



*Imagine
Something
Better...*

The Liberia Development Group

LDG PROFILE



Watchen Harris Bruce

On May 5th, 2012, Watchen Harris Bruce was in the audience at LDG's first *Face-2-Face (F2F)* held in Germantown, Maryland. Watchen liked what she saw and heard about LDG and its focus on helping Liberians help themselves that the following Monday she filled out her LDG membership form and mailed it along with her \$50 dollar yearly due. Less than three weeks later she received a phone call with thrilling news: She had been appointed Chief of Party for the Development Credit Authority and Loan Guarantee Program, a USAID funded project that will provide loans to Liberian-owned enterprises.

A USAID press release announcing the program said its goal "is to increase lending to clean energy and agriculturally linked small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)." The guarantee program, the release noted, "will support this objective through risk sharing with Ecobank to increase the number of loans they provide as well as to increase their lending experience with the two sectors."

As Chief of Party for the program, Watchen will be returning to Liberia with almost 30 years of banking experience in various capacities, including a tenure as Vice President in PNC Bank's Business Banking Division. Watchen says she looks forward to working in her new position with all Liberians, including Liberians from the Diaspora, to help grow the agricultural and clean energy sectors. (LDG)



Welma Redd, Editor of Yaw-Yaw

behalf of LDG. We urge you to read our "Up-Coming Events" section as a reminder of what LDG is doing and planning. Enjoy reading Yaw-Yaw and send us articles and developments in your professional lives as well a tips on how we can make Yaw-Yaw a functional publication. The LDG story is a simple one: we share! So, share this newsletter, which can be a useful recruitment tool, with your family, friends and colleagues.

Yaw-Yaw

The LDG Newsletter

LDG CHAIRMAN, KWAME CLEMENT, PROUDLY WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS, WHO COME TO LDG FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

GEORGE BANKS—George is just about the only African who has managed to break through the highly competitive private security industry in the Washington, DC Area. He is founder, owner and manager of Sentry Security International. He and his SSI team have provided crucial consultancy and other security services to the federal government as well as the District of Columbia for a number of major events, including presidential and mayoral inaugurations for more than 12 years.



DR. ANTHONY BARCLAY—with a PH.D in Urban and Regional Planning and graduate and undergraduate degrees in Economics and Public Policy, Anthony works with the World Bank as a Senior Aide to the Executive Director for Africa (Group One), and plays a key role in shaping and evaluating development projects in the Bank's member states.

JENKINS COOPER—a lawyer and economist by training, Jenkins brings to LDG more than 30 years of international development experience with various international aid and humanitarian organizations, including USAID. He specializes in designing, implementing and managing global development projects at the intersection of education, democracy, and health and population.

MCLEOD DARPOH—a former Liberian Commerce Minister, McLeod is currently an entrepreneur who lives in Ellicott City, Maryland.

WADAI BRIGHT DENNIS—Wadai is the long-time owner and manager of the well-known Sahara Afrique travel agency that serves the Liberian and US air travel markets. (...page 2)

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR: THE LDG STORY

Dear Friends,

The LDG story is about Liberians, passionate about their country, working together to change lives for the better in Liberia, and we in LDG (and I dare say all well-meaning Liberians) are very enthusiastic about opportunities LDG provides for working on small but impactful projects. The LDG Publicity and Outreach Committee is proud to launch Yaw-Yaw, an e-newsletter, as a light read to share news about the work and activities of our members. In this inaugural edition of Yaw-Yaw, we present profiles of new LDG members, upcoming events, and "Thank You's" to members for their work on

Yaw-Yaw is made possible by the valuable contribution of Publicity and Outreach Committee members: Edmund Neblett; Jacob Jaygbay; Wilfred Passawe; Tumu Trueh; Saye Gbalazeh; and Jestina Gray.

Up-Coming Events

1. LDG'S "26" Booth in DC

The Embassy of Liberia will host its annual "26" celebrations on July 21 on the Embassy grounds at 5201 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20011. The event draws thousands of Liberians to the Embassy every year. This year, LDG will have a booth, where people attending the event can pick up LDG brochures, see videos of LDG's work in Liberia and talk to LDG members about who we are and what we do. Please volunteer if you can to help set up and man the booth. Please contact Felix Clement (703-470-6578) and Welma Redd (240-277-6799) if you want to volunteer.



Felix Clement, LDG's "26 Day" Booth Leader

2. Up-Coming Lecture Series

The Planning Committee will hold two LDG *F2F* Lectures in the coming months. The next one is planned for sometime in September and the Ambassador of Botswana, Tebelelo Seretse, has agreed to be our guest speaker. She is likely to speak to us on the theme, "Natural Resources and Development: Lessons to be Learned from the Botswana Experience." The theme is a play on the fact that Botswana has wisely used income from its heavy deposit of diamonds to develop the country and quickly, after independence in 1966, moved from being one of the poorest countries in the world to becoming a middle income country with a per capita GDP of \$13,000, boasting one of the best health care systems in all of Africa. The Committee is working on securing a good location in Baltimore, Philadelphia or the DC Area for the event. Exact date and time will be announced once the Committee settles on a location.

3. Clothing/Food for the Needy

EUGENE BULL is working on a project that will ship items such as clothing and canned foods to needy people in Liberia. As Eugene sees it, there are institutions such as churches and libraries that will allow individuals to station containers in which people can drop specified items, such as shoes, clothing, or canned food. Those items will then be collected and shipped free of charge to Liberia under a program sponsored by Firestone. Please email (eugene_bull@comcast.net) or call (703-730-5835) Eugene if you are interested in working on this project with him.

4. Expanding PEFSP

Per report by El-Tumu Trueh, we are contemplating expanding our Primary Education Fees Subsidy Program to increase beneficiaries from 30-100 per year.

5. LDG Liberia Chapter

We are looking to establish an LDG Liberia Chapter and Tumu and Saye are working on formally incorporating LDG as a Liberian entity.

6. Next Generation

We want to focus on recruiting members age 40 and under who can help us reach young people. (LDG)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS (... Continued from page 1)

DR. T. EDWIN FREEMAN—Edwin is an award winning Polymer Scientist at the Coca-Cola Company, where he currently serves as Senior Scientist II for Global Packaging Research and Development. With a Ph.D. in Polymer Science as well as undergraduate and graduate degrees in Chemistry, he has over 20 patents to his name. Even with a busy professional schedule, Edwin has found time to play active roles in various Liberian communities in the United States. He was a founding member and Chairman of the Liberian Community of Rochester, New York, which, during his tenure, provided resettlement assistance for Liberian refugees displaced by the Liberian Civil War. For many years now, he has also been an active member of the Liberian Community of Metro Atlanta, Georgia. All of us at LDG eagerly look forward to benefiting from his immense leadership abilities.



WILLIAM AND NAOMI GLAY—William and Naomi are renowned members of the DC Liberian Community who we heartily welcome to LDG and thank for their generous support.

ERNEST JOHNSON—Ernest is another new LDG member with strong roots in the Liberian Community of the Washington DC Metropolitan Area and he simply likes to be known for the community organizer that he has been in the DC Area. His community organizing abilities will surely come in handy for us at LDG.

LUCY WILSON-KEAR—as Associate Director for Medicaid Eligibility and Policy within the Government of the District of Columbia, Lucy serves as the principal liaison between the Federal Government and the District of Columbia when it come to Medicaid related eligibility issues. LDG warmly welcomes Lucy's tremendous administrative and organizational skills and talents.

EMMANUEL AND AMANDA LAWRENCE—Emmanuel is an Architect and Urban Planner and Developer who has for many years worked in urban planning and development with the Government of the City of New York. Together with his wife, Amanda, a registered nurse, LDG is getting a pair noted for their unflinching devotion to helping their fellow Liberians.

FAITH LAWRENCE—Faith, who is a pillar of the Liberian Community in Maryland, has a B.Sc. in Accounting from the University of Liberia and more than 20 years of supervisory experience within the Bureau of Statistics at the Liberian Ministry of Planning. Welcome Faith.

JOHN LLOYD—John made his mark in the Liberian US Community through his early and persistent efforts, including organized lobbying efforts, to secure several extensions of the TPS (Temporary Protective Status) Program that enabled thousands of Liberians remain in the United States. It is fair to say that through his work on the TPS issue, John is the one person most responsible for helping Liberians maintain or obtain legal immigrant status in the US. He built great partnerships with key figures on Capitol Hill, including the late New Jersey Congressman, Donald Payne and Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, that will continue to serve the interest of Liberians and Liberia on a broad range of issues. It is a great pleasure to have John, who has also served as President of the Liberian Community of the DC Metro Area, as a member of LDG.

ADDISON SHERMAN—with under-graduate and graduate degrees in criminal justice and general counseling, Addison has for many years served the Government of the District of Columbia where he currently works with the Department of Corrections. At the height of the Liberian Civil War, Addison worked hard to restore peace to his country through pioneering organizations, such as the Coalition for the Restoration of Peace that he founded and chaired in 1991 in Liberia. It is a great pleasure to have Addison in LDG.

ISAAC ZAWOLO—Isaac, who maintains a strong presence in the Liberian Community in the Washington, DC Area, teaches mathematics in the public schools of Arlington County, Virginia, and is an adjunct professor at Montgomery College in suburban Maryland. With a B.Sc. in Mathematics and graduate degrees in Engineering and Education, he brings tremendous gifts to LDG. (LDG)

THANK YOU'S



FACE-TO-FACE PLANNING COMMITTEE

From all indications, including feedback from guests, LDG's first *FACE-2-FACE (F2F)* was a smashing success. The more than 100 people who attended the event listened to Ambassador Somduth Soborun give an inspiring speech on the secrets behind Mauritius' remarkable record of political stability and economic prosperity. According to Soborun, his country's success can be explained by a number of factors, such as an emphasis on political tolerance and compromise, a unique partnership between the government, labor, and business, and prudent use of public resources, including heavy investments in education. The results of these policies are plainly self-evident. In just 40 years of independence, Mauritius has seen its per capita GDP grow from a meager \$400 per annum to \$8,000 per annum, putting Mauritius in the ranks of middle-income countries.



Saye Gbalazeh, F2F Planning Committee Chair

Here is a special thank you to the Committee that planned the program. Its Chair, Saye Gbalazeh, and members, Elsie Dossen, Jestina Gray, Eugene Bull and Welma Redd, did a splendid job and really deserve a big THANK YOU.



Thank you also goes to all of those who attended the event and particularly to the more than 20 people who signed up as LDG members after attending or hearing about the F2F. (LDG)



Matt Elious, Infrastructure Committee Chair

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Our Education Committee has been LDG's spearhead. All of our current projects, including our Adopt-a-School Program with ETMI and our Primary School Fees Subsidy Program, have in one way or the other fallen under the banner of the Education Committee.



Jestina Gray, Education Committee Chair

Special thanks go to its Chair, Jestina Gibson Gray, and members, Dr. James Elliott, Chukui Welwolo, Saye Gbalazeh, Elsie Dossen, Margaret Dossen, Emmanuel Lawrence, Dr. Vera Tolbert and Welma Redd. Also a special thank you to Tumu Trueh, who conceived, designed and implemented our Fee Subsidy Program under which LDG pays for uniforms, copybooks and fees for registration and ID cards for students in 5 elementary schools in the Monrovia area. (LDG)



El-Tumu Trueh in his office in Liberia

Yaw-Yaw @ LDG-ONE.ORG

MORE THANK YOU'S

MEMBERS PULL THEIR WEIGHT

LDG members came out in full to enjoy and service the first *F2F* held at the Manchester Farm Community Center in Germantown, Maryland on May 5th, 2012.



Members took on one responsibility after another and worked as a collective to make the program an overwhelming success by



helping with: setting up the room, getting the computer/projector working; laying out the food; facilitating new applications and breaking down at the end. (LDG)



Eva-Mae Herring, Liberian Caterer

CATERING SERVICE

The *F2F* was catered by Eva-Mae Herring, a brand of her own when it comes to food service in the Liberian Diaspora of Maryland. The presentation included very tasty fried rice, broccoli shrimp, baked salmon, baked chicken, pickled veggies and more. (LDG)

MEDIA SERVICE

Mansa Johnson, an up and coming filmmaker with The African World Television, took 90% of all photos/video of the *F2F*. We appreciate the beautiful photos and video so much Mansa. THANKS! (LDG)

ELEMENTARY STUDENTS PERFORM "WAKA-WAKA"

The most exciting part of the *F2F* program was a dance routine performed by students who attend or recently graduated from Sequoia Elementary School in Montgomery County, Maryland. They woke the crowd up as they danced to *Waka-Waka: This Time For Africa*, an all-time African classic made popular once again by the singer, Shakira, who remixed the tune, which served as the official song of the FIFA World Cup 2010 hosted by South Africa. La 'Nyahi (7 yrs old), the youngest member of the group, turned on her dance gene with moves far above our dance grade.



L-R: La'She, Mabinty, Mariela, Tayce and La 'Nyahi (Not on photo: Darlene and Christy) (Photo by Yvon Jacques)

One of the young dancers, Tayce (11 yrs old), caught the spirit of LDG and plans to donate her piggy bank savings to help elementary school students in Liberia, according to her mother, Kiki Mashinini, who organized the dancers. A big, big thank you goes to these lovely young ladies for livening up our *F2F*.

F2F AUDIENCE ENGAGE SOBORUN



The audience engaged our guest speaker with probing questions as they sought solutions to the development problems of Liberia. The *F2F* keynote speaker, Ambassador Somduth Soborun, described policies and practices in Mauritius, designed in concert by a **government-business-trade union** engagement, which brought unemployment down to 0%—wisely using the country's only resources, human capital and scenic island beauty, to achieve its economic boom. (LDG)

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