for the co-operative project if they are also to be specific and realistic. Also, many of the co-operative project's goals are in fact activities.
- To establish co-operatives that can help make Liberian farms as efficient and productive as possible.

The Educational Project:

- The Elementary School:
  - o To offer children in the local community an excellent education.
  - o To establish a school up to sixth grad, and in time possibly extend it to high school.
  - o Through the education to promote and ensure equal rights and opportunities for all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or religion.
  - o Live up to the Liberian requirements for elementary schools.
  - o To establish an international network through exchange programs with Western schools and volunteers.
  - o To ensure that the school is independent of financial support and fully self-financed by 2020.
- The Agricultural School:
  - o To offer students an excellent education in sustainable and environmentally friendly tropical farming.
  - o To educate at least 10 new farmers a year, once the school is fully developed.
  - o To ensure that graduates make significantly more money than they did before they started in school.
  - o Through the education to promote and ensure equal rights and opportunities for all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or religion.
  - o Live up to the Liberian requirements for higher education institutions.
  - o To establish an international network through exchange programs with Western agricultural schools and NGO's.
  - o To ensure that the school is independent of financial support and fully self-financed by 2020.

The Agricultural Project:

- To provide opportunities for students to earn money during their education through farming and selling their products on the Liberian and international market.
- To provide graduates with opportunities to make more money than they did before their education through farming and selling their products on the Liberian and international market.
- To give students and farmers access to relevant farming equipment.
- To ensure that the project is self-financed and profitable by 2020 and can begin repaying investors.

The Health Project:

- In cooperation with Phebe Hospital to establish a health clinic, to help combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, reduce child mortality and improve maternal health, as well as meet local health needs in general.

### **SUSTAINABLE TRADE AND MODES OF PRODUCTION**

**Sustainability:** The Liberian soil is not always of the best quality in regards to certain types of crops – it is therefore necessary to use some kind of fertilizer to improve the quality of the soil. Access to natural fertilizers is, on the one hand, very limited, and as the available artificial fertilizers, on the other hand, is of questionable quality, it is therefore necessary to adapt the choice of crops to the circumstances that exist in Liberia. Thus, the education will seek to find the best match between the most productive and the most – locally and/or internationally – demanded crops. We will strive to ensure that the production will be as organic as possible. Our primary concern, however, is to ensure that the farms are as productive as possible, without jeopardizing the farmers health or the environment. What exactly will be produced will depend on the assessments made by our expert in tropical farming.

Liberity Agriculture wishes to employ Liberians for as many of the staff positions as possible. This will not only reduce the costs of salary, but will also ensure that there will be qualified personnel to take over the direction of the project, once financial aid is withdrawn.

### **ADDITIONALITY**

**Additionality:** In order to be able to establish the educational project, it is necessary to receive financial aid.  
*The farm:* Liberia’s agricultural sector and ministry are still working at getting back on top after the civil war. As such, there is not much help to get from them as far as information and statistics on soil quality, yield of crops and so on, is concerned. It will therefore be necessary to apply a trial and error method of farming until we have identified the most productive crops and farming methods. This will be a very costly process. In this period it is therefore important that the farm is subsidized for a while, until it becomes sustainable. Furthermore, some of farms yield is to be given to the patients at Phebe Hospital. Until the farm can produce enough to provide the hospital with this food, the farm will need financial aid. Until the farm has a surplus large enough to pay the students’ salaries, the farm will need financial aid. In order to make the farm as productive and effective as possible, it is necessary to introduce farming machines into the production. The farm will also need financial aid to purchase these machines.

*The schools:* Until the farm has a surplus large enough to finance the schools, the education project will need financial aid to pay for renovating buildings, buy teaching materials and pay teachers their salary.

*The clinic:* Until the farm has a surplus large enough to finance the clinic and pay the staff’s salaries, the clinic will need financial aid.

### **COMMENTS ON THE EXPECTED DEVELOPMENT EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT**

**Comments on effects of the project:** The project will assist in:

- Combating poverty by giving Liberians the opportunity to get an education that will allow them to improve their economic situation themselves.
- Ensure basic education for Liberians.
- Promote equal rights and opportunities for all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or religion.
- Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, reduce child mortality and improve maternal health, as well as meet local health needs in general.
- Ensure an environment friendly and sustainable development of Liberia’s agricultural sector.
- Strengthen and develop civil society, as well as providing the individual with the opportunity to participate in the political decision-making process.
- Build and maintain a global network where farmers can exchange knowledge and experiences across national borders.