



**BALAMA DEVELOPMENT
ALLIANCE**

Balama Review

Encouraging Dreams to Take Flight in Rural Liberia

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Partner's Corner

Although Balama is across the ocean from most of our partners, you are connected through prayers and support. You are the enabling force that allows us to act as the hands and feet of Christ serving the most neglected.

We humbly request your continued support by:

Prayer:

Please pray for the powerful and mighty hand of God to move through our on-going efforts.

Partnership:

Continue to remember the Balama mission with your donations. Our micro-loans of \$100, high-school scholarships of \$75 per semester or elementary school uniforms at \$20 provide hope for families.

Participation:

Just as we reach out to the villages and tribes in Liberia, you can reach out to share our story with individuals and churches in your life.

Our Beginnings

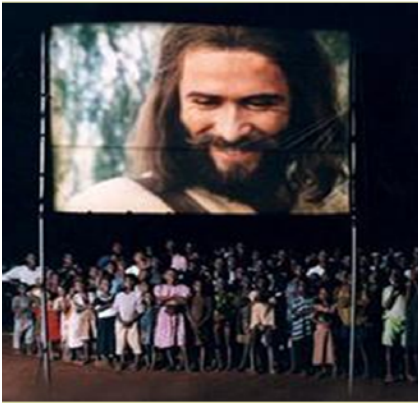
The 14-year civil war of Liberia (1989-2003) devastated many lives and left the entire country in ruin. More than 300,000 people were killed, while another 500,000 fled the country either into exile or became internally displaced. With peace in Liberia under a democratically elected President, Madame Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Liberians are now encouraged to return to their home towns and villages. However, in many cases, health care, skills training, food rations, and other services once provided by humanitarian organizations in displacement camps are no longer available to returnees. Communities are faced with the enormous challenges of rebuilding shattered lives and destroyed villages, and also coping with the psychosocial effects of a senseless civil war. Shattered but not broken, the farming communities of Suacoko with population of about 5,500 inhabitants are hopeful and working towards overcoming a painful past.

The communities are now on path to recovery with the help of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship field personnel Jessy and Calandra Togbadoya. Through the ministries of Balama Project, the Togbadoya's are helping address the psychosocial, spiritual, and educational needs of war affected youths and families in Suacoko District. Balama project started in 2006 and has as its focus:

- **Evangelism and Discipleship**
- **Christian Education**
- **Community Empowerment**



Evangelism and Discipleship



The Jesus Film Ministry is Balama Project's key strategy for evangelism and discipleship. Jesus Film is a two-hour documentary on the life and teachings of Christ produced in the Kpelle language.

The film serves two purposes: (1) It tells the gospel story in a way that eliminates language barriers that tend to hinder the gospel; and (2) It serves as alternative evening entertainment for villagers. Upon viewing the film, we lead conversations

about fundamental concepts, and later organize the viewers into small discussion groups for Bible study purposes.

We have established five indigenous congregations to date. The cell groups in Balama and Raymond Towns are growing, but we have had enormous challenges growing those in Barborquelleh and Garyea due to a leadership crisis amongst the group members. In February of 2009, we selected and trained seven lay leaders in Biblical models of leadership.

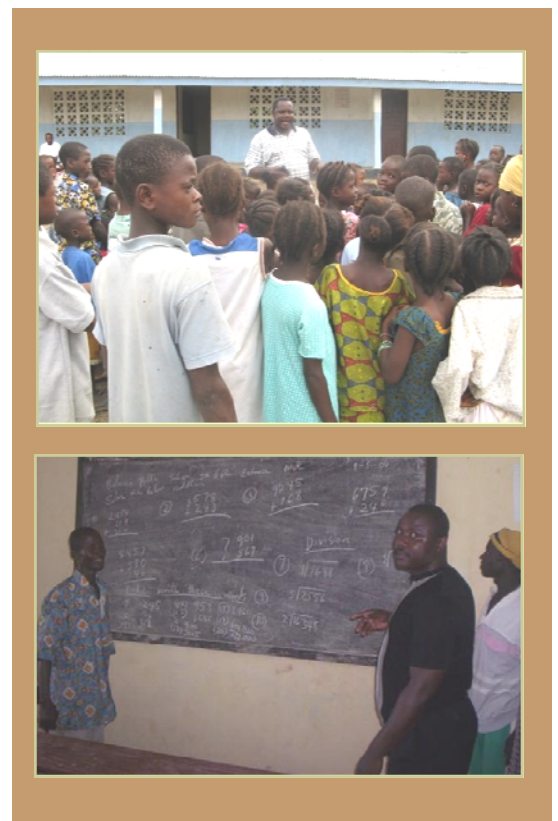
Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. May he be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. NLT Eph 3:20-21

Christian Education

It is not enough to simply preach gospel to the poor and disenfranchised; social action is also critical. Therefore, we have endeavored to share the Good News through words and deeds. Balama Elementary School is one of the many ways that we share the gospel. From a humble beginning, Balama School was birthed under a Dahoma tree that still stands in the school's front yard. The current school was built in 2006 with collaborative efforts of USAID, American Refugee Committee, and the people of Balama.

This eleven classrooms facility sits on 50 acres of land that was donated by the people of Balama. Enrollment at the Balama School has steadily grown over the past three years and now stands at 722 students for both morning and evening sections. Unfortunately about 30% of this number were forced to drop out of school due to dress code enforcement by the Ministry of Education. Students were required to wear a government prescribed uniform, a decision that creates quite a cost for students and their parents.

Before the massive student withdrawal, we had begun making preparation for evening classes to accommodate the growth. In February of 2009, the communities of Suacoko and Samaritan Purse Relief Ministries signed a memorandum of understanding for the establishment of an Adult Literacy Program (evening classes) to accommodate adults who expressed an interest in learning to read and write, but could not be enrolled into the regular day school. Balama Teachers were sponsored to participate in a two-week workshop on adult literacy. But the program was stalled due to resource limitation at Samaritan Purse.



Christian Education

Scholarship and Mentoring Program

The focus of humanitarian aid to Liberia is moving from relief to capacity building and human resource development. The goal is to build the capacity of locals through education, skill training, mentoring, and empowerment of emerging leaders for takeover as expatriates phase out. The scholarship and mentoring program has three phases:

- (1) With the communities input, emerging leaders with passion for the vision of Balama Project are identified;
- (2) Balama Project mobilizes the resources needed to fund scholarships for the emerging leaders' college education with hopes that upon graduation, they will remain/return to their communities to serve;
- (3) While in the process of acquiring a college education and vocational skills, the emerging leaders are mentored in the day-to-day operation of the ministries of Balama Project;
- (4) Upon acquisition of reasonable knowledge and skills for their work, the leaders are allowed to lead without supervision.

Currently, we have eleven high school, and four college students enrolled at G.W. Gibson High School and Cuttington University respectively. The four students enrolled at Cuttington are now poised to assume leadership role for the ministries of Balama Project for fiscal year 2010.

Community Empowerment

Brick Yard

Through the generosity of partner churches, we purchased two brick machines and set up a brick yard as an alternative source of income generation for the Balama Project. During the month of September, we hired the services of three professional brick makers from the Catholic Relief Services to give the brick yard worker a two weeks crash course on commercial quality brick production. The training of trainers (TOT) workshop was held in Balama with seven participants learning the recipe and operation of the machine. At the close of the workshop, each participant was able to independently operate the machine, mixing, and molding ten pieces of high quality bricks.

In September of 2009, heirs of the late Timothy Titman & Louise G. Harris generously gave two and half acre to the Balama Project to use as a future site of the brick yard. The land is located on a hill top along the Monrovia – Gbarnga Highway about 1 mile from Phebe Hospital. The property has been surveyed and deeded to Balama Project. Special thanks to Mrs. Wade Harris-Tipayson and Mrs. Younda Harris-Tubman for this gift.



Community Empowerment

The Balama Project empowers the communities of Suacoko by implementing programs geared towards making the communities self-sustained. We accomplish this through our micro-loan program, brick yard, and community farm.

Micro-Loan Program

The micro-loan program economically empowers individuals and families by providing seed monies of \$100 -200(USD) to help start small businesses, raise gardens, and cultivate community farms. Before issuing the funds, applicants are encouraged to participate in a week-long small business workshop after which a background check is done to establish the applicant's credit worthiness. Upon approval, applicants are placed in solidarity groups for support purposes. The solidarity group works together to ensure that members are able to repay their loans and on time. As recipients pay back their loans, the money is recycled, thereby giving other families an opportunity to start a new business. The program, however, does more than just increase income and build self-sufficiency; it contributes to economic growth and reduce poverty and unemployment amongst villagers.

Contrary to the growth experienced in 2007 and 2008, this fiscal year was challenging. Most businesses struggled to maintain inventory and to make the required monthly payment due to adverse effects of the ongoing global financial crisis. Eleven out of the one hundred thirty families served thus far were had to close their doors as the wholesale prices of commodities skyrocketed. The businesses made very little profit on commodities purchased. To stop the rest of the businesses from falling into default, we deferred monthly payments for a period of six months to help the businesses recover. This strategy helped most of them to maintain inventory. The borrowers will resume payment in January of 2010.

Community Farms

One of the Balama Project's initiatives for reducing poverty and the resulting hunger amongst the villagers is its ongoing cultivation of community farms. This is made possible through Balama Project's Food-for-Work Program—an initiative geared at helping families take the first step out of the trap of hunger. The objectives of Food-for-Work are twofold: (1) to provide food and short-term employment opportunities for participants; (2) to enhance the capacity of communities in the direction of self-reliance. Households participating in the Food-for-Work program are paid with food rations instead of money. While serving as motivator for community participation, the food ration gives participants a short-term food supply. Last year's harvest of rice and beans from the farm was used to feed our students lunches for this academic year. The pineapples, bananas, and plantains have already started to yield.



Local Partnerships

Balama Project partners with Children Ministry Liberia Inc. Children Ministry is an orphanage that provides home for 78 orphans at its Balama and Dawn Town facilities. Daryl Robert, a member at Heritage Baptist Church in Cartersville has found a passion in helping the orphanage. He will be leading a team of construction workers to build four buildings including dormitories, academic building, cafeteria, etc.

During this fiscal year in review, we also served and mentored students at Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary. The Balama Project provides hands on mission opportunities for student at the Seminary. This year, we led a field trip of seminary students into Balama. The trip gave seminary students an opportunity to engage rural pastors and share in their ministries.

Mission Teams



During the month of January, we were blessed to host an assessment team from Dunwoody Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Rev. Jeff Reams, Mr. Charles Drake, and Mr. Spencer Cornett visited Liberia for five day (January 24 -29) to assess how Dunwoody Baptist Church can nurture its partnership with the people of Balama. They are planning on leading a mission team to Liberia in 2010.

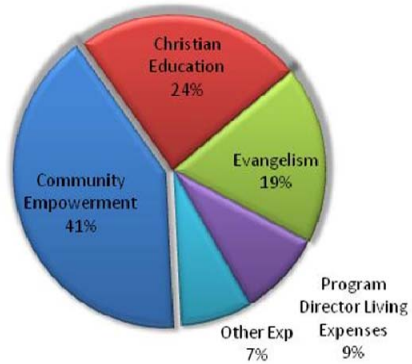
On March 4th -18th, Dr. Robert Earl and Esther Worthington of First Baptist Church, Jonesboro came to Liberia for a fourteen days mission trip to visit Balama Project, Liberia Baptist Seminary, and rural ministries in Nimba and Grand Cape Mount Counties, and other partner ministries in Liberia.

Growth in 2010

In 2008, we were blessed to have Jerry and Lisa Greeby come to Liberia for their honeymoon. The Greeby's could have chosen other venues for such a special occasion; instead, they decided to go to Liberia on a mission trip to help and work with orphans and war affected youths. Upon returning to the United States, Jerry was killed in a tragic accident. Lisa, in her loss and pain, decided to give to the service of God by designating memorial gifts for the construction of the Jerry T. Greeby Resource Center in Balama. The center will house a library, student center, and guest rooms for short-term mission teams. The memory of Jerry remains in the hearts of the people of Balama

Funding and Impact

General Funds Review 2009



For 2009, the entire Balama project operated on approximately \$78,000. The chart at the right provides a snap-shot of the distribution of these funds. Thinking in terms of \$1 given in 2009, over 83 cents went directly to the three ministry focus areas — 41 cents to Community Empowerment programs, 24 cents to Christian Education and 19 cents to Evangelism. The remainder provides for the oversight and support to keep the Balama project moving ahead.

Impact Review 2009

Christian Education:

The Balama Elementary School - This eleven classroom facility provides primary Christian education for more than 300 students. It employs 16 teachers and 2 staff members and operates two semesters a year: November - early March and then Late March - July

Scholarships - The Balama Project is currently supporting 15 scholarships—11 elementary/high school and 4 college students.

Evangelism:

Jesus Film Ministry - The film in the Kpelle language has sparked over 200 professions of faith in 3 years. There are 5 small groups today and two scholarship students preparing to become the leads for the Jesus film ministry.

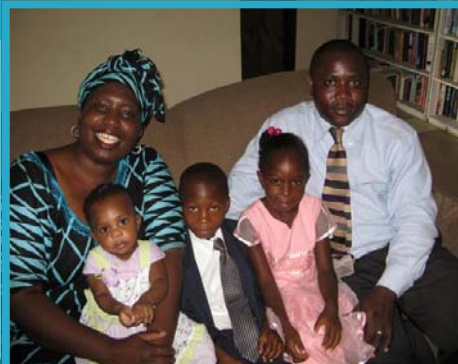
Community Empowerment:

Micro loan - Over 130 individuals have received loans with an average of 80% payback.

Brickyard - Currently there are 10 individuals trained to work in the brick yard. The average wage in Balama is about \$5 a day.

Women's programs - We have over 15 women in our sewing program and have trained many in food service. We have 5 ladies, The Coal-Pot Queens, that operate a 'catering' business for mission teams (cooking western style or Liberian food). Coal pots are the large pots that are used for cooking in Liberia.

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