

Jessica Maiorca
ILR International Experience Grant Application
2009

**Funding Proposal: Summer Internship with the Liberian Ministry of Labour's
Planning & Manpower Development Division**

Background

My mission for summer 2009 is to work with the Liberian government to develop new ways of increasing long-term employment. This proposal comes at a pivotal time in my education as the result of several years' work. I began as a member of my high school's Amnesty International group and continued through college, interning with a variety of international non-governmental organizations on campaigns connecting poverty to human rights issues. All of these concepts became real when, from 2003 to 2005, I worked as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ghana and established small businesses with women. This essentially determined that my life's work was to be within the realm of international development. As a MILR candidate (with hopes of a dual CIPA degree), I have narrowed my focus to labor market policies of developing countries. In preparation, I have taken courses in labor market economics, international trade policy, income distribution & inequality and international labor law. Now I believe it is time to challenge and refine my ideas by working first-hand with a government faced with the incredible task of creating employment for its people.

Work Plan: 3 Goals

Goal 1

For a country that ended its 14-year civil war in 2003, it is troubling that current unemployment estimates range from 70-85%. Many of those employed are civil servants and more are tenuously self-employed in the informal sector.

It is necessary, then, that I better understand Liberia's current labor market. Prior to leaving for Liberia, I will research Liberian labor market policy and poverty reduction strategies. I will also continue discussions with John F. Josiah, Deputy Minister of Administration (my current contact), and Nicholas Weekes, a former intern, regarding particularly valuable readings and studies in preparation for the trip. I will also contact Liberians residing in Ithaca. Other preparations such as determining where to live, updating my immunizations, purchasing materials, etc. will be done during this time.

I will depart for Monrovia, Liberia approximately one week after finals in Mid-May.

Goal 2

In Liberia I will work with Jackson N. Wonde, Deputy Minister for Planning and Manpower Development to develop a repeatable formula for encouraging the growth and establishment of small- and medium-sized enterprises, which is one of the Ministry of Labour's workforce

development goals. The reasons for this are simple. First, many foreign investors are holding back due to concerns about future civil unrest. However, even with the presence of foreign direct investments, Liberia can increase the establishment of Liberian-owned businesses. Second, many of the larger businesses, particularly in Monrovia, are owned by Lebanese-Liberians, some of whom send money to Lebanon. Studying how Lebanese-Liberians have developed and maintained their businesses may yield lessons to be applied to small or start-up Liberian enterprises. In addition to generating income, Liberian enterprises will increase the capacity of their owners, employ other Liberians and encourage re-investment in Liberia.

Goal 3

Finally, I will submit a report to the Ministry of Labour detailing the above repeatable formula. The ultimate goal is to encourage more investment in and planning for small- and medium-sized enterprise development. Academically, my report could also provide the basis for my thesis.

I will return to Cornell in mid-August, approximately one week before classes begin on August 27th.

Budget

My total budget is \$3,075, broken down as follows.

TRANSPORTATION COSTS

\$1,700 – Airfare: NYC-London-Freetown (various carriers, roundtrip)

\$570 – Airfare: Freetown-Monrovia (Slok Air, roundtrip)

\$85 – Bus ticket: Ithaca-NYC (Shortline Bus, roundtrip)

\$2,355 – Total Transportation Costs (Ithaca-Monrovia-Ithaca)

If the ILR International Experience Grants Committee is able, I would be extremely grateful for assistance with living expenses. While there are more than is listed, the most expensive items include food, rent and potential visits to the hospital. However, I have only included the cost of food because there is a strong chance that rent will be free and there is no way to predict whether or not I will become sick enough to warrant a hospital visit.

LIVING EXPENSES

\$720 – Food (Nicholas estimated \$70/wk but ate a lot of meat; I estimate \$60/wk)

unknown – Rent/mo. (Nicholas paid no rent and I am looking to do the same)

unknown – Medical expenses

\$720 – Total Living Expenses (for 3 months)

Supporting materials

Confirmation of internship from Mr. Tom O'Toole, CIPA

Letter of recommendation from Professor Gary Fields