



Ambassador's Special Self-Help Program Information & Application Guidelines

BACKGROUND

The Ambassador's Special Self Help Fund is a grass-roots assistance program that started as a pilot project in 1964 in Togo to allow U.S. Ambassadors to respond to local requests for small community-based development projects that have immediate impact and the potential to improve basic economic and social conditions at the local community or village level. The program has since spread throughout the continent due to the immediate and significant impact it demonstrated.

CONCEPT

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. These activities should be community based with the communities taking the lead and managing their own activities.

GENERAL GUIDELINES: The following guidelines have been established to assist in preparing a project proposal.

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 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, hand pumps, 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: Construction of clinics, schools, hand pumps, latrines and rice mill; business cooperative for women (processing cassava into farina/gari)

4. Examples of types of projects that can NOT be funded through the Self-Help Fund are: scholarships, workshops or seminars (except training as part of implementation of specific projects) athletic or recreational projects. Self-Help Fund cannot be used to fund political, religious, military activities or provide support to government agencies. Unskilled labor, administrative or personnel costs, consumable items, vehicles and items which are non-essential to actual construction like floor tiles, trim, etc. are not eligible for funding.
5. Self-Help Fund assistance is subject to U.S. regulations and availability of funds. The average range of grant awards is from \$1,000 to \$10,000.
6. All projects must be completed in one year.
7. Application forms are available at the American Library on the U.S. Embassy compound.
8. To request application of further information, contact
Coordinator
Ambassador's Special Self Help Fund
U.S. Embassy, P.O. Box 98
502 Benson Street, Monrovia
Telephone: 231-777-958072/Ext. 7266

PROJECT REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Each year, applications submitted from across the country are reviewed by a committee which makes selection based on set criteria including the level of community support and involvement as well as the potential for sustainability. Thereafter, the Self Help Coordinator conducts site visits and meets with selected applicant communities/organizations to learn more about the proposed projects. The projects are reviewed by the committee for final selection and recommendation to the Ambassador. Agreements are prepared for each selected project and a signing ceremony is organized. Once the project is finished, a dedication program is organized to mark the completion of each project, usually in twelve months.

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 towns that are working to help themselves.

The village women make soap and need caustic soda. Can the program 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, sun-dried bricks, sand and enough funds to buy food to

support the work; we might be able to assist you with items you don't have like cement, steel rods, ceiling tiles and roofing sheets. Maybe your village is constructing a well and they have already dug the well, but they need cement or culverts to complete it. We might be able to help with the cement or culverts.

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.

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 they have 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 apply for Self-Help Funds using the application form located at the U.S. Embassy. 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 do 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.

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.

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