



October 2008

Refugee facts

- The number of people uprooted by armed conflict continued to rise last year, **reaching an unprecedented 67 million**, which has aggravated the humanitarian crisis around the world, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR's) Global Trends.
- The 2008 Ibrahim Index of African Governance shows that **Liberia's overall performance has improved more than any other country in sub-Saharan Africa**. Liberia has improved in four out of five categories: Safety and Security; Participation and Human Rights; Sustainable Economic Opportunity; and Human Development.



ARCH kids studying on the porch of their new home in Liberia

Returning Home!

Celina Guich—Co-founder and Director

Dear friends,
 After my recent summer month spent in Ghana and for the first time, Liberia, I am pleased to report that the future looks bright! As many of you know, The Niapele Project is moving with our partners from the Buduburam refugee settlement in Ghana, back to their home country of Liberia. After 14 years of civil war, Liberia, now led by the democratically elected administration of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, is in the process of rebuilding. The job ahead is "not easy" as they say in Liberia, but an amazing opportunity exists for Liberians to establish themselves as a peaceful, stable and thriving nation. This tremendous potential for positive change is visible throughout Liberia, and we at The Niapele Project are honored to be a part of this p r o c e s s .

Refugees are returning to Liberia everyday from the Buduburam settlement in Ghana, and The Niapele Project continues to assist our project partners during this time of transition. The ARCH family is on their way to their new home in Paynesville, a lovely four bedroom house



with a yard and their own water well. Also, the Harmony Center is looking forward to completing their move and to establishing operations for physically and mentally disabled children in Monrovia. **Continued on page 5**

- ◆ **ARCH** is the first of The Niapele Project partners to begin settling into their new home in Liberia. Through your support, The Niapele Project has financed their household needs: **a house complete with four bedrooms, living room, kitchen and two bathrooms** for one year for the family to live in.
- ◆ This home is in a **peaceful area, and they have access to a clean and free water well in their front yard**. The 8 children currently there have all been enrolled in school.
- ◆ The rest of the family, approximately 15 more children and Regina Krangar, remain in Buduburam, as there have been some unexpected delays in transporting them. They hope to depart Ghana in the near future and reunite the family for a new beginning in Liberia!

Story from the Field—Clem Landers, Niapele consultant

In August 2008, I traveled with Celina to Liberia to help The Niapele Project and its partners in the Buduburam community transition back home. Whereas the Buduburam refugee settlement is a difficult, albeit predictable environment, Liberia is a country emerging from a 14 year crisis, and lacks adequate programs to address returning refugees' needs.

Many of the children at Buduburam refugee camp have never seen their home

country, or were too young when they left to remember it and often felt a mixture of foreboding and excitement at the prospect of returning home. In Liberia, we set out to ensure that The Niapele Project's programs would be up and running and to assess new needs.



Monrovia

A key concern we immediately noted was education. Almost 50% of Liberian children do not go to school because the quantity of students exceed the capacity of most schools, and school fees may also be prohibitive. Many returning families are nervous about seeing their children's schooling interrupted as they struggle to register their children in a complex bureaucratic system.

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Featured Story: Pandora Duyen, Director of the Harmony Center



Pandora, caring for her daughter Danielette

During the war in Liberia, Pandora's husband traveled to Sierra Leone for a peace talk, leaving her with the children. While he was away, the rebels captured Monrovia. For fear of being killed, she hid in the forest with her children for safety.

They spent three months in the forest. While in hiding, her daughter Danielette contracted a fever, but there was no medication available. Pandora realized that her daughter could die, so she decided to go to the town, no matter what was going to happen. It took them two days to get to where the rebels were.

When they finally arrived in Kakata City, she took Danielette to the hospital. By this time, the child could not talk nor walk. After Danielette recovered from the sickness, she could not do anything for

herself. From that time, Pandora began to do everything for her daughter. After working with Danielette for so long and seeing how rejected she felt when no one paid attention to her, or when other children refused to play with her, Pandora realized that all children with disabilities in her community had a great need for love and care.

Pandora moved to Ghana in 2002 when another wave of violence broke out in Liberia. While in Buduburam Refugee Camp, a representative from a local organization focused on disabilities contacted Pandora to register Danielette.

Because of her passion for disabled children, she volunteered her services to work with them. In 2006, Pandora along with a French Physiotherapist and other mothers like herself, started a Disabled Children's

School, named The Harmony Children's Center. Pandora is the present coordinator of the organization. Pandora wants to make the disabled children "feel as if they are not different from the others" she says. For this, she will need the help of kind hearted people like you to help make her dream come true.

Pandora explained that thanks to The Niapele Project, who after hearing their story came to their aid, she is able to continue her mission. There is much more to be done, of course. Pandora would like to setup a computer room for the children, and a playground, as well as provide transport from home to school so that even the most disabled can still attend. She would also like her organization to assist with medical care, and be a provider of quality services for families of disabled children.

Our website
www.theniapeleproject.org
is newly designed
and full of
information!

The Niapele Project is currently constituting its Board of Directors. We are looking for dedicated individuals who share our commitment to the cause of vulnerable refugee children, and who would like to become a part of a dynamic, young start up NGO. If you would like to explore this opportunity, and find out more about the role of a board member, please contact penelope@theniapeleproject.org

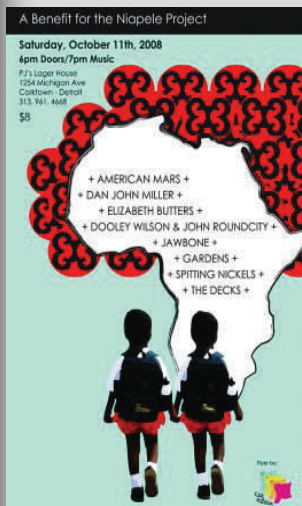
Detroit Benefit

The first **meeting of music and The Niapele Project** occurred on Saturday, October 11th at PJ's Lager House in Detroit, home of TNP's fundraising coordinator Carrie Hadler. Bands from the Motor City, Toledo, and Boston all graciously agreed to play for free to contribute to our cause. Handmade refugee merchandise from Buduburam was on sale and a number of photos of the camp and our projects were on display so the crowd could understand what the show was all about.

The night started off with the ever-helpful and generous Detroit group **Spitting Nickels**. One-man blues band **Jawbone** played after them. **Detroit Music Awards winners American Mars** wowed the crowd with a stripped-down acoustic set of their usual tunes right before Blanche lead singer and **Dan John Miller** played a screaming solo set. Toledo bluesmen **John Roundcity and Dooley Wilson** sucked the crowd into their very specific brand of real old time slide guitar blues. Boston songstress **Elizabeth Butters** transported the audience back to 1935 with Appalachian mountain music played on the dulcimer and guitar. Elizabeth was accompanied by Dooley Wilson on the acoustic guitar and John Roundcity on the harmonica. Detroit's leading avant-garde band, Gardens, played a blistering set to a packed room. Energetic Detroiters The Decks closed out the night in awesome fashion.

Each band played between 25- and 35-minute sets to a crowd that grew larger and larger as the night wore on—in all, about 125 people came through the door and over \$800 was raised for The Niapele Project.

The atmosphere of the venue was extremely happy and the poster made for the event by graphic designer Andrea Farhat proved to be a hot commodity. Thanks to all the musicians and attendees who made this event a great success! And, Happy Birthday to Carrie's best friend at Buduburam, Sonnie Fawah, who turned nineteen on October 12th!



Detroit benefit show poster

What's new at Niapele?



Emma and Lucky

New Partners!

- ◆ **Eyes on Africa** will collaborate with The Niapele Project to provide free eyeglasses for members of our projects.
- ◆ **The Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Law Clinic** is a Yale Law School course currently working with The Niapele Project on a research project on the rights of former refugees and other internationally displaced people who have been repatriated to their countries of origin.
- ◆ **Avenue Web Media** created our sleek and professional new site. They offer incredible design + marketing savvy at great rates, with special deals for nonprofits!



Emporium Academy of the Arts

Fact— GDP in Liberia fell over 90% during the conflict – the fastest economic collapse since the Second World War.

Fact—Today over 80% of the population is officially unemployed and an estimated 50% of Liberian children are out of school



UNMIL tank in downtown Monrovia

Lend your support!

- ◆ **GoodSearch.com** is a new Yahoo-powered search engine that donates half its advertising revenue, to the charities its users designate. Use it just as you would any search engine. Just go to www.goodsearch.com and be sure to enter The Niapele Project as the charity you want to support. Spread the word!
- ◆ **Project Green Recycle** helps us collect your used cellphones + ink cartridges for recycling + raise funds for our

projects in the process. Check out our blog to find a drop-off in LA or contact us to start a collection in your area. As always, we welcome your gently used electronics to donate to our partners or to recycle as for funds.

- ◆ Shop our site for **Made in Buduburam** goods. The Emporium Academy for the Arts empowers women at the refugee camp by providing basic skills training. The sale of assorted bags and clothing made by these women provides them with the some of the

means needed to support themselves and their families.

- ◆ **Become a "Friend of Niapele!"** Subscribe for the convenient option of making an automatic monthly contribution in any amount and receive a special gift– we want our donors to feel appreciated!

Thanks to Angie Aldape and SnL Communications for choosing The Niapele Project to be a part of their generous "SnL Gives Back " Program!

Do good. and feel rewarded:
[Subscribe here to make a monthly donation](#)

How can you make a difference in under 1 minute?

Just go to www.goodsearch.com and be sure to enter The Niapele Project as the charity you want to support. Powered by Yahoo, it works just like an other search engine.

School Feeding Program— Impact Assessment 2007-2008

We are pleased to announce the **release of the CAMES School Feeding Program Impact Assessment Report**, prepared by Adam Sandow, our nutrition consultant.

Since the beginning of implementation, The Niapele Project has placed an emphasis on transparency and information sharing with our donors and partners— our commitment to accountability led us to develop a monitoring and evaluation

system with Adam, whose expertise and dedication to improving the livelihoods of refugee children was critical in enabling us to perform the monitoring.

The result of a year of providing meals for primary school students at CAMES are available [here](#).

You will find that the malnutrition rate of the student population actually

increased during the year—it's important to keep in mind that this is due to the fact that enrollment increased significantly as families learned that free meals were being provided. As such, we are glad to report that not only enrollment increased, but attendance was more consistent, and the program was considered a success by all stakeholders!

[Download the Report here!](#)



The Niapele Project is a proud member of CSAfrica, a collaboration of non-profit organizations offering sustainable solutions for grass-roots initiatives to empower the people and communities of Africa.

www.csafrica.org



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Founded in March 2007 by Celina Guich and Penelope Chester, **The Niapele Project aims to improve the livelihoods of refugee children** through empowerment—at the heart of which lies access to education and health care.

The Niapele Project aims to have **direct, meaningful impact** in the lives of vulnerable refugee children.

We achieve this by working **in partnership with the community, assisting them to fulfill the needs they have identified**, through the development and implementation of initiatives that aim to create the necessary conditions for children to move beyond survival and thrive.

Because we believe in **holistic, sustainable solutions**, The Niapele Project strives to **integrate social and environmental standards** into its work—through our initiatives, we encourage women's empowerment, local ownership and leadership, as well as environmentally sound practices.

Make a tax-deductible donation today!
Visit www.theniapeleproject.org for details

Continued from page 1 [...] In Liberia, we traveled to Paynesville (a small town outside of Monrovia) and Bong County with Karrus Hayes to assess the sites of new schools Mr. Hayes plans to establish over the coming years in partnership with The Niapele Project and other benefactors around the world.

When we returned to Buduburam, we showed some of the children at the Carolyn A. Miller Elementary School pictures we had taken in Liberia. Rufus, a 14 year old boy, looked at the pictures, with tears in his eyes, recalling the country he had been forced to flee over 7 years ago, "Look at my country," he exclaimed, "it once was so beautiful and now it is ruins!"

He paused and then with a newfound resolve declared: "I must work hard in school, and get good grades, and some day I will help Liberia!" In the words of Liberian President Ellen Johnson- Sirleaf, by empowering the children of Africa, they will some day empower Africa.



Monrovia, a bird's eye view



There are many ways to make a difference! We are always looking for individuals with time and energy to contribute their skills—do you know about permaculture? Physical therapy? Organizational management? Social work? **All skills and levels of commitment are welcome!**
Contact us to learn how you can be involved !

Continued from page 1 The Niapele Project registered as an International NGO (non-governmental agency) and established a headquarters in Liberia to coordinate our projects as we move forward. We hired a Project Manager, Henry Snyder, who is based in Monrovia to help coordinate these efforts. In the months ahead, we will expand our initiatives to include the research and development of an organic permaculture farm on 100 acres of land that will sustain the school nutrition program on the future site of the Carolyn A. Miller School in Suakoko, located a few hours north of Monrovia, in Bong County. Daily School Nutrition in Monrovia will also continue with the Carolyn A. Miller school which now has over 800 students!



The community based projects we are partnered with are happy to be on their way home and full of hope for their future as sustainable organizations contributing to a brighter future for Liberia.

On a final note, we are thrilled to have received our 501(c)(3) status with the IRS. As an official U.S. government recognized public charity, we look forward to expanding our partnerships with socially responsible businesses, foundations and other like minded organizations.



A word from the co-founders and directors

Another exciting quarter for us at The Niapele Project, with a fair share of unexpected twists and turns as the reality of working in a complex developing world environment is catching up with us.

Refugees in the Buduburam refugee settlement are becoming increasingly eager to leave, as they continue to be portrayed as a nuisance by the Ghanaian government. As over 7,000 refugees have been repatriated to Liberia through the UNHCR's voluntary repatriation program since April, and thousands more made their way on their own, the camp is becoming increasingly deserted—its bustling market, streets and schools are all but reduced to a murmur.

Our sources on the ground have told us that Ghanaians immigrating from the northern part of the country are now illegally occupying the former homes of refugees in the settlement. As a result, the local authorities sent a letter to camp residents which was interpreted as a warning to vacate the premises in order to avoid expulsion, or even detention and deportation.

Ironically, for some, this may be the

only way home, as neither the UNHCR, the Governments of Ghana and Liberia, are willing or able to take up their case. This is true for those refugees whose status was not officially ascertained at the time they fled their homeland—an estimated 20,000 people—and who cannot afford to pay for a one way ticket back to their country.

We continue to stand by the side of our partner organizations and the broader refugee community, advocating for their rights—as you gleaned from Clemence's piece, the situation returning refugees have to contend with upon arrival presents extreme challenges. The Niapele Project's support for its partners is—more than ever—necessary to protect the well-being of the children our partner organizations serve.

We hope that you will join us in our attempt to improve the lives of these vulnerable little ones and the organizations that provide them critical support.

Finally, some changes have occurred at the organizational level, as Penelope accepted a position as

Program Associate for the Clinton Giustra Sustainable Growth Initiative. Of course, she remains fully involved in the Project, but has relinquished her day to day responsibilities as co-director to become chair of the Board. Celina is courageously taking on the role of full time, sole director—we are both very pleased to share these new developments with you, as our organization continues to grow and evolve.



Starting in January 2009, we will establish a permanent presence in Liberia—stay tuned for updates as the plan unfolds in the coming months!

As always, peace & love,

Celina and Penelope

PS: Don't forget to check out our [partner page!](#) And, if you haven't watched it yet, click [here](#) for our PSA