



## **Ambassador's Special Self-Help Program Application Guidelines**

The Ambassador's Special Self Help Fund has been established to finance small scale self-help activities. The concept of self-help is one in which the people achieve a development goal through the use of their own available resources, with material assistance as necessary, from the Self-Help Fund. The following guidelines have been established to assist in preparing a project proposal.

Proposal should be addressed to: Coordinator, Ambassador's Self-Help Fund, Embassy of the United States of America, P.O. Box 98, Mamba Point, Monrovia.

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

1. The Ambassador's Self-Help Fund is designed to provide a flexible" one-shot" type of assistance (i.e. no recurring obligations of U.S. funds). Therefore, once assistance has been provided to a project through the Self-Help Fund, no additional funds can be provided to the same project. The potential for sustainability is a high priority in identifying projects to be funded.
2. Self-Help assistance is provided only for projects that have the genuine support of the benefiting communities. The people must contribute a significant portion of the project's total cost (usually 25%) through labor, material, land, cash, etc.
3. United States Government contributions through the Self-Help Fund are made only to development projects. Typical self-help projects are latrines, clinics, schools, etc, as well as economic development projects that increase the community's financial resources for undertaking other self-help projects on their own. Recently funded projects include: Clinic rehabilitation, swamp rice cultivation, rice mill construction, school renovation, pit latrine, business cooperative for women (tie & dye, soap)

Examples of types of projects that will NOT be funded through the Self-Help Fund are: scholarships, workshop or seminars (except training as part of implementation of specific projects, athletic or recreational projects.

4. The responsibility for completion of these projects rests with community. The project coordinator(s) is responsible to obtain all necessary approvals for project implementation including the approval of appropriate authorities.
5. In the case of construction projects, U.S. assistance is provided only for those materials necessary for the completion of the basic physical structure and not for items which are non-essential to the actual construction (i.e. floor tiles, trim, etc.).
6. Self-Help Fund assistance is subject to U.S. regulations and availability of funds. Projects are usually funded for amounts of US\$10,000.00 or less.
7. The Self-Help Fund will not pay for unskilled labor, project supervisors or other personnel.
8. All proposals submitted will be kept on file for one year.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**What is Self-Help?** Self-Help is a special program of the U.S. Ambassador to Liberia. Self-Help gives U.S. Embassy support directly to communities, groups, neighborhoods, areas, villages and town that are working to help themselves.

**Fine, my community is working very hard. Can we have some money?** Maybe. Self-help funds are given for specific projects. The money must be used to purchase something without which the project wouldn't get started or can't be completed. If you have a plan, labor and funds for a specific project, but need some supplementary help, the U.S. Embassy may be able to help you. However, we can only help the project once! No repeat performances.

**The village women make soap and need caustic soda. Will you buy some for them?** No. Self-Help funds cannot be used to buy the things you use every day. Self-Help funds cannot be used to buy caustic soda for soap making, paper for a school or fertilizer for a farm. Self-Help funds must be used for things that will last and things that are needed to get a project started or completed.

**Can you give me examples of projects you will assist?** Sure! Perhaps you are building a school, and you already have timbers, hard blocks, cement and enough funds to buy books and paper. You need desks, chairs and roofing sheets. We might be able to give you the tools to make the furniture or buy roofing sheets. Maybe your village is constructing a well. The people have already dug the well, but they need cement or culvert to complete it. We might be able to help with the cement or culvert.

**Can you give me examples of projects you will NOT assist?** Yes. We already mentioned not being able to provide items that are consumed, including food, paper or fertilizer. We also cannot be involved in a project, which is being financed by the Government of Liberia, as we have other programs, which provide U.S. assistance to the Government of Liberia. However, we are willing to support locally organized projects, which may be sponsored in part by government organizations.

**So, the village has to do most of the work itself?** Exactly. The Self-help fund will try to get you a few things you can't otherwise get, but YOU have to do the work, and YOU have to get as many things as you can. Self-help money can only be used to get those last few things to get your project going or completed.

**The village has always wanted a bridge for the creek. Can you help?** Perhaps. But the village will have to decide what it will do for itself. Remember, this is a Self-Help program. The U.S. Embassy will help you help your-self, but the Embassy will not do the project for you. If the village wants the bridge enough to contribute most of what is needed to build it, then the U.S. Embassy will be happy to talk with you about helping with the things you can't get.

**What do we do first?** Talk to the people. Find out what they will contribute. Some people may have money, others may have a bag or two of cement, and others may have timbers or planks. Others may be willing to donate their labor. How you organize the effort is up to you.

**You were right. Everyone wants the bridge very much, but we have no way of getting reinforcing rods. Can you help us now?** Now it is time for you to submit your proposal for Self-Help Funds. Give title of the project, the nature of the project, location, and project estimated cost, etc. Tell us why you need the project, why it hasn't been built in the past, what the people will contribute to building it, what is the plan, who is the organizer, and what you want the U.S. Embassy to give you.

**What will you do with the application?** The Embassy will consider your application, along with applications from other pending projects throughout Liberia. Because the amount of money the Embassy has for the Self-Help Fund is limited, only the best projects, those projects which will benefit the people most substantially and have the best chance of success, will be chosen to get money from the Self-Help Fund.

**We got a letter from the U.S. Ambassador. He said that our request for reinforcing rods is approved. What do we do now?** The person in charge of the project should come to Monrovia. He or she should know exactly how many reinforcing rods the project needs and have suggestions about where to buy them. The person in charge and an Embassy Officer (maybe the Ambassador) will sign an agreement together. The agreement states exactly what the U.S. Embassy will give your project and how it must be used. When the person in charge comes to Monrovia, we will talk about ordering the reinforcing rods.

**We have the rods. Can we start work?** Of course. Be sure to use the rods only for the bridge. If there are any materials left over, you must tell us. If you use things provided by the U.S. Embassy for any purpose other than the purpose stated in the agreement signed with the Embassy, you risk having to repay the funds and never again being able to apply for Self-Help funds. From time to time, a representative of the U.S. Embassy will stop by to see how the project is going. By all means, get started as soon as possible.

**The bridge is finished! Great! Will you be having an inaugural ceremony?** Yes. Everyone from the area will be there, and we would like someone from the U.S. Embassy to come, too. Fine! We would be pleased to attend. But please remember one thing. Don't throw away the records of your project. We need to be able to look at them for up to three years. Please let us know when the ceremony will be.

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Each year the Embassy receives many more applications than it can possibly fund. Only those which meet the guidelines will be considered. If your project is chosen for consideration, someone will visit the site to talk to you about the proposal and verify the information on the proposal. Please include a map and/or a description of how to locate your project. Also include a telephone number if one is available. Tell us if there is someone in Monrovia who knows about the project and can be contacted to answer any questions.

Thank you again for your interest in the Ambassador's Special Self-Help Fund.

Good luck with your project!