

Proposed Target Project: *Project Dignity: Empowering Liberia's Women*

Brief Project Description

"History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again." Maya Angelou

Human rights abuses against women and girls in Liberia occur on a daily basis. The statistics are staggering. Liberia, a land of hope and promise, was a land of refuge - where former slaves escaped the violence of the New World with dreams of better lives for themselves and their children. Today, Liberian women endure horrible physical and psychosocial effects of sexual violence resulting from 14 years of civil war and the resulting culture of violence. The impacts of rape and other forms of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) often include serious health problems, severe psychological consequences (including stigmatization) and, at times, social exclusion from families and/or communities. *medica mondiale*, an NGO based in Cologne, Germany, began operations in Liberia in 2006, founding *medica mondiale Liberia*. Led by Liberian and international women's rights activists, *medica mondiale Liberia* helps ease the passage of abused women back into society through promotion of trauma-sensitive direct services (medical treatment, counseling and legal services) and political/social advocacy.

Project Dignity supports the establishment of Medica Liberia, a 100% Liberian-led NGO for the empowerment of women. The current organization, *medica mondiale Liberia*, will become independent from its long-term partner *medica mondiale* through the management of local women leaders operating under the new name, Medica Liberia. *medica mondiale* proudly offers a 20-year track record of cooperation and successful handovers of program leadership to local women (in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Bosnia). They hope to achieve similar results in Liberia by securing funding for this critical phase of transition - the evolution of *medica mondiale Liberia* to Medica Liberia. Support for Project Dignity is an investment in the future of women's leadership in Liberia. When empowered Liberian women take positions of strength in their communities, conditions for women and girls will improve - an investment in Liberia's female population that will grow exponentially!

Specific Project Objectives

Project Dignity calls for a macro-level intervention to strengthen the institutional base of the newly established NGO, Medica Liberia. Empowering the organization's staff and board members through capacity building measures, leadership development, and training in sound financial administrative systems will professionalize the organization and assure its future success as an independent NGO. The establishment of this highly professional Liberian women's rights organization, able to train other Liberian NGOs and government institutions, will provide an important contribution to a sustainable transformation process for the nation. Medica Liberia's dual strategy combines direct services for women with an advocacy component. This approach promotes political change and transforms how community services are carried out.

How will the project improve the lives of women?

With the successful transition of Medica Liberia into an independent, professional NGO, the lives of Liberia's female survivors of SGBV will continue to improve. Direct services providing crisis care and ongoing support by volunteer counselors at local community-based protection networks, often based in Palaver huts, will be ensured. Training professionals (medical, police and court staff) in how to provide trauma-sensitive services for thousands of SGBV victims each year will ensure that women receive appropriate care by public health service providers and are able to exercise their rights in safety, according to legal standards. Awareness-raising activities and advocacy on the Ministry level in the capital, Monrovia, to influence both political and social change will be safeguarded.

Project Dignity will ensure Medica Liberia's ability to provide Liberian survivors of SGBV access to trauma-sensitive services, facilitate women's engagement in the reconstruction of their war-torn country, and ensure that women's human rights issues are high on the country's political agenda.

Who will carry out the project?

With an uncompromising commitment to supporting women in war and conflict zones, *medica mondiale, Germany* started operating in Liberia in 2006 under the leadership of its founder, Dr. Monika Hauser, the 2008 recipient of the Right Livelihood Award. *medica mondiale* has a history of successfully handing over leadership to local women in the programs they established in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Bosnia. They remain committed to these organizations (Medica Afghanistan, Medica Kosova and Medica Zenica) and work in cooperation with them to ensure their continued success. It is now time to transfer leadership to Liberian women. The transition will take place under the direction of Program Manager, Sybille Fezer, and the Liberian Country Director, Caroline Bowah Brown. In October 2014, the vision of women's empowerment in Liberia will gain focus, with Medica Liberia fully in charge. *medica mondiale* will continue to support, monitor and evaluate their progress as they do with their other newly independent NGOs. As milestones are achieved, updates will be provided in the form of written reports, photos, letters, interviews and personal statements (i.e. stories from board members' successful training sessions, celebrating International Women's Day, and staff retreat for reflection and self-care).

Project Budget

The budget of \$155,870 for the two-year project will fund Liberian women's leadership of this women's rights NGO. The proposal provides a detailed breakdown and is realistic for the capacity development to support local leadership of Medica Liberia. Launching the new NGO and promoting women into leadership positions will require funding for items that include: Facilities and operating costs - \$1150/month; Four salaries (including health and social benefits) - ranging from \$400 to \$2500/month; Training sessions - ranging from \$550 to \$780 per participant (multiple-day trainings, including transport, accommodation, costs for trainer/consultant); Monthly coaching sessions via Skype for the Executive Director - \$150. These activities will empower the organization's staff and board members through capacity building measures, leadership development, and training in sound financial administrative systems. Professionalism and accountability will guarantee the organization's survival and encourage future donors.

Multidisciplinary Nature of the Project - Which UN Millennium Development Goals are addressed?

Target 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women: ending violence against women and improving the lives and healthcare of women; training community professionals (medical, police and court staff) on how to provide trauma-sensitive services; enhancing women's knowledge of their human rights and laws in their country; collecting gender specific data through first-hand accounts from the victims of violence; adoption of the internationally recognized Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) supported by WHO and UNICEF. Promoting the three target areas proposed by UN Women: 1. Freedom from violence against women and girls; 2. Gender equality in the distribution of capabilities; 3. Gender equality in decision-making power in public and private institutions, national parliament and local councils, the media and civil society, the management and governance of firms, and in families and communities.

Target 8: Develop a Global Partnership: serving the needs of one of the poorest Western African countries: GDP per capita (US\$): \$421.70.