



Village Improvement Project

Annual Report 2018





About Us

Village Improvement Project, Inc. (VIP) is a registered nonprofit in the United States and Liberia with a vision to be the catalyst for improving Liberian village life using simple technology that helps unlock the potential of the communities we support.

We are dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for communities in rural Liberia through service and education projects.

We believe in connecting people and transforming communities and that everyone should have the opportunity to meet their potential and increase their productive capacity.

Simple, affordable and sustainable technology such as solar power, improved cooking stoves, compressed earth bricks and composting toilets are just some of the tools that can help improve the quality of life for village communities in rural Liberia after years of horrific civil war and more recently Ebola outbreaks.

Over the past few years, we have focused on the following:

- **Solar Lanterns for family homes:** LED solar lantern with 560 lumens that allows for mobile phone charging. Lanterns can stay on for 8 hours. Allows for night time family activities, study time for children, reduced need for batteries and kerosene fuel and continuous mobile phone connectivity.
- **Cookstoves:** Using rocket stove technology to develop an improved cookstove for Liberian homes. Expected to be more efficient than coal pots and open-fire cooking methods and reduce deforestation of Liberia's rain forest.
- **Highway signs:** Reflective signs identifying towns along major highways leading from the capital city, Monrovia. Builds a sense of pride in local communities and provides safety benefits.



Location of Liberia in West Africa.
Source: WorldAtlas.com



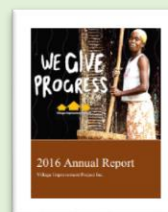
Map of Liberia. Source: WorldAtlas.com

Our past annual reports

Click on the report covers below to access our past annual reports.



2017



2016



2015



2014



President's Message

Village Improvement Project for us is a labor of love. With funding from our wonderful donors, we provide things like solar lanterns to help the poor in Liberia. It's as simple as that.

Donating a lantern to family means that their day can be extended by a few hours without valuable resources being spent on purchasing kerosene or flashlight batteries, inhaling harmful fumes or worrying about accidental fire. I learned this after providing such a lantern to a poor family member and saw the positive impact it made. VIP provides simple technology that the poor in Liberia then use to improve their lives.

We know that our recipients are making the best of our donations. It makes us especially happy to hear how kids can study as they need using the solar lanterns we provide and are not limited to daylight hours. We think too about how these children will contribute to their community, their

society, their country, Liberia and ultimately the world and this drives us to do more.

In this 2018 annual report, we share what we've achieved for the year, our financial report, our valued people and our exciting plans for 2019. Please take a few minutes to find out more about our Liberia Director of Operations, Ms. Miatta Johnson.

Raising the funds for our work continues to be a large part of our work in the United States. We use a variety of crowdfunding and other ways to source funding, but I especially want to share that members of our board of directors are walking the walk and contributed just over \$3,600 in 2018.

After reading our annual report, I personally encourage you to follow us on social media and support our work either by promoting us among your networks, volunteering with us or donating if it is possible for you to do so.

LeRoy Boikai

Dr. LeRoy Boikai

Founder of Village Improvement Project

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Our People

Our staff in Liberia



Ms. Miatta T. Johnson
Country Director, Liberia



Miatta, our Director of Operations in Liberia



Volunteers in orange t-shirts helping with lantern distribution



Road conditions that Miatta and the VIP team encounter when distributing lanterns

Staff Spotlight

Ms. Miatta T. Johnson Country Director, Liberia

We are truly fortunate to have Miatta as the Director of Operations in Liberia. She joined us in 2015 and serves with integrity. She brings over 30 years of experience from the public sector in Liberia having worked with the elections commission, the airport and customs.

Liberia can be a challenging environment to work in and she continues to be committed to achieving our goals. Miatta has shown us a high level of accountability in managing VIP's resources, including maintaining the office, keeping accurate records and preparing timely reports for the board in the United States.

In addition, she is proactive and shows initiative. She has covered operational expenses out of her own pocket that we were later able to reimburse and in both 2015 and 2018, she sourced a banner and t-shirts for solar lantern distribution activities VIP hosted.

Miatta has recruited volunteers in Liberia to help with the distribution of solar lanterns. We know she is passing on her strong work ethic and volunteer spirit to them as we have found them to be very dedicated to the work of VIP.

Miatta, VIP salutes you!



Our volunteers in Liberia



Ms. Manaweh Mapleh



Ms. Yassah Yelobah



Ms. Zoe Horace



Ms. Tenneh Jallah



Mr. Samuel Jambo



Mr. Varney Dakinah



Mr. Seymon Nyehn



Mr. John Sackie



Mr. Joseph Clarke

Volunteers in orange t-shirts along with Dr. LeRoy Boikai helping with lantern distribution





Our volunteers in the United States



Over the last three years, we have connected with Taproot Foundation, an organization that helps nonprofits find skilled volunteers willing to provide pro-bono support. To date, they have helped us with seven projects and provided us with approximately \$28,000 in services. Some of the past projects included strategic plan development, video editing and the prototype for a cookstove design.

In 2018, volunteers completed projects for us on Google AdWords, copywriting, coaching on using Facebook effectively, and in the preparation of our annual report.

Our Board Members



Dr. LeRoy Boikai, Chairman of the Board – LeRoy is an active member of the Liberian Diaspora in the United States. He has worked in adult education and literacy for more than twenty-five years.

Now, he is the Director of Adult Services for the Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services, a non-profit providing English language instruction and job readiness training to refugees and immigrants from Asia, the Middle East and Africa.



Mr. Emmanuel Wettee, Vice Chairman – Emmanuel has worked for the State of Ohio at the Bureau of Workers Compensation for more than 20 years and is now a Business Process Analyst.

As a long time community leader in the Liberian Diaspora, he served as president of the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA) from 2006-2008 and currently serves as chairman of the All-Liberian Conference on Dual Citizenship.

Emmanuel also has extensive experience in IT and in teaching IT to others.



Dr. Jerome Boikai, Secretary – Jerome is a retired teacher from Detroit Public Schools and is now an adjunct professor at Wayne County Community College.

With a Ph.D. in Speech Communication (Radio, TV, Film, Theater and Journalism), he previously served as an assistant manager at the Liberia Broadcasting Corporation.



Mr. David Moore, Treasurer – David is retired from a business career and his connection to the founder of VIP goes back many decades. David served as a Peace Corps teacher on Suehn Mission from '65 - '69.

One of his 9th grade students was LeRoy Boikai. Dr. Boikai and David have kept in contact over the years and now join forces for VIP, Inc.



Mrs. Musu Boikai – Musu is LeRoy's wife and she works as a nurse assistant at the Dominican Sisters of Peace Healthcare Center for retired nuns and priests in Columbus, Ohio.



Mr. Phillip Martin - Phillip Martin was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Zwedru, Liberia, from 1988 - 1989. Martin, an artist, taught art at international schools in the Philippines, Zambia and Belgium after his days in the Peace Corps.

The travel bug, as well as the Peace Corps spirit, never left him. These days, Phillip Martin, [The Mural Man](#), paints community murals in both his local community and at distant walls around the world. So far, he has painted 57 murals in 25 countries.

The most unique aspect of his work is not the beautifully crafted mural upon completion. The real magic is bringing a community together to design, paint and then own a mural.



Mrs. Nancy Moore – Like her husband David, Nancy served as a Peace Corps volunteer for two years. She taught at the Mattie Mae Davis Elementary School in a rural area north of Suehn village.

She is now retired from a position as a technology trainer for the Los Angeles County Office of Education.



Mr. Jack Wilson – As one of the first Peace Corps Volunteers, Jack coached the first national high school basketball championship team at Suehn Industrial Academy in Liberia in 1962.

He has spent more than 35 years in public service, beginning as a Peace Corps administrator in Sierra Leone, Washington DC, and Fiji.

He was also an administrator of environmental protection programs in Ohio and Kentucky.

Jack is the coauthor with Angene of [Voices from the Peace Corps: Fifty Years of Kentucky Volunteers](#).



Mr. Aditya Govil - Aditya currently works as Director of Business Development with Avante-garde Health and has worked in the healthcare sector, focusing on finance and decision support systems. Aditya has a degree in Computer Science and Mathematics from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and is currently continuing his education at Harvard Business School.



Mr. Tamba Tandanpolie - Tamba is an Ohio businessman who owns and operates Ultimate Home Healthcare Services, a growing senior care health facility in Central Ohio. In the past, he served as an engineering coordinator at Honda Manufacturing in Ohio and was an adjunct professor at DeVry University and the University of Phoenix.



Dr. Angene Wilson - Angene and her husband, Jack, were in the first group of Peace Corps Volunteers in Liberia from 1962 to 1964 where she taught at Suehn Industrial Academy.

Angene is professor emeritus at the University of Kentucky, where she was chair of the Secondary Social Studies Program from 1975 to 2004.

She is the author of [The Meaning of International Experience for Schools](#) and coauthor of [Social Studies and the World: Teaching Global Perspectives](#).

Angene serves on two other Liberian nonprofit boards.



Our History

Village Improvement Project was started in July 2014 with a nine- member board and seed funding from The Pollination Project and the Ross Foundation. LED solar lanterns and solar street lights were tested to confirm that lanterns stay on for eight hours and streetlights for about three hours. We were able to distribute lanterns to 50 homes in three villages during our first year. From

then we have grown our ability to raise funds and have continued to distribute lanterns in remote villages. We started testing on an improved cookstove and hope to start producing them in Liberia. We have also constructed road signs along one main highway and added reflective signs to improve traffic safety.

Our Achievements in 2018

Solar Lanterns

Over the course of two weeks in January, VIP distributed 864 solar lanterns (504 to village homes and 360 to teachers and nurses) in 42 localities in five counties--Cape Mount, Lofa, Bassa, Bomi and Montserrado, traveling on extremely difficult road conditions.

The lanterns at night. Photo courtesy Refuge Place International



360 Panasonic lanterns (in kind donation of \$12,160) were distributed to 269 school teachers working in 19 off-grid

Villagers with their new Panasonic lanterns along with VIP volunteers and Dr LeRoy Boikai



schools, 46 staff in five orphanages caring for Ebola orphans and to 45 midwives and nurses working in five rural clinics. We were able to capture feedback from Jenneh P from the Tenegar Community Clinic:

"We no longer must shut down the clinic at dusk and ask the remaining patients of the day to return the next day."

"The bright light from the lanterns is more than we are used to. This has a big positive impact on our ability to deliver newborns at night."

"As a clinic worker, I no longer need to pay US \$0.15 per day to charge my cellphone."

"Instead of using flashlights, we now use the lanterns to travel at night to villages to conduct maternal health education."

"Clinics open longer as staff can treat patients into the night."



VIP purchased lanterns were given to families. We also gave 10 lanterns to Refuge Place International, a health delivery nonprofit based in Liberia and founded by Dr. Mosoka Fallah.

VIP's Clean Cookstoves

Funds raised in 2017 allowed us to hire the services of an expert welder, purchase raw materials, produce, then test new cookstoves and compare them to traditional cooking methods.

Improved cookstoves like this will be used in the field tests.



begin assembling stoves ourselves in Liberia employing local labor. In preparation for starting local manufacture and assembly, in 2018 VIP shipped a welding machine and accessories to Liberia to use in fabricating clean cookstoves.

Testing revealed that while less firewood was used and cooking time was faster, there was no appreciable reduction in smoke and because the stoves contained no insulation or pot sleeves, the fire burned uncontrollably on the sides of the pots, thereby reducing the efficiency.

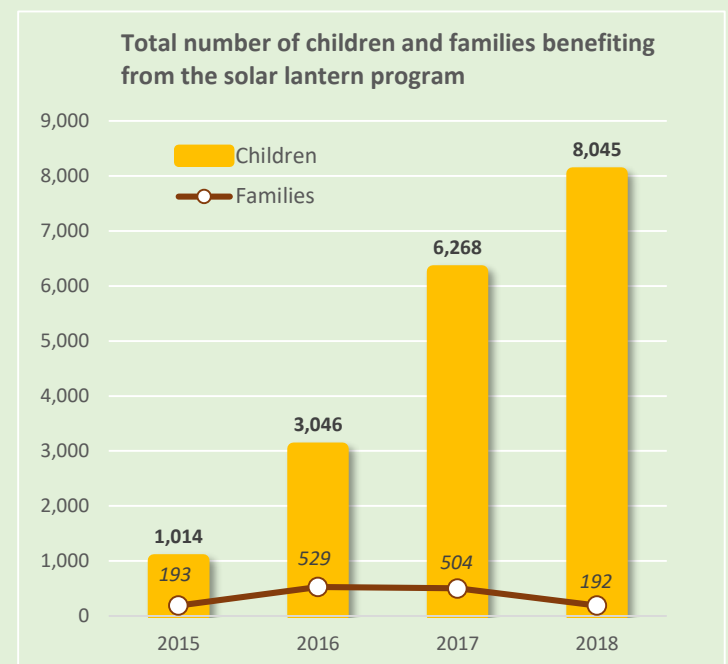
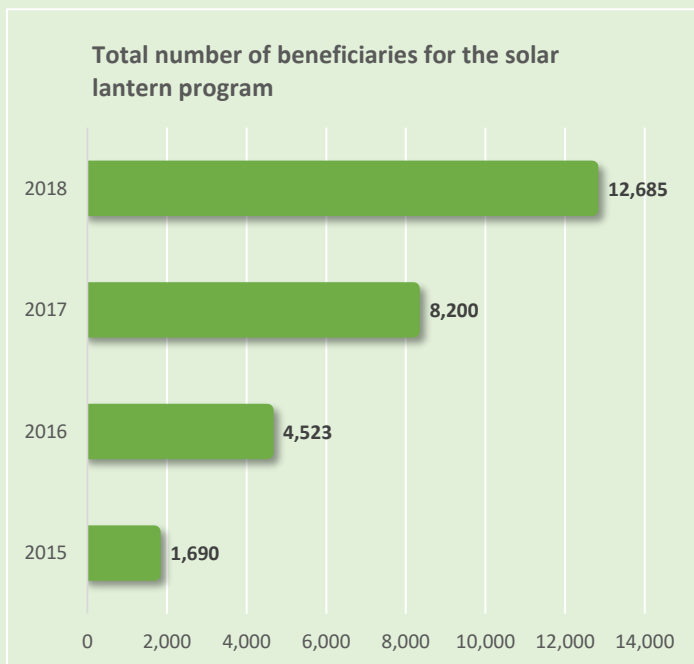
- Based on our testing with the stoves, we then collaborated with [Mary's Meals](#), ZOA Liberia (both nonprofits involved in feeding school children) and GIZ En/Dev (a German energy nonprofit) to share experiences and ideas on improving cook stoves.
- In September, VIP established a social enterprise in Liberia called Liberia Eco Supply Ventures to produce cookstoves in-country.

Other activities

We collected and distributed clothes and shoes for men, women, and children in four villages.

Our goal is to become a distributor of clean cook stoves in Liberia. With the earnings from distribution sales, we plan to

Our Beneficiaries





Our Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals

Our work in Liberia contributes to a number of [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#). SDGs are a collection of 17 goals from the United Nations. They cover social and economic development issues including poverty, hunger, health, education, global warming, gender equality, water, sanitation, energy, urbanization, environment and social justice. [SEE NEXT PAGE]



Goal 1: No Poverty

•Solar lanterns

- ☐ solar energy is freely available to charge lanterns and provide power for mobile charging
- ☐ lanterns are provided free of charge
- ☐ families spend less money on kerosene and batteries for flashlights
- ☐ families save time on trips to the market for mobile phone charging.
- ☐ children at homes and orphanages can study at night
- ☐ school teachers can complete school tasks like correcting assignments at night
- ☐ nurses and midwives with lanterns can get to patients and perform care needs at night
- ☐ more time to engage in family activities

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

•Solar lanterns

- Families especially will experience financial relief from having solar lanterns at home and more efficient cookstoves requiring less fuel
- Reduction in expenditure and increase in income could contribute to reducing hunger



Goal 3: Good Health and Well Being

•Solar lanterns

- ☐ reduce need for kerosene lanterns, thus reducing indoor air pollution
- ☐ nurses and midwives with lanterns can get to patients and perform care needs at night

•Highway signs

- contribute to reducing traffic related injuries



Goal 4: Quality Education

- **Solar lanterns**
 - reduce a basic limitation of limited light after sunset
 - children at homes and orphanages as well as school teachers take advantage of the additional study time

Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy

- **Solar lanterns**
 - clean energy that is provided free of charge
 - no problems reported with the lanterns
 - testing showed that they last for eight hours per full charge
- **Cookstoves**
 - are an improvement on traditional cooking methods as they reduce the amount of fuel needed and air pollution



Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth

- All VIP projects can create a few jobs ranging from erecting signs, distributing and maintaining solar lanterns, and producing cookstoves in Liberia

Goal 13: Climate action

- **Solar lanterns**
 - clean energy – no carbon dioxide emissions
 - solar energy is renewable
- **Cookstoves**
 - are an improvement on traditional cooking methods as they reduce the amount of fuel needed
 - less firewood means less extraction of timber from the rain forest for fuel





Financial Report

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY

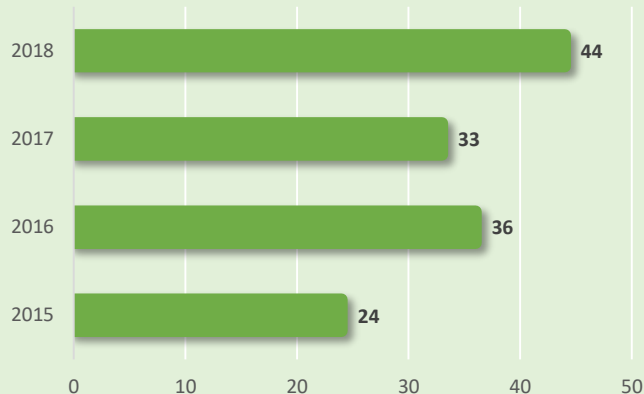
January - December 2018

Fundraising and Revenue	
Contributions	13,024
Other	951
Fundraising Costs	-823
Total Revenue	\$13,152
Expenditures and Operating Costs	
Administrative & Legal	1,821
Information Technology	484
Liberian Salaries & Benefits (In-country Maintenance & Project Support)	7,344
Supplies	575
Total Expenditures	\$10,224
Net Operating Revenue	\$2,928

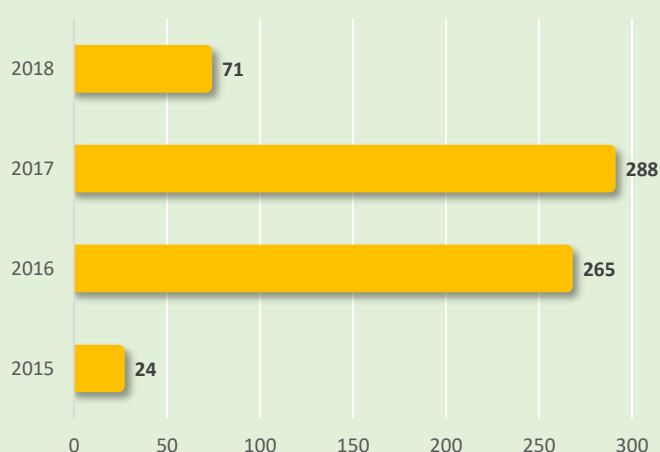
Biggest financial contributions

- Board members raised \$3675. This is a major contribution and speaks to their commitment to the work of VIP
- \$3000 donation from Fidelity Charitable
- \$2000 donation from Alan Zagoria

Number of donations made by board members



Number of overall donations



Global Giving



In 2018, [Village Improvement Project](#) continued to maintain its Superstar status with Global Giving, a status we have had since 2015. Using the platform, we participated in five events and raised \$10,418.

42 donors connected with VIP through GlobalGiving, providing an average donation of \$147, and two recurring donors helped us to raise \$510.

We earned a net promoter score of 50 and 36 effectiveness points. Because of these scores, and other marketing efforts on their part, we earned an additional \$1,260 from GlobalGiving. This means a lot to us.

GlobalGiving also provided us with badges that we can use on our website and social media to promote that we have been vetted by GlobalGiving as a top-ranked nonprofit.

We have two ongoing projects on GlobalGiving Crowdfunding Platform:

Solar Lanterns for 3000 Village Homes in Liberia

- **\$45,000** total goal
- **\$8,466** remaining
- **165** donors to date

Improved Cookstoves for 25 Liberian Village Homes

- **\$20,000** total goal
- **\$4,260** remaining
- **69** donors to date



Our Plans for 2019

VIP will continue to provide no-cost solar lanterns to rural Liberian villages.

We will also continue testing, building and then start selling rocket cook stoves. These are more efficient than existing ways of cooking. We intend to launch Liberia Eco Supply Ventures to produce and sell institutional cookstoves to schools, hotels, restaurants, and hospitals. This will provide employment in Liberia.

A major goal in 2019 is to publish and distribute an illustrated book of 50 Liberian Folk Tales. This collection is a long overdue treasure missing in Liberian schools.

Most Liberian schools do not have a library. Those that do often have discarded books from schools in Europe and North America which do not contain culturally relevant stories. We believe that the book we plan to produce will capture the attention of young Liberian readers as they are stories that the children will want to read. The more they read, the better their chances are for a brighter future.

Not only will these tales enhance the education and lives of Liberian students, but they will also help to spread Liberian culture around the globe. Librarians, teachers and parents around the planet can use this book to share a little Liberian culture with their children by learning about Spider, African food, and tales from a culture they may not have ever otherwise known. Once again, everyone wins. This is our contribution to preserving our culture.

In addition to the stories, we plan to have teacher lesson plans to accompany the tales, plays written for or by the students that again stress reading and writing, and community mural projects that bring the tales to life in a way that the students will never forget.

VIP will also continue to provide reflective road signs to improve the safety and grow the infrastructure of the highways leading out of the capital of Monrovia.

Please help us to achieve our plans...

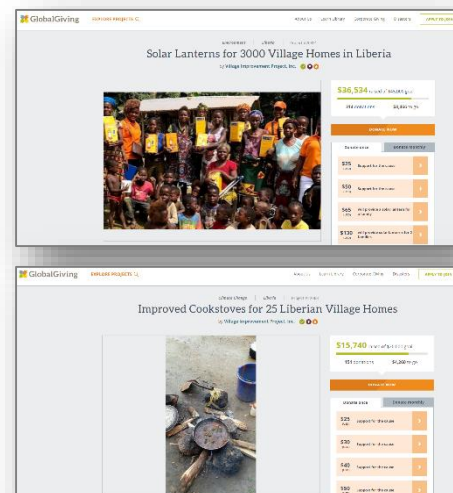
- Follow us, then comment, share and like our posts on social media platforms: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Pinterest](#).



- Tell your friends about us: use the information in our annual report to share details about what we do.
- Volunteer with us. Connect with us through social media, [email](#) or phone (614-558-4348) to discuss how you can help us. Consider becoming a board member as a way of supporting us. From time to time, we post volunteer needs on the Taproot Foundation site, [Taproot+](#).



- Financial contributions can be made directly through [Facebook](#), our [website](#), [GlobalGiving](#) and on [GuideStar](#) or to our fundraising campaigns: [Solar Lanterns for 3000 Village Homes in Liberia](#) and [Improved Cookstoves for 25 Liberian Village Homes](#).



We will be celebrating our 5-year anniversary in July 2019. VIP springs from a long-held dream and goal to do something significant to improve the lives of poor villagers in Liberia who never seem to benefit from most other development efforts. Our anniversary this year will be a good opportunity for us to reflect on what we have achieved and recommit to our goals for the future of VIP.

