



The Niapele Project Quarterly Newsletter

March 2009

New beginnings in Liberia

Volume 1, Issue 4

Where does my donation go?

As a donor, you are entitled to know where and how exactly we spend your generous donation. Here are some basic facts about how we use our resources:

Your donation does not pay for salaries

As most of you know, we are an all-volunteer organization—however, we do pay a salary to our local staff in Liberia. Indeed, while all of us in North America who are working for Niapele work other full time jobs to support ourselves, our staff on the ground works full time for us. As of March 2009, we have one full time staff, Henry Snyder (see page 2 for his profile)

Your donation buys local products and services

Through our work, we strive to develop sustainable strategies for our partner organizations. Beyond this, we recognize the importance of sourcing goods and services locally—not only do we support the local economy, but we also cut down on transportation costs. The only exception to that rule is that we accept old electronics (phones, laptops) and give them a new life by redistributing them to our partners!

Your donation makes a direct impact

We direct our resources to improving the lives of vulnerable children. From purchasing food and other basic necessities, to paying for school fees or healthcare, every dollar raised makes a difference in ensuring that the children you help lead healthier, happier lives.

Let's do Lunch!

Following the success of our 2007-2008 nutrition initiative in the Buduburam refugee camp ([read about it](#) or [watch our video!](#)), it is with great pleasure that we announce a new school nutrition program (SNP) at the Carolyn A. Miller School in Liberia!



After repatriating to Liberia from the refugee camp in Ghana, Mr. Karrus Hayes, the founder and director of the Carolyn A. Miller School, and his team opened the new tuition free elementary school for 630 students in one of Monrovia's suburbs, Paynesville.

We recently completed a joint assessment in order to begin the SNP, and hope to secure the funding necessary to purchase all the items needed to start the program as well as to sustain the monthly feeding expenses.

The one-time start-up expense of \$1,500 will purchase everything needed to maintain the program, including benches & tables for the cafeteria space, stoves, pots & pans, bowls, spoons and water storage. The monthly cost of serving lunch to 630 students and staff is approximately \$2,000—that's more than 12,500 meals a month!

And of, course, once we are able to secure funding and begin, we will be engaging program workshops, ensuring that the project is managed sustainably.

A daily meal provided at school is one of the keys to ensuring greater and more regular attendance at school, especially for girls—to make a difference, join us for lunch!

Your dollar goes a long way:

Each lunch costs 16c—

that's less than a dollar a week

to keep a student from feeling hunger pangs in class.

[Donate now!](#)



Knowledge is Power: A new Niapele learning partnership

We at The Niapele Project place an emphasis on being a learning organization—we acknowledge that in order to offer the best possible services as a non-profit, understanding the context, the dynamics and the processes we have to contend with is crucial for us to have a meaningful, sustainable impact.

Following the [study produced by Masters students at Sciences Po](#) (Paris), which provided a comprehensive analysis of available solutions to resolve refugee crisis, we have partnered with the Allard

K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Law Clinic, a Yale Law School course that gives students firsthand experience in human rights advocacy. The Clinic undertakes litigation and research projects on behalf of human rights organizations and individual. The Clinic has a longstanding commitment to protecting the rights of refugees and other displaced people.

The Lowenstein Clinic has prepared a paper that will assist us in our advocacy efforts on behalf of Liberian citi-

zens who have been repatriated to Liberia from Ghana. The paper outlines the international responsibilities of the Liberian government to its returning citizens under international human rights and refugee law and identify best practices from other repatriation contexts that could provide a useful model for Liberia.

We look forward to implementing the recommendations put forward in the Yale study—for more information, visit our [Learning Center!](#)



These girls live in a rural fishing village which is threatened by coastal erosion. The community has already lost its medical clinic to erosion. Environmental concerns in Liberia are paramount, as natural resources are currently their main hope for economic development.

Photo by Jeminie Shell ©

Every six seconds, one child dies from hunger and related diseases.

One in three children in the developing world is stunted because of malnutrition.

About 59 million primary school-aged children attend school hungry.

Hunger limits a child's chances of educational success.



Introducing Henry Snyder, Monrovia-based Program Manager

"My name is Henry A. Snyder, a graduate of the A.M. E. Zion University College, Monrovia Liberia. I was also hired by many international humanitarian organizations over the years, including some United Nations agencies to carry out the following activities: general food distribution, repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, de-mobilization of ex combatants and supervised the implementation of community based recovery projects.

I have resided in Liberia my whole life, even during the Liberian civil war which devastated the entire nation and killed over 250,000 people, forced almost 50% of Liberia's population to seek refuge in other countries in the sub region, and also caused huge internal displacement of people for over a decade and a half.

As a college student during the war period, in the 1990s, I was heavily engaged with humanitarian work as a volunteer, providing some services for vulnerable groups:

Orphans, unaccompanied children, internally displaced persons (IDP), refugees, physically challenged /

I was also hired by many international humanitarian organizations over the years, including some United Nations agencies to carry out the following activities: general food distribution, repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, de-mobilization of ex combatants and supervised the implementation of community based recovery projects.

Presently, I'm providing some services for The Niapele Project in Liberia, where I liaisewith national government through grass root organizations and other non-governmental organizations for the successful implementation of long-term sustainable development children related projects."

Since August 2008, Henry Snyder has been our "eyes and ears" on the ground in Liberia. We are very lucky to have this man of integrity and compassion on our staff—thanks to his efforts, we are now an accredited international NGO in Liberia. In addition, Henry has been reaching out to similar organizations and creating new relationships with NGOs and government agencies.

Of course, Henry is also working with our partners, the Carolyn Miller School and ARCH, to determine the best way for us to continue working together. Henry is working to assess the needs of both partner organizations as they are slowly settling back into their homeland.

**Change a life
Make a tax-deductible donation to The Niapele Project today!**

[Click here to make a difference](#)

The Niapele Project & the arts!

As part of our effort to create synergies with like-minded organizations and individuals, The Niapele Project is proud to be a part of the upcoming photography show

Portraits [in]justice @ the Keagg Gallery in Laramie, WY—Opening March 7th!

This show features the photography of UW graduate student Jeminie Shell who, during the summer of 2008, was immersed in the politics, culture, and chaos of post-war Liberia.

Jeminie's portraits reveal the beauty and resilience of the poorest populations of Liberia as they face day-to-day social and environmental injustices and work to slowly improve their lives in post-war Liberia.

Funds raised will be donated to The Niapele Project for water/sanitation initiatives

"Liberia is particularly vulnerable to high global food prices because of its heavy reliance on imports to meet national needs.

High rates of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition mean that the poorest people have difficulty coping with food price shocks."

Action Against Hunger



Los Angeles: Party with a Purpose!

Winter is almost over—it's time to celebrate the arrival of SPRING!!

The Niapele Project is hosting an evening of music, art, food & drinks!
Come celebrate the spring equinox with us!

When: Saturday, March 21st 2008

SAVE THE DATE!

- ◆ Food by: [The Lunch Lady](#)
- ◆ Drinks by: [Izze](#), [Starr African Rum](#)
- ◆ Photos by: [Brown Lion Photos](#)

To RSVP or for more info, contact : celina@theniapeleproject.org

Stay tuned for details: [The Niapele Project blog](#)

The **impact assessment** of our 2007/2008 school year Nutrition Initiative with the Carolyn A. Miller School in Buduburam concluded:

“The three assessments have all recorded increase in the students’ population as well an improvement in the nutritional status of the children.”

We are eager to recreate this success with in Liberia!

Program Highlight—The Harmony Center

The Harmony Children’s Center has had a busy start to 2009, highlighted by a workshop held to educate and support the parents and siblings of children with disabilities. In addition to offering a safe environment for disabled children to learn and socialize, Harmony aims to educate the community about the needs and rights of disabled children. Harmony was founded on the principal that ALL children need love and attention to thrive.

By educating the friends, families, and peers of children with special needs, Harmony seeks to eliminate stigmas that exist in the community. Furthermore, a supportive home environment serves to reinforce progress achieved in the classroom.

At the workshop, Harmony volunteers provided a forum for family members to express themselves on issues related to their child’s disabilities, thus creating an outlet for concerns and building a sense of community for families who experience common struggles. In addition, the workshop alerted family members of the

essential role that they play in helping their disabled children to achieve. The response to the workshop was very

enthusiastic and the school plans to continue to



support disabled children and their families by expanding community outreach initiatives in order to further the goal of improving the lives of children with disabilities.

Currently, The Harmony Children’s Center is scouting for new facilities in Monrovia to relocate to at the close of the 2009 school year in Ghana.



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



A word from the co-founders

This 4th issue of our newsletter nearly coincides with Niapele's 2nd anniversary (happy birthday to us!) - and it's been 2 years full of steep learning curves and challenges, but we've been loving (almost) every moment of it.

One of the most important lessons we've learned is that our success depends on one thing—trust.

From a programmatic perspective, we've come to realize that the most important variable that determines the success of our partnerships with local organizations is whether or not they trust us to help them improve and become sustainable—without this, it is very difficult to engage in meaningful skills transfer and capacity building at the grassroots level. Because of this we strive to be open,

transparent and collaborative in our work.

Pandora Duyen, the director of the Harmony Center, has been developing her small organization successfully and confidently for the past year. Thanks to the trust she places in us, we have been able to help her implement sustainable processes for her organization.

Equally as important, though, is the trust that YOU place in US. Every time we receive a donation, it means that someone believes that The Niapele Project is making a difference. We are honored that, over the last 2 years, hundreds of you have been moved to take action with us. We are particularly thankful to those of you who trust us so much, that you donate regularly .

We do not take your trust for granted—we hope that you find our newsletters and updates interesting, and inspiring! We know we're repeating ourselves, but we think you need to hear this again: YOU make our work possible. YOU are the one changing the lives of refugee children—everything we do, from serving hot meals to school children to sending orphans to school, is possible because of your trust and support.

A great, big thank you to all of you who make this possible.

Peace and love,

Celina and Penelope