

The Liberian Philanthropy Secretariat: A Case Study

This work presents a review of the newly established Liberian Philanthropy Secretariat. We will begin by examining the leading currents of thought prevalent within development literature on the current state of foreign aid, its past and the hopes for its future. We will then consider the rise of private sector citizen-to-citizen aid and international development. We will outline the emerging contributions being made by this new paradigm in foreign aid involving non-governmental, citizen-to-citizen international assistance encompassing both individuals and organization. We will also briefly consider the role of remittances in private sector giving and investment.

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This work presents a review of the newly-established Liberian Philanthropy Secretariat. It begins by examining the leading currents of thought prevalent within development literature on the current state of foreign aid, the past and the hopes for the future of foreign aid. The study then considers the rise of private sector citizen-to-citizen foreign aid and international development. It outlines the emerging contributions being made by this new paradigm in foreign aid involving non-governmental, citizen-to-citizen international assistance, which encompasses both individuals and organizations. It also briefly considers the role of remittances in private sector giving and investment.

Following the literature review, the study will examine the Liberian government's policies directed toward taking advantage of the many opportunities afforded by the international community, including the establishment of the Liberian Philanthropy Secretariat. The study then looks closely at the structure and mechanism of the Liberian Philanthropy Secretariat—founding, management objectives, staffing and position within the Liberian government bureaucracy. Additionally, the work outlines Best Practices by considering personnel, method, purpose and evaluation of development work. Finally, the paper makes recommendations to improve the operations and broaden the scope of the Secretariat, and concludes with a summary highlighting salient points made in the document.

Development Aid

Over the last few decades, appeals from advocacy groups, policy makers, and celebrities for increased international assistance to developing countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa have increased in number and volume. However, they have been met by contrary voices resisting a blanket increase in funds, insisting that an increase in foreign aid will merely repeat the developmental failures that have plagued the continent since the beginning of the decolonization era. These contrary voices are keen to point out that despite billions of dollars given precious little has been gained. What is needed instead is a reassessment of the policies and practices of the aid regime. The question being asked by the contrary voices is “Why is it that after 50 years and more than one trillion dollars such desperate appeals are still being made for help with very basic levels of human needs?” President Paul Kagame of Rwanda succinctly articulated this concern when he said:

Now, the question comes for our donors and partners: having spent so much money, what difference did it make? In the last 50 years, you've spent US\$400 billion in aid to Africa. But what is there to show for it? And the donors should ask: what are we doing wrong, or what are the people we are helping doing wrong? Obviously somebody's not getting something right. Otherwise, you'd have something to show for your money.

The donors have also made a lot of mistakes. Many times they have assumed they are the ones who know what countries in Africa need. They want to be the ones to choose where to put this money, to be the ones to run it, without any accountability. In other

cases, they have simply associated with the wrong people and the money gets lost and ends up in people's pockets. We should correct that.

In short, the need for a review of policies and practices has come about because the aid regime has failed, or at least it is not working as presently constituted. The Liberian government has made the private sector integral to its development agenda. As a part of this general policy orientation, it has established the Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat. We propose to review some of the Liberian government policies regarding her interest in harnessing the private sector and the development of the Secretariat, its administrative structure and policy goals.

In order to fully understand the task set before the Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat a quick review of the various developmental approaches in Liberia should be undertaken. The discussions and debates are centered on a few key positions.

- Foreign aid has failed because the international community has not fully appreciated local conditions and so has applied a blanket solution to the many varied problems, a kind of one-size-fits-all approach. What are needed are better planning and an increase in outlays for development assistance. The thinking is that once goals have been clearly defined for each needy country then disbursements may be allocated for the realization of these goals. The problem with this argument is that it does not sufficiently accounts for history, persons, and culture. The emphasis on increasing international assistance does not go much beyond the tried and failed development policies of the past. This position has a better appreciation of the determinative character of geography than it does of the force of the human will and the consequent culture and history that is a product of that will. An old Hasidic Rabbi has rightly said, ***“Just as the strength of the root is in the leaf, so the strength of man is in every utensil he makes, and his character and behavior can be gauged from what he has made.”***
- A contrary position acknowledges that local conditions have not always been fully appreciated, but that historically good planning has happened and that in the process goals were clearly defined. A cursory historical review reveals that much the same goals now being touted are essentially no different from those identified in the past. The current concerns still do not fully appreciate local conditions. And here local conditions have to do with a complex multiplicity of factors that motivate individuals and communities, such as history and culture. There will indeed be no meaningful developmental progress unless and until local conditions are taken seriously. The question here is what is it that makes a person want to be? Individuality and diversity really do matter even in international development. These are profound philosophical, religious, and cultural questions. These are questions that the international community cannot settle. Only persons within developing communities can determine these things for themselves. And until that time, the international community can essentially do nothing of real value but wait for constructive change to come about in these developing communities. In the meantime, the international community should restrict itself to meeting humanitarian emergencies and assorted promising individual cases. On the surface this seems like wise counsel. Its strength lies in its market-driven approach. Yet at a deeper level this position may be defeatist, even if its concerns are real and understandable. But what would have happened to Liberia if there had

been no international will to help Liberians settle their civil conflict? Are we really so unaffected by each other's burdens? Indeed, good work in foreign aid may yet be done if those doing the work do not see themselves as *lords and masters and gatherers of tribute*, but as helpers and teachers, bringing consolation and blessing.

- Yet another position maintains that international assistance has not only failed to be efficacious over the last fifty years but has been harmful to the recipients, that all the pathologies of the developing communities in Africa may be directly attributable to foreign aid. There is a sense in which this position has not transcended the level of blaming others for all the ills within one's own community. It may ultimately be an irresponsible stance. Though it proposes the drastic solution to discontinue all international assistance to developing countries. This may actually end up forcing dependent communities to take on more responsibility, which is a good thing. Akin to the hard stance of leaving a person to his own devices if he will not listen to good counsel, it is ultimately a *swim or sink* position. This is severe council, not many will be able to hear it.
- A more nuanced position seeks to appreciate all the complicated factors surrounding development aid involving both donors and recipients, and yet calls for continued intelligent engagement. Past policies are acknowledged as failures, and must be subjected to a critical review. A sentimental response to decadence and decline is rejected. People and their culture and history do matter. Yet it remains true that we live in a global village. Should a village have no concern for its own wellbeing when a certain family in the village deteriorates and can make no meaningful contribution to village life, but rather threatens it with disease, violence and destruction? And so for this position, a wise engagement is necessary to international peace and security. It is also cost effective. Broken countries like broken lives are not cost efficient. A typical failed state costs the world anywhere from 60 to 100 billion dollars¹. The cost of doing nothing can be prohibitively high. The benefit of intelligent engagement is nearly 30 times less than the cost of doing nothing. This position takes into account the fact that donors have often not sufficiently appreciated that the problems of developing communities are mostly philosophical and cultural—internal to these communities. Yet the international community has a vested interest in the stability of these countries and peoples. It is not solely about the efficacy of foreign aid but about a more judicious approach to the distribution of foreign aid. How may the international community be of assistance and avoid the errors of the past? How may they be of assistance for consequential long lasting positive change to developing communities, so that fifty years hence a record of success and solid achievements will have been achieved? Thinkers here are concerned that law and international charters be given pride of place as instruments for stability, peace and development.
- Yet another position that has not been much discussed but in fact is central to the success of international development: the development of people. The theme here is that changing people changes history. If people are not changed, little else changes in the long term.

¹ Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 74.

In the mean, these policy positions have been centered on government outlays to the developing world involving bilateral and multilateral institutions. References to the role of philanthropy in international assistance have remained peripheral throughout. This is understandable. Private philanthropy is a relatively new player to the world of international assistance. Its role however is growing in importance. Being private does lend a different perspective, and may reorder many priorities. The lessons of the past decades could accrue for good to this new player in foreign aid. It may be a part of the solutions to the many problems confronting international development.

The Role of Private Philanthropy in Development Work

Private participation from developed countries in international development is growing in prominence. As an aggregate private international development assistance has superseded official government to government flow of capital by a factor of three (by a factor of five before the recent financial downturn). This includes philanthropy, remittances and investment.

Persons and groups not associated or minimally associated with formal governmental structures are increasingly involving themselves at great personal cost in international assistance. This may not be as new as it seems. Perhaps the work is merely being better documented. The Liberian state, from conception through founding and on to the present day, has benefited immensely from private and philanthropic interest. Yet, even in Liberia with its long relationship with private giving is seeing a dramatic rise in philanthropic participation in the last decade. These persons and institutions have involved themselves in every area of development work; from relief to banking and finance to professional and scientific, to educational (primary, secondary and tertiary), to travel and leisure, to entrepreneurship (both social and business), to medical and religious work (with religious and humanitarian interest mostly acting as the motivating factor for all the rest). These persons and institutions have shown themselves most adept to the use of sophisticated technology in pursuing excellence in their vocation. And *vocation* it is for most of them. They are creative and fecund in the realization of their work, in management, in the delivery of products and services, and in the use of technology—seemingly always inventing and reinventing themselves to meet the challenges at hand.

The participation of some 200 million individuals internationally in the private flow of capital is made most evident in the emergence of remittances. Remittances are monies sent back home by expatriates. Remittances are the most important stable source of external development finance in developing countries. They are the single most important source of insurance in many poor countries, especially those in political and economic crisis. For many poor countries in the world they are the only viable source of income. Remittance is a form of self-help undertaken by the poor themselves. For instance, Liberians send back anywhere from about 60 to 100 million dollars annually. The consequences of remittances are still being studied, but even now they are being viewed on the whole as positive and transformative for the societies affected. This is of such importance for the developing world that some have termed remittances the *new development mantra*. Recent documentation would indicate that

remittances have surpassed official foreign aid assistance from the developed world to the developing world by 34%.² (These figures may now be lower because of the worldwide economic down turn.)

Remittances must not be looked at merely as the flow of financial capital from the developed world to the developing world. It should also be more broadly appreciated as the flow of ideas from the developed world to the developing world – ideas regarding governance, law, politics, science and technology and culture. That is, remittances are not only cash transfers but also *knowledge* transfers. The Liberian experience may be considered an example of that knowledge and cultural transfer in the election of a female President, an unprecedented event on the African continent.

Remittances do not technically qualify as a philanthropic enterprise. However, it does represent at some level the generosity of the developed world, in that the developed world has permitted the free and legal migration of peoples from the developing world into their countries to work and earn and learn, and the transfer of their gains back home to their countries of origin. Historically, this need not be so. Prosperous advanced and sophisticated nations have been known to put up massive barriers against entry or make the cost of entry prohibitively expensive. Yet this exchange is not one way. Real material benefits are accrued to the developed world in these transactions.

With total private flow at \$355 billion (1991-2008): private investment at \$121 billion, remittances at \$181 billion, and philanthropy at \$53 billion compared with official governmental flow of \$121 billion³; the trend is to encourage developing nations to foster long term partnership with the private sector and philanthropic institutions for sustained prosperity and growth within their respective countries. The size of the flow of capital is not the only reason to encourage developing nations to foster long term partnership with philanthropic institutions and other private actors. These private actors are often uniquely suited to deal with nuances of people, culture, and history, in that they are flexible and highly committed. The concern of some of the more reflective researchers and scholars is that too many of these intangible aspects of international development have been missing, and may mostly account for the abysmal failure that the project as a whole has been so far.

The new leadership in Liberia has heard about these numbers and knows the deep long term commitments that come along with them. The Liberian government is actively seeking and encouraging the participation of the private sector (both for-profit and non-for profit) in Liberia's development. It has made that sector integral to its development agenda.

² Hudson Institute, The Center for Global Prosperity publication: *The Index of Global Philanthropy and Remittances 2010*.

³ These numbers are from the Hudson Institute, The Center for Global Prosperity publication: *The Index of Global Philanthropy and Remittances 2010*.

The Liberian Government Development Policy

The Liberian government, by a major policy initiative, has positioned itself to take advantage of the many new and diverse opportunities afforded by the international community. Liberia seeks to promote a healthy and attractive environment for business and service.

The Liberian government in defining its development objectives has launched the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). This national strategy consists of four parts:

1. **Enhancing Peace and National Security:** Under this rubric the government has demobilized an estimated 100,000 ex-fighters and reintegrated them into society. The government is also pursuing similar policies and activities to reintegrate and resettle former internally displaced persons and returned refugees. The government has begun a major restructuring of the entire state security apparatus.
2. **Revitalizing the Economy:** Estimated unemployment in the formal sector of the Liberian economy is about 80%.⁴ The Liberian government is challenged to resuscitate the economy, create jobs, and rebuild infrastructure and the major sectors of the economy such as agriculture, fisheries, mining, forestry and manufacturing. The government sees the revitalization of the economy as foundational to the PRS. The government under this initiative will be focused on developing a prudent fiscal policy, a stable microeconomic environment, and a policy to stabilize monetary exchange rates. The government will seek to improve the management of state enterprises and the management and use of Liberia's natural resources. The government will seek the recovery and development of the private sector, with a particular interest in supporting the informal sector of the economy where women and the poor make their living, providing access to financial and other professional skills to make it more productive. The Liberian government will seek to improve energy supply and stability, develop a policy for land ownership reform and tenure, pursue the reform of the tax and investment codes, reduce regulation and administrative practices for doing business in Liberia, and improve on the current laws and regulation governing telecommunications.
3. **Strengthening Governance and the Rule of Law:** The new administration in Liberia rightly sees bad governance as mostly responsible for all Liberia's woes over the last 25 years. The administration appreciates the link between people and government. And for this reason the Liberian government has set for itself the monumental task of changing the mindsets and value systems of the Liberian people. The government will restructure the machinery of government for the purpose of making real the rule of law in all spheres of national life. Liberia has become a member of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The government will strengthen environmental rules and regulations. The Liberian government has implemented the Governance and Economic Management Action Plan (GEMAP) to strengthen governance, financial management and its accountability system with the hope of bringing about transparency to the business of government. The Liberian government has made the international community integral to

⁴ <http://www.liftliberia.gov.lr/content.php?sub=104&related=63&third=104>

maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of the GEMAP system. It has put into place a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established an Independent National Commission on Human Rights and began the reformation of the Civil Service Commission. To address gender inequalities the government seeks to create an environment especially conducive to the growth and flourishing of girls. It has committed itself to full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 by developing national policies on women and security as a guide for achieving gender equality and equity. A Ministry of Gender and Development has been established. The national gender policy is addressing the needs of both men and women and boys and girls.

4. **Rehabilitating Infrastructure and Delivering Basic Services:** Here the Liberian government is interested in the rebuilding of roads, telecommunications, water and sanitation systems, the electrical grid, schools, the launch of a new girls' education policy, healthcare facilities, and the revitalization of the national strategy to fight HIV/AIDS and malaria.

Not explicitly part of the PRS, Liberia is also fully committed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and is using the PRS as the main vehicle for achieving the MDGs.

The present Liberian administration has also developed a Diaspora policy. The Liberian Diaspora represents a major source of financial, intellectual, human and technical capital to Liberia. The impact of the Liberian Diaspora is competitive with the impact of donor assistance to Liberia. Wisely the Liberian government Diaspora policy includes plans for a formal institutional engagement with the Liberian Diaspora. The government has already established an Office of Diaspora Affairs. The government has identified three areas for potential cooperation with the Diaspora: private sector development, a strong middle class, and a public sector capacity building. It has begun to collect data on the Diaspora so as to develop a Diaspora profile. The Liberian U.S. Embassy has established the Liberian Diaspora Advisory Board. The government has introduced a bill into the Liberian legislature to legalize dual citizenship affording the Diaspora greater flexibility and extending their level of participation in Liberia's development. The government further commits itself to treating the Diaspora as the 16th Liberian county with all the rights, privileges, and attention of any other Liberian political sub-division.

At last, the Liberian government has established the Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat.

The Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat⁵

On 22 September 2008, a meeting was jointly convened in New York City by Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf President of the Republic of Liberia and philanthropist George Soros to discuss the role of foundations in Liberia. Numerous presidents of foundations with interest in Liberia attended the meeting. They were chiefly concerned about improving coordination between the Government of Liberia and the foundations. The main result of the meeting was an agreement to establish a framework with the central task of coordinating foundation activities in Liberia. Another important outcome of the meeting

⁵ For this section I would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat.

was an agreement to establish a high-level Advisory Council to President Sirleaf. It was also agreed that a series of smaller working groups with a focus on particular issues be formed.

In response to the outcome of the meetings in September 2008 in New York City, the Liberian government with the generous support of the NoVo Foundation, Humanity United, Wellspring Advisors, the Daphne Foundation, and the McCall MacBain Foundation created the Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat in April 2009. The Secretariat is presently housed within the Office of the President, where it is being incubated and developed with a view toward its future institutionalization and clear legal structure. At this point in time, the Secretariat is forming and evolving. Even so, it represents a new model for donor-government collaboration in transitional countries seeking to increase the effectiveness of philanthropist-supported activities.

The need for this administrative unit came about as a result of challenges encountered on the ground in Liberia. The Liberian government as well as the foundations found field coordination to be difficult. The foundations were frustrated at not being able to know with any certainty conditions on the ground in Liberia. The Liberian government had trouble coordinating foundation activities in the country. Part of the coordination problem had to do with the fact that only two foundations maintained a field office in Liberia, with the others being headquartered in different places around the world; places as far as New York and the San Francisco Bay Area to various European cities. Considering the vast geographical expanse of these locations, the great challenge of coordinating stakeholders and activities in Liberia with a private donor community scattered around the western world may be fully appreciated. The Liberian government while happy with the support they are receiving from philanthropists and foundations believed that with proper outreach and engagement they could attract more private international assistance to Liberia. For all these reasons the Liberian government, the philanthropists and the foundations had a vested interest in the creation of the Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat.

The Liberian government sees the Philanthropy Secretariat as having three objectives:

- 1) Improving the quality of foundation and philanthropist-supported activities in Liberia by a) facilitating more effective foundation collaboration through better information sharing, communication and outreach between the Liberian government, NGOs, and the foundations and between the foundations themselves and other interested parties; b) enhancing alignment between foundation activities and Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS); c) identifying projects and NGOs that may present strategic funding opportunities for foundations and philanthropists; d) identifying and developing mechanisms – such as fiscal sponsorships - to facilitate the delivery of philanthropic support into Liberia; e) strengthening the capacity of Liberian government entities to effectively engage with philanthropists and foundations.
- 2) Expanding the number of private philanthropic institutions and individual philanthropists supporting work in Liberia, and expanding the scale of the efforts of foundations that are already at work in Liberia.
- 3) Establishing and coordinating the Presidential Advisory Council which will provide high level strategic advice to the President on issues related to investment and economic policy. So far the Secretariat has not prioritized this objective.

The Philanthropy Secretariat will coordinate the work of the Presidential Advisory Council by developing a Technical Operating Report, working with the President's Office to identify and invite potential members to join the council, assisting in developing themes for the meetings of the Council and ensuring strong follow up on decisions taken at those meetings. The Council is slated to convene twice annually: once by teleconferencing and another time in the fall in New York City. The smaller working groups will meet similarly with the second meeting coinciding with the Council's meeting in the fall. Senior officials from different foundations will independently lead the smaller working groups. The Secretariat will work with the Liberian President's Office to identify proper foundation leadership for each group, and will then invite these foundations to officially initiate the working groups. The Secretariat will assist in the coordination of the teleconferencing meetings of these working groups. It will also work to ensure a strong follow-up on decisions taken at these meetings, and ensure that the groups' ideas and plans are fully communicated to the Liberian government.

The Liberian Philanthropy Secretariat operates with a staff of two, one Liberian and one non-Liberian, although a plan to phase this into an all-citizen staff has already been adopted. These two staff offices are the Secretariat Program Manager and Program Assistant. Presently the Program Manager is an international, and the Program Assistant a Liberian. A Liberian Minister of State, the Chairman of the National Investment Commission, heads this Office.

The Secretariat Program Manager will be the primary link between the foundations and the Liberian government. The Program Manager will report to a Liberian Minister of State without Portfolio. This staff position will regularly communicate and maintain contact with all foundations and philanthropists in Liberia, and help them in their dealings with the Liberian government and the NGOs. The Program Manager will operate from Monrovia but is expected to travel frequently to meet with representatives from various foundations around the world.

It is hoped that within a limited time frame the Program Assistant will assume the responsibilities of the Program Manager. The Program Assistant is responsible for coordinating the logistics of the foundations' visits to Liberia in respect to their meetings with NGO officials and relevant Liberian government officials. This person is also responsible for providing for accommodations and transportation during the foundations' visit to Liberia. This staff person will also be a support to the Program Manager, coordinating his day to day activities, and attending to the administrative duties for the Secretariat.

The Philanthropy Secretariat will be responsible for providing quarterly reports to an Advisory Board of philanthropist. The Advisory Board will be responsible for providing feedback and guidance to the Secretariat from those quarterly reports. The guidance and feedback will consist of ascertaining that the Secretariat is adequately responding to the needs of the foundations. The Advisory Board will also evaluate the overall performance of the Secretariat based on a set of deliverables determined for the Secretariat after a year of operation. It is hoped that this evaluation will assist in fine tuning the Secretariat's framework and structure.

The Secretariat in consideration of its core objectives has determined its deliverables thus far to be the following:

More Effective Coordination

Information Gathering and Sharing: A central activity of the Secretariat will be sharing information between the foundations and the Liberian government. The Secretariat will gather needed information through regular correspondence with the foundations focal points. It will collaborate with the Liberian Ministry of Finance Aid Management Unit to provide reports for private donors. Relevant information will then be made available on its website. The Secretariat is responsible for creating and maintaining a comprehensive database of foundation activities in Liberia. It has already launched a well-articulated website and is already looking for new ways to enhance its effectiveness and visibility.

The website's address is <http://supportliberia.com>. The site is professionally done with a pleasant and inviting design that encourages interaction through a clear, simple, and easy to navigate interface. The site makes for a fine introduction to the Secretariat and its project. It has six major pages each containing pertinent information on Liberia, the Secretariat, and ongoing third-party projects in the country. The six major pages are *Home*, *About Us*, *How to Support Liberia*, *Philanthropic Partners*, *Resources* and *Announcements*. *Home* is primarily a welcome page. *About Us* provides a brief historical background of the Secretariat, and a brief discussion of what the Secretariat is and what it does. A section on its services featured on this page explains what non-monetary assistance such as books and medical supplies the Secretariat makes available. The Staff section, also on the *About Us* page, is an introduction to the Secretariat personnel, their qualifications and professional experiences. *How to Support Liberia* highlights four areas in which prospective philanthropists could contribute to Liberia's development and reconstruction. These areas are Sirleaf Market Women's Fund, Liberia Civil Society Support Program, Scott Fellows Program and Kiva.org. The other major page is *Philanthropic Partners*, which provides a list of Liberia's private philanthropic partners with a brief description of the various foundations and their work in Liberia. This list may be furthered categorized by the focus areas of Capacity Building, Civil Society Strengthening, Education, Energy and Environment, Food and Agriculture, Gender/Women's Rights, Health, Human Rights, Information and Communication Technology, Private Sector Development, Rule of Law and Transportation. A final sub-category, called "Other" acts as a catch-all for whatever is not included in the preceding sub-categories. *Resources* is a page providing a database of foundations and philanthropists activities and projects in Liberia, a directory of international and local NGOs operating in Liberia, a library of relevant documents and reports on Liberia for assisting research by persons seeking to do work in Liberia, links to Liberia government Ministries and Agencies, links to recent press reports on Liberia, a list of books and films related to Liberia and a brief history of Liberia. The last major page *Announcements*, provides information on upcoming meetings and visits by foundations and philanthropists concerning Liberia.

Liaison to NGOs and Government of Liberia: The Philanthropy Secretariat will serve as the primary link between the foundations, NGOs, and the Liberian government. As liaison the Secretariat will seek to improve the quality of information available about NGOs in Liberia. It will assist the foundations in identifying potential NGO partners and work with the foundations to build the capacity of the NGO sector in Liberia. It will educate Liberian NGOs on how to improve their engagement with the private donor community. It will educate relevant government entities about the role of philanthropy in the development process. The Secretariat will seek an expanded role for intermediaries such as New African Research and Development Agency (NARDA) and with the NGO unit at the Liberian Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs. It will develop a special pilot initiative for local NGOs for projects in Liberia. It will also convene relevant meetings and conduct occasional on site visits to foundation-funded projects. Upon request the Secretariat will conduct regular monitoring visits to existing foundation-funded projects and convene meetings with all potential NGO partners. It will alert foundations to relevant emerging issues with their field partners, and help remove any hindrance that the foundations may have with their partners in Liberia.

The Secretariat will meet quarterly with foundation representatives in their home country. This is primarily for sustaining direct contact with major players within the private donor community. The meeting will generally be about providing updates on projects in Liberia, sharing ideas on new areas for potential involvement in Liberia, and listening to foundations concerns and aspirations for their work in Liberia. The Secretariat will convene additional meetings outside of the quarterly meeting as these may become necessary. Some of these meetings will take place in Liberia and some via conference calls. The Philanthropy Secretariat is also interested in introducing the foundations and philanthropists to Liberia's bi-lateral and multilateral partners.

New Opportunities and New Foundations

Identification of New Initiatives and Linking to Foundations: Here the Secretariat will identify aspects of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) that are in need of additional foundation support and specific new investment opportunities. It will develop concept notes describing possible new PRS-aligned programs or initiatives that offer strong potential for foundation support. To do this the Secretariat will work closely with Liberian government officials, facilitate and manage the work of outside consultants as the case may be, and identify funding sources. It will seek to link these new opportunities to foundations by tailoring initiatives to match foundation interests and targeting specific opportunities to particular foundations. In its quarterly meetings with foundation representatives the Secretariat will discuss and further develop and refine these potential projects. The Secretariat will seek some expansion and rearrangement in its staffing requirements.

Outreach to new philanthropy actors: The Secretariat will identify foundations and other philanthropic actors with potential interest in Liberia. It will do outreach through a combination of letter writing, direct meeting, and by inviting philanthropic actors to visit Liberia. It will seek to build a network of Liberia philanthropic contacts who can serve as catalysts for new foundation

involvement in Liberia. The Secretariat will identify additional forums and other opportunities that might provide it with a strong potential to engage new foundations in Liberia. As such it is committed to regularly attending the Clinton Global Initiative and other major philanthropic meetings. On this note, the Secretariat will collaborate closely with officials from the Global Philanthropy Forum (GPF) to deepen Liberia's participation. It will be responsible for the organization and program development of the Annual Liberia Foundations Meetings held yearly in the month of September in New York.

Presidential Advisory Council

We have already reviewed the role and structure of the PAC; suffice it to say that this is a major item of interest to the Secretariat that is listed as a key objective in its operations.

In addition to Liberia's traditional bilateral and multilateral partners, the country is receiving strong contributions from a small and growing group of private donors, both individuals and organizations. The private international donor community of foundations and philanthropists has played a significant role in the reconstruction and development of Liberia since the conclusion of the 14-year civil war in 2003, continuing on to the election of Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as President of Liberia in 2005 and on into the present.

Liberia has benefited from private donors in a number of ways. The Open Society Institute has supported education in Liberia through the Education Pool Fund and technical assistance to the Ministry of Education itself. The Carter Center programs with funding support from Humanity United have assisted the effort to strengthen the rule of law in Liberia. Humanity United is involved in a series of initiatives designed to strengthen civil society and independent media. Along with TrustAfrica, Humanity United seeks to provide grants and capacity training to a number of leading civil society groups in Liberia, such as local independent radio stations. A set of 10 buses which has been operating in Monrovia since November 2008 were provided by the McCall MacBain Foundation. The International Rescue Committee's work of increasing educational opportunities for girls and of combating violence against women is receiving funding from the NoVo Foundation. The Nike Foundation, in partnership with the Liberian government and the World Bank, is launching the Adolescent Girls Initiative which will offer skills training and business development services to young women in Liberia. The training hopes to remove barriers to development by focusing on technical skills integrated with life skills. The Initiative is designed to reach 1,500 Liberian girls. The Scott Family Fellows Program initiated a capacity support service for senior level Liberian government officials. The program provides for young professionals from the United States to serve as special assistant to senior Liberian government officials by providing them with much needed professional, technical, and administrative assistance. The program was launched by a generous contribution from philanthropist Ed Scott, but it has since received additional support from the Open Society Institute, Humanity United, McCall MacBain Foundation, and the Nike Foundation. To date the Scott Fellows Program has fielded 15 total Fellows to Liberia in support positions. In fact the current Program Manager of the Secretariat is one such Fellow, and this is not his first assignment. He first worked as a Special Assistant to the same high level Liberian government official who is presently

the head of the Philanthropy Secretariat. Surely, an accommodating working relationship had developed that was advantageous for this new venture.

One may consider the Daphne Foundation as a representative sample of philanthropic work in Liberia, and as a representative sample of the kind of foundations that the Secretariat typically works with. The Daphne Foundation's interest in renewable efficient energy has led to the funding of an elementary school lighting system just outside of Monrovia. The school lighting system is based on a small light called *taa bora*—*better light* in Swahili—that was invented by a U.S.-based entrepreneur after a visit to rural Tanzania in 2003. His aim was to create a modern, environmentally friendly lighting solution that would replace candles and kerosene, cost less, last considerably longer, and could be assembled by local villagers. The result—a portable light that with a simple adjustment becomes a desk lamp for studying—is made up of a recycled plastic water bottle, rechargeable AA batteries, LED bulbs, and simple electronic components that are assembled without the need for electricity. The light lasts a minimum of three years and is charged by a 1.5 watt solar panel. This has allowed the school to expand its educational services into the late evening and early night for youth and adults. It has also spun off a business assembling these lights for sale and renting the school area at night. This will provide income for livelihood and for the upkeep of the school lighting system. The hope is that the *taa bora* lanterns will expand the widespread availability of low-cost, high-efficiency environmentally friendly lighting solutions as an alternative to kerosene lights and candles. This is good news for Liberia.

Liberia continues to seek support for the Liberia Education Trust to rehabilitate schools, to train teachers and to provide scholarships for students. It is also interested in support for its wireless communication platform and sustainable energy projects. The government of Liberia seeks to strengthen and expand the already transformative impact of foundations in Liberia. The Liberian government is encouraged by the generous response of private donors to Liberia's appeals.

Some Thoughts on Best Practices

Economists have tended to content themselves with a laughably simple picture of human motivation, rationality and well-being. People are not purely self-interested. They care for others and observe social norms. They do not always reason "instrumentally," seeking least-cost means to given ends. They question the point of their aims and the worth of their wants. Well-being, finally, has no single measure and is not inscrutable to others. Its elements are many and do not boil down to "utility" or some cash-value equivalent. – The Economist August 8th 2009

But they were not made as weapons of war or conquest: that is not their power. Those who made them did not desire strength or domination or hoarded wealth, but understanding, making, and healing, to preserve all things unstained. – J. R. R. Tolkien

Human existence is something more than ordinary existence in time and space. For man, to be means to know and to love. –The Meaning of Civilization

The role that this new unit of government seeks to play in facilitating private donor services in a post-conflict transitional Liberia makes discussion of best practices imperative; best practices concerning poverty, knowledge, goals, personnel, sustainability and project evaluation. Some recommendations have been in the concluding section of this study, but for the moment the chief interest is the consideration of the causes of poverty as fundamental to any theory of development or international assistance program. Such a theory plays a critical role in any later discussion of the Secretariat's policy initiatives. This is why the Secretariat must develop a philosophy of development, a theoretical statement that makes clear its understanding of the causes of poverty. This is not to depreciate the fact that the Secretariat operates within broader policy goals of the Liberian government.

Poverty: The Liberian government has issued results of the survey of its poverty reduction strategy. And this is all well and good. One shortcoming of those results is that poverty is reduced merely to material conditions such as the lack of money, water, food, housing and just social systems. These are limited categories. We may want to move beyond the tried emphasis on infrastructure, to a greater emphasis on developing people and their capacities. It is documented that before the 1980 coup d'état Liberia was making relatively good material and social progress. Indeed, Mrs. Sirleaf herself has acknowledged that by international standards Liberia was designated a middle income country. And yet the coup fundamentally changed Liberia's trajectory. This is a reminder that human progress is not inevitable. The coup and the resultant breakdown of civil society is also a reminder that development should be centered on people; and that ultimately and immediately "*progress*" is a measure of our successes on our way to full knowledge and full love. Perhaps this may be part of what the government meant by setting for itself the monumental task of changing the mindset and value systems of Liberia.

Thinkers (we are particularly indebted in this section to the text *Walking With the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* by Bryant L. Myers) within the development field would have us believe that poverty is more than mere material conditions. They maintain that while poverty and ill-being are closely associated, wealth and well-being are not. *Amassing wealth does not assure well-being*. Poverty is a complex phenomenon. Although in the Liberian situation it may be simpler than we are prepared to admit. *True human development involves choices, setting aside that which is not for life in us and our community while actively seeking and supporting all that is for life*. In light of Liberia's tragic past, this is a statement of utmost importance to the task of poverty reduction in Liberia. We must come to terms with how Liberians themselves have contributed to their poverty stricken conditions. What are the choices that they have made that have impeded their progress? How might those choices be changed for the better? The primacy of persons and history in the work of development must not be neglected. A people's understanding of the world, themselves, and their place within that world is not without consequence. It is best to first begin by understanding the nature of poverty as flawed relationships. The narrative of transcendence is imperative to the discussion of poverty in this context. Poverty represents a significant bridge in all of these relationships. And this is important to us, if in our poverty reduction strategy we are concerned about human well-being and well doing. If well-being and sustainability are of value to us then we will appreciate poverty as having to do with relationships. The

cessation of poverty will involve having people resolve these flawed relationships and began to live harmoniously with themselves, others, nature and transcendent reality. Well-being is inclusive of the whole range of human experiences, social, mental, spiritual and material. Relationship then is the first order of business in any strategy of poverty reduction. From this perspective the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is actually more important to Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy than anything else. If they are seeking the resolution of broken relations, men and women in Liberia will have to repent, that is, change radically for the better, and learn to forgive each other. The high purpose of the TRC is to spotlight the importance of truth-telling, to bring about reconciliation and to reestablish the place of justice and righteousness in the state. The point of truth-telling is to bring the people to a place where they can face the truth about themselves and their situation. The TRC may not have fully appreciated the depth and importance of its role in Liberia's development. Admittedly, some of these things have happened notwithstanding the controversies surrounding its findings.

Concerns for relationships at the local and personal levels do not deny that Liberia is a part of an international community that may not always share her best interest, and that may even be hostile to it. The priority of relationships must take into account causes beyond the individual and her local community to include the international community and the world at large. In fact, individual choices while substantial, meaningful and significant, are not absolute. Individual choices do not totally determine the way things are in the world, although it remains important to make the best of even a bad situation.

Knowledge: Knowledge is power. And power is not a necessary evil but can be a very great good. It is subject however to the perversion of evil. There is no short cut to thoroughly understanding a problem before providing a solution. Only good research involving site visits and a careful and thorough investigation will yield good data. From good data wise decisions can be made and appropriate policy developed. The knowledge of a people, their worldviews, beliefs and cultural practices are important to helping them meet their developmental needs. For it may be that the local worldview and social structures are the source of poverty in the community. Remember that Liberia was a middle income country before the 1980 debacle. It may be that the local worldview is not sufficient to the task of development and growth. It may not be life-sustaining. It may in fact be contributing to ill-being. For this reason development must address fear of spirits, witchdoctors, cannibalistic practices, human sacrifices, sexual practices and oppressive regimes, etc. All these things suppress the will to change. A spiritual and mental dimension to poverty is most consequential for the social and material order.

Goals: The question of the goal of development and growth must be addressed. Why should a people want to develop and grow? Where may they expect to be once this process has been engaged? The leaders must make it their chief responsibility to explain to the people what they are trying to do in seeking development and growth. And the people must buy into it as indeed a great good. The people must deeply appreciate why development and growth are necessary and good. They must embrace it. They must want to change for the better. Great institutions and nations emerged only from a focus on the individual aspiring to the highest possible spiritual and intellectual development and growth. Meaning is of utmost importance. A person may be able to attend to any *how* if he has a great *why*. Valuing effectiveness over meaning creates poverty. This theme was touched on previously. It is best to

see the goal of development as the discovery of the true identity and vocation of a people. The great question is what does Liberia want to be?

Development work is nothing less than the introduction of change into a human community, a challenge to a people's way of being in the world. Getting people to change is not easy work. Getting people to change at this depth is even more difficult, but not impossible. Men and women are malleable. They can change, and they have changed. Getting people to change at this level is spiritual work. Development is helping the poor recover their true identity and vocation. It is helping them understand who they are and what they do, that is, helping them to discover their calling. They are persons of real value with a transcendent purpose, beings possessed of a vocation as productive stewards and with a calling to know and to love. This then is the work of real change, real development and growth, real progress. It is not easily attained within a decade. It is a life long journey.

Personnel: Those who would help the poor must be willing to listen to their story, and listen wisely, carefully and appreciatively. The whole story must be heard and appreciated. They must be willing to allow the poor to be heard. And if the community is inarticulate, it must be helped in telling its story. We must understand where the men and women have been in order to appreciate where they are now, and where they might want to go. The story of a people is of central importance to understanding their developmental needs. Very often it is the stories of their relationships. As we have said before, they cannot be understood apart from their relationships. Their history of exclusion and disrespect needs to be heard with care and compassion. And yet the outsider, the foreign investigator brings to bear a fresh perspective to the problem. This is a perspective that must not be depreciated or taken lightly. The outsider's perspective may also be a part of the solution.

Listening to a community story requires care and a depth of sensitivity. Care must be taken that the Western secular materialist bias does not gloss over the importance of the unseen world to a people's story. Liberians religious and spiritual view of the world must be taken seriously into account. This is especially so since most Liberians locate the cause of their problems and their hope for solutions to these problems in that unseen world. And that unseen world is *reality* for most of them. This aspect of the Liberian experience must be acknowledged to do justice to the whole Liberian experience. This information is crucial to understanding their growth and development as a people. A sensitive observer will not only focus on their vulnerabilities, that is, why have they failed? Why are things not working in their community? Why the community has not corrected poverty sustaining behavior? She will also seek to understand their strength by looking for what works in the community. The poor do have some assets. In that it points to a time of stability, prosperity, clarity, order and lawfulness, and in that it was the result of policies promulgated by the forefathers of contemporary Liberians and so may be done again. The relative peace of Liberia until the 1980s is an asset. It may be asked why that peace held. The critics and criticisms of 1970s Liberia were rather short on appreciating what was working in Liberia. What was positive about the country that sustained it for more than one hundred years? And how might we replicate this life giving force all over the place? What was it that created value and was successful? And how can we expand this good? What is it that brought life to Liberia and how may it be replicated? Here the consideration should be all-inclusive of the physical, material, social, organizational, motivational, and attitudinal aspects of human life. One development thinker has said that this way of

looking at the community *is an intentional posture of continuous affirmation of life, of joy, of beauty, of excellence, of innovation.*

Poor training benefits no one. Some have claimed that many colonial era officials' gross policy errors had to do with a fundamental inadequacy in their training. Of course, Liberia was never colonized. Yet those who would help Liberia out of her poverty, even Liberians themselves, must be well trained. In many hard ways Liberia has experienced the blunt force of incompetence. Development thinkers not only stress the importance of training but are even careful to suggest some professional and academic disciplines that are necessary for work in development. Not surprisingly these are all scientific and professional in nature. This is all very good, but a theologian or a literary scholar or some such person may be just as important to the work of development. The problem of development is not primarily scientific or technical. Development has to do primarily with responsible well-being. Even so the person who would be fit to do development work should not only be intellectually trained, but also spiritually trained. The failures of the last fifty years of development in Africa have led some careful thinkers to highlight the place of humility in a development professional. Here the net must be cast broadly to include the educated class of a developing country. All of us concerned about the development and growth of a country must start from the premise that we are simple people and do not know as much as we think we know nor as much as we should know. In fact, it may be well to acknowledge that we are in fact ignorant about many things concerning human community; that we do not even know ourselves that well. And all this remains true in spite of an otherwise impeccable professional and academic training. Liberia might have had a better experience if her critics of the 1970s were a little more appreciative of their limitations. So let us all remember not to harbor exalted opinions of ourselves. We do not have all the right answers for Liberia. This will allow us to start with Liberia as she is and not to assume more of her than we ought. Some thinkers would also urge us to do our work with a bias towards peace. This bias towards peace was lost on some of the critics of the 1970s in Liberia. It is evil to agitate a people towards bitterness, hatred and violence. So we should always assume in all of our transactions, no matter how strenuous and difficult, the ontology of peace.

Sustainability: Ultimately, for any effort to be considered successful it must be sustainable. A community cannot thrive on the distribution of non-sustainable handouts. Equally true is the fact that the community could not be sustainable if it were not already so in some ways. Liberia in its very existence is sustainable at some levels. Of course, the last twenty-five years of Liberia's history, greatly tested Liberia's sustainability. And it may yet be said that Liberia's sustainability is still being tested. Nevertheless, Liberia could not be today if she was not sustainable.

Sustainability though is multi-dimensional. Physical sustainability, where the community is being enabled to provide for its own material well-being, focuses on teaching the poor how to create their own wealth. By contrast, mental sustainability is interested in the poverty of being. Poverty of being, ontological poverty, is the deepest form of poverty. In a poverty of being a person is robbed of all values and reasons to be. Liberia suffered not only physical destruction, but also psychological and spiritual destruction. Her identity was disfigured and marred. She is now most in need of healing and a restoration of her psychological and spiritual well-being. Liberia must learn how to think and be in the world again, so that she can make sense of her world and of her place in that world. This is where a

faith-based organization or a religious community can be very helpful. They may help in not only being repositories of values tradition, but also the source of values formation - contributing not only to the moral instruction of the community, but providing persons with good life enhancing values for service in the community. The discussion of life enhancing and preserving values bring us to the consideration of social sustainability. Here the concern is with the development and growth of law within a community. A sustainable community will preserve, protect and expand the legal rights of the individual and the group. It will respect the civil and political liberties of both the individual and the group. It will encourage the building of civil society. A strong civil society is valuable to strong and weak states alike. But it may be of greater value to a weak state. A strong civil society may actually provide the foundation to a strong and enduring state. Finally, ecological sustainability entails preserving Liberia's natural environment and encouraging an environmentally sensitive exploitation of Liberia's natural resources.

Project Evaluation: Development thinkers have noted that one of the reasons for the great loss of resources in foreign aid over the last several decades had to do with the lack of evaluation. So much was lost because no one thought of asking these simple questions: Is this thing working? Are we getting the results that we had hoped for? Where is the money going? Are people being helped? Therefore any consideration of best practices must address the matter of project or program evaluation. Another matter of equal importance is what is the evaluation for? Is the evaluation for the community in which development work is being done? Or is the evaluation primarily for the donor organization? It is for both the community and the donor organization. They both have a vested interest and similar purpose in the outcome of the project. It is simply good stewardship that a donor should seek verification that her money has been used properly and for its intended purpose. Evaluation should also be in the interest of the community. A good evaluation will try to determine if the development project is creating life, and providing for growth and change for the better. Resources should be poured into those projects or aspects of those projects where life is being affirmed. Even where acknowledged failures have occurred, learning opportunities must be sought. Even in failures there may be unanticipated successes. The really good economists have a preference for the rigorous methods of randomized trials. This method is expensive and will involve outside experts; but to hear the economist talk of it, it has great value. However, it seems not quite able to evaluate quality, and a good evaluation must go beyond quantities to include quality. A qualitative evaluation will include the evaluation of relationships. Given the premise that poverty is relational at its foundation, and that the relationship spoken of here is broad and all inclusive in its scope, involving the self relationship with itself, others, nature and transcendence. But that this relationship has become deeply flawed resulting in violence, conflict, greed, alienation and marginalization. A development program will then seek to be evaluated in terms of changes in these relationships. How has a people's view of their world and their place in that world changed? And is the change life enhancing and affirming? Or is it diminishing life's value? Will the new fabric of values emerging from the development program support and sustain ongoing positive change? Is the new values system promoting the life and good of the community? Evaluation though must go even further to include the development agencies and their staff. The community must be allowed to participate in this level of assessment. Besides assessing the technical competence of the development agency and its staff, the question of project values must be reviewed. Is the right thing being done? What message is the development technology communicating? What is the community learning about itself in this

development project? How is Liberia learning to recompose its story so that it is life enhancing? There were testimonies before the TRC that did suggest that Liberia recompose its story to encourage and affirm life. A good evaluation regime will be careful to listen to women and children. Women's issues in Liberia are in no way resolved even with a woman president. Nevertheless, Liberia is well ahead in listening to women. Childhood is so impressionable. It is in childhood that values and character are formed, and often remains fixed until life is ended. The children, boys and girls, are the future of Liberia. Mrs. Sirleaf has rightly expressed such deep compassion for the Liberian children, profoundly lamenting the many cruel ways they were brutalized and abused. What will such abused and brutalized children visit on Liberia when they are become adults?

Challenges

The Secretariat is an evolving institution, at this point fluid in what it will eventually become. Yet even now we may appreciate that the very existence of the Philanthropy Secretariat is a tacit recognition of the increasingly important role played by private donors in development work. In international assistance work emphasis should be placed on the role of the citizen-to-citizen model of assistance and policies developed to maximize private donor contributions while simultaneously not depreciating bi-lateral and multilateral partners. The Liberian government should be applauded for trying to do just these things, developing policies and setting up administrative structures to take advantage of this new and emerging paradigm in foreign aid. Likely, because of this new model and the advantages it affords in personal contacts, we may reasonably hope that the next half century of foreign aid will be better than the last.

The Secretariat has as part of its mission the expansion of its outreach activities to attract more private donors to opportunities in Liberia. This is good. The Secretariat may want to expand its outreach pool beyond the foundations and philanthropist to include universities, colleges, corporations, private voluntary organizations, and religious organizations. The Philanthropy Secretariat currently facilitates non-monetary assistance such as donations of books and medical supplies. It is recommended that the Secretariat expand this area of interest to include donation of gifts in kind such as professional technical services.

The Secretariat may want to consider remittances as part of the data it collects. Closely related to this, it may want to look for ways to involve the large pool of the Liberian Diaspora with its work and mission in order to sustain their continued interest in Liberia. Knowing that remittances tend to dwindle in every succeeding generation, involving the Diaspora in its work can be one way to counteract this tendency. Liberia will need its educated people for a long time to come, and most of those educated people are in the Diaspora. A critical mass of educated people is essential to a rapid and enduring recovery from civil war. The Diaspora can and is willing to provide development assistance.

It will be best for Liberia if the Secretariat expand and not curtail international participation in its management. Indeed, it is recommended that the management of the Secretariat be permanently internationalized so that both Liberia and her international partners are finally responsible for the management of the Philanthropy Secretariat. It is recommended that its legal status be finally determined as a semi-governmental agency of the Liberian government being equally controlled by both the Liberian government and her international private partners of philanthropists and donors. This might allow the Secretariat to serve as its own fiscal sponsor for various projects in Liberia. Whereby, it could become a secondary grant making organization. The Secretariat could also serve as a good place for providing Liberians with international exposure and opportunities for professional growth. Mentorship/fellowship programs could become an integral part of the Secretariat's mission, contributing to the development of good leadership for Liberia. At some level it could be expanded into a membership based organization for Liberia and her friends.

The Secretariat may already be evolving into this form, but it could become a think tank for Liberia in development and reconstruction matters. The objective of the Presidential Advisory Council already points in this direction. It may also consider becoming a place where social entrepreneurship is encouraged and developed.

The Secretariat may want to consider producing some kind of regular publication either print or electronic with feature stories and other items documenting the quality of its work and that of its partners in development in Liberia.

We recommend that the Presidential Advisory Council along with the smaller working groups not restrict themselves to investment and economic policy, but expand their advisory role to include security and governance.

The task that the Secretariat has set for itself cannot be accomplished with the present staff of two. The Secretariat will need to increase its staff to execute its work well. Indications that the Secretariat is growing in its appreciation of this point have already emerged.

Summary

The Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat is a unit of the Liberian government established in 2009 for the purpose of facilitating privately funded donor projects in Liberia. It presently has a small staff of two and is headed by the Chairman of the National Investment Commission, a cabinet level position. This case study is a review of the administrative structure and purpose of the Secretariat.

The Secretariat is evolving and as a result is still trying to determine its legal status and place within the Liberian government apparatus.

The Liberian government is wise in taking this step of establishing the Philanthropy Secretariat to leverage private philanthropy interest in Liberia. In the last decade the role of the private sector in international assistance has greatly expanded. Figures from the Hudson Institute would indicate that private flow from OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries (rich developed countries) to developing countries has surpassed official development assistance by roughly a factor of three.

The private sector participation in foreign aid represents something relatively new, and brings with it much hope that the present and the future of international assistance and development will not be like the past. Private sector muscular participation in international development brings with it the possibility of reinvigorating the current regime of international assistance generally, and ultimately leading to positive changes in policies. Indeed, this has already begun to happen. With the Sagamore Institute's interest in the private sector citizen-to-citizen model of international assistance, this paper has sought to provide a context for appreciating the role of private philanthropy in foreign aid including the non-philanthropic role of remittances and the Liberian Diaspora. The paper considers the policies of the Liberian government that are geared toward attracting the many opportunities afforded by the international community to its national development interest, including the establishment of the Liberian Philanthropy Secretariat.

Liberia is in need of much assistance, and it is in her best interest to receive that help from wherever she may legally do so.

And yet there are broader policy concerns that must be considered to make this new approach to foreign aid a resounding success. To broaden the policy discussions, it is best to begin with the consideration of the causes of poverty as fundamental to any development work or international assistance program. Poverty is relational at its foundation, and this relationship is with the self, other people, nature and transcendence. Best practices are being considered from the standpoint that progress is *a measure of our successes on our way to full knowledge and full love*, emphasizing the defining importance of relationships, and appreciating the goal of national development as the discovery of the true identity and vocation of a people. The accent is on the development of people and their capacities, not infrastructural development, though this too is important. From this position, in light of the accumulated losses of roughly 2 trillion dollars in development assistance over the past 50 years, mostly in Africa, and with the hope for better in the next 50 years, best practices are being considered in the following categories:

Knowledge: The knowledge of a people, their worldviews, beliefs and cultural practices are important to helping them meet their developmental needs;

Goals: Great institutions and nations emerged only from a focus on the individual aspiring to the highest possible spiritual and intellectual development and growth. Meaning is of utmost importance. The question of *why* cannot be neglected. Development is helping the poor recover their true identity and vocation;

Personnel: Persons (Liberians or internationals) who would be fit to do development work should not be only intellectually trained, but also trained spiritually. The failures of the last fifty years would have us highlight the place of humility in a development professional. All of us concerned about the development and growth of a community must start from the premise that we are simple people and do not know as much as we think we know nor as much as we should know. In fact, it may be well to acknowledge that we are in fact ignorant about many things concerning human community; that we do not even know ourselves well. And all this remains true in spite of an otherwise impeccable professional and academic training;

Sustainability: for development effort to be considered successful it must be sustainable. Sustainability is multi-dimensional, that is, both physical and mental. Mental sustainability deals with the poverty of being where a person is robbed of his reason to be;

and **Project evaluation:** Project evaluation is for both the community and the donor organization. Resources should be allocated to those projects or aspect of those projects where life is being affirmed. A good evaluation must include not only quantities but also quality. Development agencies and their staff must also be subject to evaluation. A good evaluation regime will be careful to listen to women and children. Additionally, in our reflections going forward, we have emphasized the theme of selfless service and a presumption or bias towards peace.

The Liberian Philanthropy Secretariat could prove to be of immense value to the Liberian Republic if managed wisely and with vision. It may yet carry to new heights private giving to development projects in Liberia, and this not only in funds disbursement but also in ideas and professional exchanges and assistance. The Secretariat could be a place where Liberia can deepen its international private-public partnership, involving on a more personal level the participation of its international partners. The Secretariat could be used to strengthen international commitment to Liberia so that in the future, Liberia may not be so easily abandoned and marginalized. Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat could be strategic to Liberia's national development in more way then is currently anticipated. Through the recommendation that a think tank be developed as part of its administrative structure, the Secretariat could be a place for not only studying and providing public policy options, but also a place for developing policy experts and leaders. It could play a coordinating role by becoming a registry for all NGOs and civil society institution operating in Liberia and likely to receive aid or donor support. It could become the clearing house for these organizations, publishing in a regular newsletter its most successful activities and profiling stories of excellence amongst NGO and civil society players in Liberia.

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