

PROPOSAL NO. 1025-07-0004

Submitted to:

Needs Donors

**Malaria and Environmental Education Program (MEEP)
IN LIBERIA, WEST AFRICA**

Prepared by:

**Dr. Syrulwa Somah, Principal Investigator
Liberian History, Education & Development, Inc. (LIHEDE)
2285 Rothwood Acres Drive
Greensboro, NC 27407**

**Material Requested for Project:
SW/FM Broadcasting Equipment
Period Request: May 15, 2006-present**

Approved By:

**Ms. Henrietta White-Holder
National Chairman, Programs and Grants
Liberian History, Education & Development, Inc. (LIHEDE)
2285 Rothwood Acres Drive
Greensboro, NC 27407
Lihede2003@yahoo.com
Telephone (336) 456-8075
Fax (336) 334-7433**

Dear Prospective donor:

The Liberian nation and people suffered great losses in terms of human life, human resources, capital investments, and infrastructural developments during the 14-year Liberian civil wars from 1989 to 2003. This decimated the lives of an estimated 400,000 innocent people and half of the nation's population is displaced. Not only that 85% Liberians are unemployed, but also 30-50 thousand of the children are orphans and more than 100,000 child soldiers and ex-combatants who are desperately in need of education, rehabilitation and psychological counseling to once more make them productive citizens.

In a total population of 3.4 million people, the illiteracy rate of Liberia is at a high 85% due to the consequences of the war, with more than half of the nation's 1.6 million children, mostly between the ages of 3-18, out of school. The total number of schools in Liberia before the civil war stood at 2,400, out of which around 80 percent was destroyed. From these alarming statistics, it is clear that Liberia's social, economic, political, cultural, and educational institutions were severely destroyed during the civil war and are now in need of urgent rebuilding, repairs, or improvements in order to promote a better quality of life for the Liberian people.

Worst of all, 100% of the population is exposed to malaria on a continuous basis. In Monrovia where majority of the educated and decision-makers are concentrated, more than 50% of the patients, workforce in hospitals and clinics are infected by malaria. And more than one of every five newborn Liberian children will not live to celebrate their 5th birth day. Malaria has not only been the number killer of our people, but it has been the cause of agricultural dependence, poverty, instability, inequalities, and lost of Liberia's territory (Sherbro Island) to its prevalence.

Malaria is our 9/11, nuclear weapons, A-K-47, tsunamis, terrorist, holocaust, genocide, and global warming, etc. Malaria has killed more people in the history of Liberia than the total number of Liberians killed during the 14 years civil wars. Sadly, we now have both malaria and HIV/AIDS diseases to take on which all indications show will accelerate death in Liberia because anyone with HIV/AIDS who already has weakened immune system gets malaria that also targets destroying the red blood cells and elevating the body temperature will have little chance to live because Malaria accelerates the spread of AIDS. And keep in mind that our nation not only leads the world in the highest newborn crude death rate (66 deaths per 1,000 births) but life expectancy has declined to the lowest levels ever, in our modern history to, 41 years for males and 47 years for females.

The health of Liberia nation is at stake. Yet, many people do not have any malaria public library of resource center to read on malaria, watch films, or learn about seriousness their number one killer, which steals Liberia's children by the thousands. Therefore, we are asking Gospel Radio and people of passion to help LIHEDE implement this humanitarian Radio project and realize its dream. Jesus spoke on health and social justice issues in Mathews 10:42, so it shouldn't be difficult for the malaria control message to be delivered from the pulpit to God's children who malaria is killing every second!

Goal

This proposal, Malaria and Environmental Education Program (**MEEP**) intends to utilize a cultural approach through a grass root campaign movement to empower the vast majority of the Liberian

population, non conversant in English who live in rural and at -risk communities to be fully involved in the implementation of the national malaria control and environmental protection programs in Liberia through education, dissemination of information and participation in formulation of national policy and strategy backed by gospel message.

The program will spillover into the greater Liberian society mainly to support local enterprises in the creation of jobs by training that will replace deforestation and artisan diamond mining as well as establishing mosquito control brigades at various community levels to control malaria and other relevant insect borne diseases. We believe that if environmental destructions and these insect-borne diseases go unchecked, and the decision-makers are not educated about environmental impact, not only God's children will not be well to worship him, but no business will really take off in Liberia because most Liberian workers will be too ill to work.

The **MEEP** intends to engage, educate, train community leaders to take ownership of the control of environmental protection and the deadly disease, using three strategic: workshops, ethnic language radio programs, malaria library, integration of malaria education in the national curriculum of Liberia, Poro and Sande institution. **MEEP** aims to use radio to educate a vast of Liberians in the sixteen different languages of Liberia, considering that 85 percent of the population is illiterate and vast of majority of those affected by the disease reside in the rural communities and are ignorant of the signs and symptoms of malaria and how environmental destruction promote malaria breeding and poverty. District and Clans chiefs, elders, ethnic and sacred institutions, ethnic leaders, and civic groups will be actively engaged to enhance and participate in the malaria awareness campaign under the **MEEP**.

Grass root Liberians have not been represented in the decision-making mechanism of environmental protection and national malaria control, but yet are the target population for an effective malaria control program. It is therefore novel and innovative for the grass root population to not only be recipient of a top-to-bottom malaria policy, but also for to have a voice in the formulation of strategies and approaches to address the malaria epidemic in their communities thus empowering them through self-determination. **MEEP** does not only intend to conscientize and rally grass root Liberians, but believe that focusing on local ownership, that can empower and encourage local communities to develop creative methods ideas to build local resources and capacity to combat malaria and sustain this progress on their own. The Overall objective of the **MEEP** approach is for ordinary Liberians to see themselves as stake holders, entering into dialogue to share experiences of successful local community strategies for adoption of bond between them and their environment and possible collaboration on projects for a malaria- free new Liberia.

The Problems: Liberia is in serious need of massive rallying for spiritual awareness, environmental protection, and malaria education programs for social stability, rehabilitation and reconstruction after fourteen years of civil war. In Liberia, 100% of the population do not have any alternative to live with the environment and are exposed to malaria on a continuous basis. In Monrovia where majority of the educated and decision-makers are concentrated, more than 50% of the patients, workforce in hospitals and clinics are infected by malaria. And more than one of every five newborn Liberian children will not live to celebrate their 5th birth day. Liberian history is riddled

with malaria tragedies and environmental destruction because they called the natural world "bush". For example, the first 88 emigrants who sailed from New York on January 31, 1820 and landed in today's Liberia, more than 80% died from malaria. Since then, malaria has not only been the number killer of the Liberian people, but the tropical forest has been seen as their enemy and has been abused to cause of agricultural dependence, poverty, instability, inequalities, and loss of Liberia's territory (Sherbro Island).

Liberia's own official government records reveal that our poor nation loses 21,300 lives and spends \$40 million dollars every year combating the disease. This huge amount does not even include what poor malaria-stricken Liberian families spend. Indeed, many spend up to 35% of their income on malaria prevention and treatment, excluding what Liberians spend on burial. During the rainy season, when Liberians are vulnerable and can least afford to be sick, malaria wages war on them, making it impossible for them to do their farm work. Most victims certainly survive the disease, but when millions cannot work their families suffer and starve. And tens of thousands will bear the physical and psychological scars of malaria forever. Malaria ought to be the easiest of the Big Three Third World killers to control because AIDS and TB are a lot more complex and harder to address, but this is not the case because we lack the ethical clarity, moral courage and political will power to use the most efficient malaria treatment options made available to us by modern technology. But we in LIHEDE believe that if we cannot eradicate malaria and protect our environment in Liberia due to political and ethical reasons, we can at least control and prevent malaria and major environmental catastrophes in Liberia. And this is our plea to Gospel Radio to help us bring the Good News of God via radio 24/7 while we fight malaria and prevent environmental destruction of God's creatures in Liberia.

Moreover, the World Health Organization lists Liberia as one of two nations with the higher rate of malaria in the world, noting that about 100% of the population of Liberia is exposed to malaria on a continuous basis. In fact, in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, where majority of the educated population and key national decision-makers are concentrated, more than 50% of all hospitals and clinics' visits by patients are malaria-related, while, according to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Liberia, there are about only four functioning hospitals in Liberia with an estimated 237 physicians/specialists or 0.1 physicians per 100,000 patients. In addition, more than one of every five newborn Liberian children will not live to celebrate their 5th birth day due to malaria, while Liberia currently leads the world in highest newborn crude death rate at 66 deaths per 1,000 births. Indeed, with these kinds of statistics which continued to put much burden on the inadequate resources of both the government and the people of Liberia, it is now time to act and act now to prevent malaria in Liberia to help to lay the foundations for a better nation after the battle against malaria has been won.

Liberians continue to live on meager 30 cent per day as noted recently by former World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz, if the average Liberian family continues to spend up to 35% of their income on malaria treatment and prevention, and if malaria continues to impact the Liberian workforce and infant mortality rates, then Liberians must understand that to fall short malaria prevention today would trigger the sensitive index of the post-reconstruction of the new Liberia development to slide into a curve of steep decline. Therefore, today, not tomorrow, humanity must act now through the use radio to prevent malaria in Liberia before it is too late.

The core of the **MEEP** approach is to reach the vast majority of the grass rooters, including the majority indigenous population, who live in the rural communities and do not have access to adequate health facilities and seem not to understand the socio-economic impact on their communities and country by the disease, malaria, which robs them of future generations and Liberia's future, overburden its health structures and prevents its prosperity. The lack of knowledge about the disease is the reason most Liberians, especially residing in rural communities, contribute malaria to witchcrafts and do not seek medical treatment. This attitude is compounded by taboos and other cultural values, which interfere with the grassroots /indigenous participation malaria control. The **MEEP** target audience is 85% of the Liberian population who understands vernacular languages and has no access to public education about malaria. This population access to information and education about the disease in their own vernacular languages will enhance their understanding of the disease and empower them to be proactive in the fight to combat the disease. Thus, **MEEP** plans to rally and educate this specific targeted group to be a part on the malaria and environmental protection programs. Misunderstanding the single largest cause of death is a fundamental national security issue.

Liberians will positively response when **MEEP** is implemented and they know that malaria and environmental impact their economic, agricultural and democratic development. It is clear that democracy does not survive where the people are sick, too weak to ... farm, learn, compete and defend their national boundaries and worship Jesus Christ.

Strategy II: Radio:

Most of the billboards that communicate environmental control and malaria information are in English language that 85% of the people cannot read. This defeat the purpose. This is radio communication and programming in the mother tongues of the people is needed. There many radio radios station in the Liberia but what we have proposed is completely different. If supported, it will win the heart s of the Liberia majority. Radio programs are the best way to counter lack of information about protection the environment and malaria that killing the people and rally them to action and limited education opportunities in rural areas. Radio is the most cost-effective, accessible information/communication technology to all Liberians on board. Radio reaches more people than any other mass medium - people who are isolated by illiteracy, distance, conflict, and poverty. It is easily adapted to local language and culture.

Farmers in North America and Europe make decisions every day based on information that they get from newspapers, market services, the internet, and commercial and government extension services. Because most farmers are well-educated, they are able to process this information and use it for their benefit. In contrast, Liberian in low-income counties are often poorly educated, many never went to school and have not completed primary school, and are illiterate) and have limited access to current and relevant information. Without this access, they make decisions based on bednets barriers, outdated or incorrect information - thus exacerbating their already difficult situations.

Radio is a trusted source of information. It offers an opportunity for change. Liberians can listen to radio in the privacy of their home, in a language with which they are comfortable. It requires no special skill. A survey of Liberians revealed that radio is the most welcome source of outside information.

Project Action Plan:

Our core program has two main streams. One will develop content for radio programs that will be relevant to rallying and education Liberians, especially the 85% who cannot read and write. The second provides training and professional development opportunities for our vernacular speakers for our national rallying campaign.

In the first stream, the LIHEDE will research and write radio scripts. Topics we cover include gospels, environmental vision, bond between Liberians and the environment, alternative employments, how to use bednets, cultural barriers associated with bednets, malaria control, mosquitoes behaviour, malaria impact of agriculture, education, malaria and pregnancy, malaria and poverty, malaria witch myth, environment management, malaria safety, youth in rural areas, child death, and more. These scripts will be translated into the 18 official Liberian vernacular languages, and broadcast. The scripts will also be available on our website and will be sent out electronically to our associates and to other organizations in Liberia that support small-scale malaria control and rural development.

Our primary beneficiaries are the 90% of Liberian who are exposed to malaria - especially women, who provide about 75% of the labour for agriculture in Liberia, and are often sick with malaria and have no information on malaria. Other beneficiaries are their families, and in particular their children, will benefit from malaria control information as a result of innovated production and processing, and better education as a result of rallying the Liberian grassroots.

In the second stream, LIHEDE provide training to develop the skills of rural radio broadcasters so that they can meet the needs of all the 18 official vernacular languages; LIHEDE will promote training resources and opportunities offered by other organizations; and LIHEDE publish examples of "best practices" of its radio partners. Radio stations in Liberia have extremely limited resources, and little training in malaria control or rural issues. Our materials will help broadcasters and their directors/managers understand malaria control' problems and concerns and produce programs that provide reliable, practical information based on scientific research as well as traditional knowledge.

LIHEDE will develop Radio script to suit local conditions. For the most part, production is cheap, especially compared to other mass media. Broadcasters can actively involve listeners in their programs. That way, listeners - the majority we aim to help - can determine the content.

Radio will encourage communities to help themselves with other agro-industries. Network partners and their farm audiences share their experiences using our scripts, and provide new information that we can share with others. Some day, new technologies and improved education might give the

Liberian grassroots everywhere access to the information like those in developed nation today. For now, radio is the medium of choice in our mission to share knowledge for the new malaria free Liberia.

When rural or peasant organizations have their program heard on their own radio station where they give information that is relevant to the community, it really will be a vibrant movement, hearing their voices and their awareness of the broad situation, of the international situation and the national issues as well. All of this will help communicate how to prevent the disease and how to do this as a community-based effort.

MEEP is asking good will individuals and organizations to donate to this project to buy a specially designed Radio Station (with AM, SW, FM capabilities) that can also cover at least 43,000 Sq. miles (a size of Tennessee). Such a station will have a positive impact. Equally so, all other programming to one radio can educate a whole village. In 2005, LIHEDE was given radio frequency (97.5 FM) to operate in Liberia but is still in the process or looking for broadcasting equipment to begin it s program. LIHEDE will be delighted to name the Radio Station after your organization and invite you to unveil the day it goes on air in Liberia.