

LIHEDE Status Report

Presented

By

Dr. Syrulwa Somah, Executive Director

at

2009 LIHEDE 5th Jubilee Awards Dinner & Ball Program

Alumni Event Center, N.C. A&T State University, 200 N. Benbow Rd., Greensboro, N.C.

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The administrators, faculty and staff of N.C. A&T State University; the pastor and members of Genesis Baptist Church; the Commissioner of Good Governance of the Republic of Liberia; the Chairman and members of the Board of Directors of LIHEDE; the Secretary General and members of the Executive Committee of LIHEDE; the Chairman and members of the 2009 LIHEDE 5th Anniversary Jubilee; the chairperson and members of the Daughters of LIHEDE; the LIHEDE 2009 honorees and their families; Madam Keynote Speaker; heads and representatives of various community, religious, charitable, and professional institutions present, here tonight, distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

First, I want to thank all of you for taking time off from your busy schedules to join me and other distinguished members of the LIHEDE family in this festive and thought-provoking 5th Anniversary Jubilee Celebration. Second, I want to assure you that I will be brief in my remarks, although it is always difficult to speak to one's state of being, let alone speak to the state of affairs of a five-year-old organization like LIHEDE, in only 15 to 20 minutes.

LIHEDE was founded in 2003 by Mr. Nat Galarea Gbessagee, Mr. Siahyonkron Nyanseor, and myself. Our goal was, and still is, to promote the authentic history and traditional culture of Liberia as way of promoting national peace, unity, reconciliation, and development in Liberia. We felt that the more we understood ourselves, our origins, and our common destiny as Liberians, the more we could learn to appreciate who we are and share our talents and resources with one another for the collective growth and development of ourselves and our homeland. But the problem with every lofty goal is implementation, and though LIHEDE is still a relatively new organization, we have managed in the last five years to establish ourselves as a professional and credible organization in both Liberia and the Liberian Diaspora community. But Mr. Gbessagee, Mr. Nyanseor, and myself cannot take all the credit for the current state of LIHEDE, as we had professional help from very talented and experienced people from all walks of life.

Apart from my wife, Mary; my daughter, Azenia; my sister Victoria; and my sister-in-law, Cynthia, who are no doubt the first female members of LIHEDE, LIHEDE attracted Dr. Mariah Y. Seton, a well-known community organizer in the Liberian Diaspora, as the first Social Chair for LIHEDE; Dr. Emmet Dennis, the current president of the University of Liberia, as the first Social Welfare Director of LIHEDE; Dr. Adetokunbo F. K. Borishade, the current Director of Africana/Liberian Studies at Cuttington University in Liberia as the first Director of Education and Culture of LIHEDE; Mr. Marvin Dickerson, former Director of ARISA with NC A&T State University and current Safety/Quality Control Manager at Pitney Bowes Government Solutions at the Atlanta Surface Transfer Center in Georgia, as the first Chairman of the LIHEDE Board of Directors; and Mr. Sam Togba Slewion, a professional Liberian journalist, as the first Director of Publications of LIHEDE. Of course, as founding members of LIHEDE, Mr. Gbessagee became the first and current Secretary of LIHEDE;

Mr. Nyanseor, the first and current Treasurer of LIHEDE, and your humble servant, the first and current Executive Director of LIHEDE.

As LIHEDE grows and expands, I am pleased to state that LIHEDE now has a new chairman of the Board—Dr. Lawrence Amos Zumo, a neurologist; Mrs. Labeth Sirleaf-Varh will serve as a chairperson of the newly-formed Daughters of LIHEDE, an auxiliary all-female body; Mr. Augustus Menyongai will continue to serve LIHEDE as the coordinator of the LIHEDE office in Liberia; Dr. Joseph T-G Gbaba, Sr., a Liberian playwright and artist, is General Chairman of this LIHEDE 5th Anniversary Jubilee. He is assisted by Consul Teta Banks, a former Liberian Honorary Consul in Philadelphia as Jubilee Co-Chair and Ms. Sylvestine Payne, a professional social worker, as Jubilee Operations Manager. Mind you, I have referenced here not all of LIHEDE's officers and members, but the first occupants of various posts in LIHEDE. LIHEDE also respects and appreciates the efforts of all of its officers, members, sponsors, affiliates, and well-wishers in making LIHEDE what it is today.

I should now focus on the current legal and operational state of LIHEDE, including LIHEDE partnerships, programs, and sponsors.

Status of LIHEDE

- LIHEDE is legally registered in the State of North Carolina as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization
- LIHEDE is legally registered in the Republic of Liberia as a nongovernmental organization
- LIHEDE maintains an office in Paynesville, Liberia equipped with professional staff, computers, and a car
- LIHEDE owns a 15-acre piece of land in Liberia to be used for construction of a future college complex
- LIHEDE is owner of a radio frequency in Liberia (FM 97.5) for a future radio station project
- LIHEDE U.S.A operates mostly on a pro bono basis, relying exclusively on membership donations and related services until such time that LIHEDE can afford to hire professional staffers
- Every member of LIHEDE is technically a sponsor of LIHEDE since each person usually spends considerable time and money, and renders mostly voluntary services to the organization. However, I want to acknowledge in particular a total cash donation; an excess of a quarter of a million dollars has been spent within the last five years on LIHEDE projects. The only amount that came from outside of the more than a quarter of a million spent from 2003 to 2009 was \$12,000 from Firestone Natural Rubber Company and \$3,000 from Malaria International; \$30 from Dunkin Donuts, \$50 from Sam's Club, and professional services from BNettv.com of Canada whose crew flew to Greensboro to cover and broadcast live over the internet the 2005 LIHEDE symposium on combating malaria in post-conflict Liberia free of charge. The Liberian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, through its Malaria Control Program, has continued to sponsor LIHEDE operations in Liberia through donation of vehicles and staff personnel to facilitate LIHEDE travels outside Monrovia.
- Recently, LIHEDE Board Chairman, Dr. Lawrence Zumo, made a cash donation of \$700 to LIHEDE's Liberian History Bowl Scholarship which will be awarded to deserving students in Liberia with interest in Liberia studies, while each member of LIHEDE donated \$100 to help underwrite the cost of this Jubilee. All these personal donations are made to show the world that not all Liberians are corrupt and unpatriotic.

Major Collaborations

In the last five years, LIHEDE has established cooperative partnerships with four Liberian organizations and institutions, resulting in the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each of the four:

In 2005, LIHEDE and the A.M.E University and A.M.E Zion University in Monrovia, Liberia signed a MOU, each to promote the teaching of Liberian culture and traditions at the college level through the offering of a bachelor's degree program in Liberian Studies. (The program never fully kicked off). The good news that never existed in the curriculum of higher education is that during the 2008-2009 academic year, Cuttington University launched a new Africa-centered program—the Africana & Liberian Studies Program which is headed by former LIHEDE's Director of Education and Culture/Liberian Studies Project, Dr. Adetokunbo Borishade.

Major Project Activities and Highlights

- In 2004, LIHEDE held a symposium in the U.S. on Promoting “Civil Liberties, Collective Security, and Development in Post-Conflict Liberia.” The symposium was held to provide a forum for all Liberians, Africans and other nationals of different spheres and backgrounds to come together and find practical solutions to social and economic problems in Liberia and Africa.
- In the same year, LIHEDE commenced a letter writing campaign in 2004 in support of the LIHEDE malaria eradication efforts in Liberia and the West African sub-region by sending letters to the political leaders of the world, including the U.S. Congress, President, and Secretary of State; Pope Benedict, the U.N. Secretary General; the European Union; the head of the African Union, Ghanaian President Koufou; the WHO, and USAID, and so forth. The next results of the letter writing campaigns have been successful so far with inclusion of Liberia on the PMI and other responses and cooperation from USAID, WHO, the Liberian government, and AU.
- During 2005, LIHEDE conducted a workshop in Liberia on “Mapping Out Appropriate Strategies for the Restructuring of the Armed Forces of Liberia.” The workshop was aimed at highlighting and creating public awareness of the need for the constitution of a professional army in Liberia prior to the 2005 post-civil war national elections.
- In that very year, LIHEDE held a symposium in the U.S. on “Combating Malaria in Post-Conflict Liberia: A Lesson for the Rest of Africa.” The symposium was held under the theme, “Exploring Cutting-Edge Technologies For Malaria Treatment in Liberia,” with presentation topics grouped under four sub-themes of “Understanding and Coping with Malaria,” “Malaria Control & Treatment Options,” “Typhoid Fever & Clinical Manifestations of Malaria” and “Malaria, Pregnancy, and Women Issues,” which were aimed at exploring the causes, treatments, and socio-economic effects of malaria. The resolution adopted at the end of the symposium was presented to USAID and the Liberian government for their respective actions in helping to defeat the current malaria scourge in Liberia.
- In 2006, LIHEDE held a National Health Conference at the University of Liberia on malaria treatment, control, and prevention in Liberia. The National Health Conference was the first major health conference to be held in the history of Liberia, and it was a follow-up of the 2005 malaria symposium and resulting resolution. The conference, which was held by LIHEDE in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Liberian universities, and private bodies, sought to bring to the consciousness of the Liberian people and the world the magnitude of the impact of malaria in Liberia. And one of the highlights of the 2006 National Health Conference was an invitation extended to officials of LIHEDE by the US Embassy near Monrovia to witness the historic announcement by then U.S. President George W. Bush via satellite declaring Liberia a focused country to benefit from the President Malaria Initiative (PMI) funds. As a focused nation, Liberia automatically became eligible to receive over \$70 million in aid for malaria control and prevention efforts in Liberia from the PMI funds,

Germany, Japan, China, WHO, and other donors with PMI accounting for \$37.5 million of the total amount.

- Also in 2006, LIHEDE conducted a workshop in Liberia on “The Impact of Fake Drugs on Malaria Treatment in Liberia.” A workshop was also conducted, once again in Liberia, on “Using Our Culture and Sports for Malaria Control and Prevention” in Jacob Town, Mont. County
- In 2007, LIHEDE conducted another workshop in Liberia on “Using Our Culture and Sports for Malaria Control and Prevention” in Bong County and Grand Bassa County.
- In the same year, 2007 LIHEDE held a symposium titled “Working together for Quality and Equitable Public Education in Liberia.” This international symposium examined potential linkages between poor public school systems and underdevelopment, poor public health system, tribalism, and the community at large to more effectively use public education and technology to promote the mission of public school.
- In 2007, LIHEDE and Liberian Environmental Watch (now African Environmental Watch) signed MOU to participate in both of the organization’s activities and partnerships.
- In 2009, LIHEDE established a partnership with Higher Grounds of Rhode Island to support each other’s projects.
- Of course, let us clarify that although Liberia was added onto the PMI funding recipient list— in part due to a letter writing campaign initiated by LIHEDE after a LIHEDE malaria symposium on Liberia that was held in the U.S. in 2005— all of the funds and donations have been channeled through the Liberian government. When LIHEDE started “We Want No More Malaria in Liberia,” in fact, no one gave us credit, but LIHEDE pressed on. Also, prior to LIHEDE’s letter writing campaign in the U.S. in 2005 and the subsequent national health conference held in Liberia in 2006, Liberia has never held a national health conference devoted to the control and prevention of malaria and other common diseases in Liberia, nor was Liberia prequalified for PMI at the time. Liberians and friends of Liberia, tonight, I am pleased to say that PMI has launched its first round of indoor residual spraying in Liberia.

When Liberia got the PMI funds, LIHEDE didn’t stop to say “Well, we are done.” For example, LIHEDE launched the Culture-Driven Malaria Awareness Program in the port of Buchanan in Grand Bassa County on August 11, 2007 and Gbarnga in Bong County on Saturday, December 8, 2007. The event was characterized with radio panel discussions, town hall meetings and it was climaxed with a soccer match between Grand Bassa and Bong County’s team, Bassa Defenders. LIHEDE sponsored a U.S. and Liberia-based malaria soccer team, Club Bassa.

A five-man delegation, including Dr. Horlin Carter, Sr., Director of African & African American Affairs; Rev. Maxine Carter, and Rev. Dr. Gregory Headen hosted the second Culture-Driven Malaria Awareness Program on December 15-16, 2007 in Gbarnga in Bong County, Liberia. In addition, the LIHEDE delegation traveled to Margibi County with the LIHEDE malaria soccer team, Club Bassa and continued the third phase of the LIHEDE Culture-Driven Malaria Awareness Program, among other engagements.

Speeches/Articles

In the area of public speaking and engagement, we have not turned down one invitation. In the past five years, 25 invitations were received and 25 speeches were delivered, including presentations to Liberian organizations, conferences, and educational and religious organizations. Gbessagee, Publicity Director; Mr. Tobpa Slewion, Chairman of the Board; and Dr. Lawrence Zumo produced more than 100 articles on concept papers such as

history, tourism, agriculture, youth development, health, and education at business and public organizations. All have had a strong impact on LIHEDE's marketing campaign.

LIHEDE Expansion

The Daughters of LIHEDE (DOL) only resurrected 5 months during the time of Jubilee Planning. It is now a very strong body and is being given the respect that is due. Women affairs are now being given particular attention through the constant interaction with the DOL and the organization of Flora. Like sunshine after a storm, DOL is the glimmer of hope. This is what we are determined to accomplish and the goal we still pursue with the daughters of Liberia on our side. Many thanks to Mary Somah, Syvestine Payne, Labeth Sirleaf Varh, Roberta Williams, Carley Jegbadai-Fully and Nee Allison. You are a major part to the success of our 2009 Jubilee Conference. I wish to extend my sincere appreciation for your outstanding support and dedication. DOL superior efforts and support were invaluable to our Jubilee's smooth evolution. I would like to highlight your dedication to assistance and your professional demeanor which is refreshing and truly praiseworthy. It must be noted that on many occasions DOL's ability to efficiently resolve any mental strain on my part and to proceed uninhibited to a full and successful completion was commendable. I received many words of praise to which I owe to your vital role in the planning and execution of the "Taste of Liberia", movies, poetry, workshops, and inviting our quests. Your folks know the meaning of hospitality. We are looking forward to the next Jubilee.

LIHEDE Awards and Honors

Fellow LIHEDEANS and friends of LIHEDE, in 2004 LIHEDE decided to recognize our unsung heroes, individuals, and organizations that, in their own way, look beyond their own needs and touch someone as an angel. As an organization that prides itself on history, education and development, it is our duty to not allow those whose contributions make a difference in the lives of people, community, nation and the world go unnoticed. LIHEDE effectively recognizes unsung heroes through the use of the LIHEDE awards and recognitions. LIHEDE felt that recognizing a public figure (a government or industry leader) for long-term contributions to history, education and development— which have resulted in increased public awareness of the field and its benefits to society— would promote and encourage more citizens. Noticeably, recognizing our heroes and sheroes while they are alive is something that is done in our Liberian society. The Awards and Honors Committee is responsible for choosing the 2009 LIHEDE Jubilee awardees.

It is now my distinguished honor to explain the purpose of LIHEDE Diaspora Service Award. LIHEDE awards, in some cases, can be earned and applied for by the participant. Other awards require nomination from the leader's peers. These awards fall under 6 major categories: LIHEDE Humanitarian Service Award, LIHEDE Distinguished Service Award, LIHEDE Educational Service Award, LIHEDE Environmental Service Award, LIHEDE Heritage Award, and LIHEDE Community Leadership Award. In addition there are also a number of other LIHEDE awards.

- The LIHEDE Humanitarian Service Award recognizes individuals whose outstanding services by an adult individual or an organization for demonstrated involvement in the development and implementation of immigration, social services, and human rights or other humanitarian services to Liberians in the Diaspora.
- The LIHEDE Educational Service Award recognizes individuals or Web site that provides, free-of-charge, an avenue for frank exchanges of view on Liberian culture, tradition, history, religion, education, social services, and related development milestones.
- The LIHEDE Environmental Service Award recognizes individuals and organizations for their dedication to promoting education, safe and healthy environmental practices and awareness.
- The LIHEDE Distinguished Service Award honors and recognizes individuals or organizations that render special humanitarian services to Liberians throughout Liberia and the Diaspora.

- The LIHEDE Community Leadership Award recognizes and honors individuals and organizations that provide valuable and outstanding community services to youth and adults.
- The LIHEDE Heritage Award is presented to individuals and organizations that promote authentic Liberian culture.

You may be wondering how all of this happened in the span of five years. LIHEDE's method or vision of leadership is simple— to set an example as an organization and earned its members' trust. LIHEDE's method, or vision of leadership, is to work as if we are employees of the Liberian government expecting nothing in return. Or that we did not have to be ministers, leaders or directors to do for Liberia. Secondly, to build an organizational character that will demand trust from to who we represent and to do what we said we are to do and do. To us, Liberia has given us the best it has to offer, and it owes us nothing.

Here, at LIHEDE we build nests, not destroy them. Here, we allow young minds to grow from child play. LIHEDE prides itself on commitment, dedication, resourcefulness, quality and quantity in membership, not number. LIHEDE grabs one project, one at a time, and does an excellent job in an extraordinary way to attract the world's attention. With these principles, norms, and traditions, today LIHEDE is strong, and cooperation is everywhere is on the move. We've set an example of "Liberians do not unite" with "Liberians can do for Liberia." We've rebuilt our defenses. And of all our accomplishments, none can give us more satisfaction than knowing that we have earned your respect to travel thousand of miles from Africa to America, from Europe and continental United States to share our celebration. Tonight, then, LIHEDE is strong, respected, balanced, and determined. This is the state of our organization. And if we will work together on all of our visions, I believe we can give future leaders of LIHEDE and a future generation the chance to learn that our oneness, that our culture, that our history, not just reciting batch of dates, shapes our present behaviors.

The Trajectory of the next 5-10 Development Plan

Today is the beginning of a new life. I encourage you to catch every moment, every minute of this life. And so tonight, now, in 2009, we begin a new quest for LIHEDE— to maintain a strong alliance to forever love our nation, maintain character, leadership, and earned trust that have enabled LIHEDE to achieve what it has. I look to the future with you with dynamism for where you and I with our commitment to support our next 5-10 development plan. Toward this end, I have a few basic objectives tonight. And speaking of vision, let's turn to a matter on the mind of every Liberian tonight: education, that which instills patriotism and nationalism in society, and prepares people in society to guide against all forms of hatred, racism, tribalism, sectionalism, fear, disease, poverty, and self-destruction. Hence the following:

1. Completion of comprehensive Liberian history book on the oneness of our people
2. Establishing the first college in Liberia for women, an expansion of the proposed Liberian Women Center that fit into our African-Liberian Centered University with a college for women
3. LIHEDE High School (a Special Education High School) model in Liberia
4. Malaria Library
5. LIHEDE Radio Station
6. Housing Compound for LIHEDE and friends of LIHEDE to stay and hold conferences
7. Agriculture and others

Of course, we are hoping to our visits to Grand Cape Mount, River Cess, Lofa County, and Nimba Counties in 2010 and beyond with our continued Culture-Driven Malaria Program. I am quite convinced that these cultural driven malaria programs have helped to remind people of the insidious nature of malaria. I have seen this for myself in Montsorrado, Bong, Margibi and Grand Bassa counties. We plan to hold the largest conference with the College of Elders and Council of Females to address the misconception about our Poro and Sande universities.

Of course, to achieve our dreams, I maintain to seek the support and membership of dedicated men and women like you for us to contribute to quality and character excellence because education is the starting point. Education means more than just passing on knowledge. It is a road to freedom, health, servant hood, opportunity, personal growth and service to humanity.

I look forward to continued strong support from people like you for the new LIHEDE vision, our tomorrow. I want you to be the forerunners in this regard. I want us to be able to gather here again or else where to thank you for your vision and generosity. Together, we can build and renovate LIHEDE. I want to thank you, ahead of time, for what you are the new powerhouse and pioneers and Peace Corps in our midst to do for LIHEDE and the new Liberia. If we are bound by nothing else, we are bound by the unity and history that we must maintain during those trying times when we are accused of trying to pollute our nation by calling for the eradication of malaria. If we are bound by nothing else, we should now be bound by the trust and respect our fellow Liberians and Friends of LIHEDE have bestowed on us. And if we are bound by nothing else, we should be bound by a knowledge explosion like we have never seen to fly us into history.

How can you help? Well, you can promote and support LIHEDE through membership. But the most important thing is that we need your assistance in raising funds so that, at least, participants in the next Jubilee would see concrete evidence of LIHEDE. You may play the role of a facilitator by recommending us to some of your associates, be grant writers, look for radio transformers, create and invest in LIHEDE business partners, contractors and others. Your response is awaited.

Fellow LIHEDEANS, Friends of LIHEDE, when the minds of humans are weaved together, nothing can stop it. You are experiencing something new: awakened citizens of the new Liberia, citizens who are willing to defend and look after Liberia with character excellence. That is why in LIHEDE, our habits are our character and our character determines the good things that have happened for LIHEDE during our challenges. It has been a pretty remarkable five years by any standards. There have been ups and downs, but anyone who can remember what things were like after those five long years of determination, appreciates what immense changes have been achieved since then.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, as we celebrate, it is worthwhile to remind ourselves that Liberia development is a living flame to be constantly fuelled and not a monument to be saluted and revered on and off. LIHEDE's projects in history, education and development must be an eternal flame to be innately fuelled by all of us because it defines our humanity.

So tonight, we are bound together by a common thread of brotherhood on this historic campus not to relent on work pace and vision of LIHEDE, but to open new frontiers of servant hood and allegiance to life unpredictable challenges. Gratitude, respect and pride, these words sum up how I feel about the members of LIHEDE and what this Golden Jubilee means to me. I am deeply humbled and thrilled to be in your presence. I thank you. Long live LIHEDE.