



The Rafiki Foundation, Inc.

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UNICEF in Liberia on Tuesday January 22, launched its "State of the World's Children 2008 Report" at the Ministry of Gender and Development with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and other dignitaries in attendance. One of many things the report says is that "investing in children is also wise from an economic perspective." In addition, it states, "improvements in child health and survival can also foster more balanced population dynamics. When parents are convinced that their children will survive, they are more likely to have fewer children and provide better care to those they do have and countries can invest more in each child." The report goes on to indicate that child survival requires many things. "The first is health because in the absence of this the child may not live. The next aspect is the upbringing of children, a stage which includes their schooling. Today, as UNICEF presented this report, Liberia is faced with numerous problems regarding the plight of the thousands of children" (fifty percent of Liberia's population is fourteen years old and younger).

A commentary from Phillip Wesseh, a writer for the Liberian paper the Inquirer, states "Most of the school going children are out of school, selling in the streets as bread winners of their families. It is also said that there is a high rate of illiteracy. These, obviously pose a great challenge in this country. More noticeably, the many years of conflict in this country have exacerbated the situation with many of our future leaders believing in violence as a panacea for whatever situation. Because violence has been institutionalized over the years, the young ones have grown only to know about violence because it is this kind of environment they were born into. Certainly I agree with UNICEF that 'when children are well nourished and cared for and provided with a safe and stimulating environment, they are more likely to survive, to have less diseases and fewer illnesses, and to fully develop thinking, language, emotional and social skills.' Likewise, it is true that 'when they enter school they are more likely to succeed. And later in life, they have a greater chance of becoming creative and productive members of society.'" (The Inquirer January 24, 2008)

Dear Friends and Family,

We start with these words from the local newspaper "The Inquirer" because they are so relevant to the work we have been called to be a part of in Liberia. It is our hope that they provide the backdrop to help you know and understand the overwhelming need for the work Rafiki is doing in Liberia.

Each morning we wake and have to tell ourselves "we live in Liberia now." The initial entry has been very easy because of the work of our teammates (Donna and Ed Bland and Joanne Colvin) to prepare a place for us to stay as well as a place for us to work. It has also been less stressful as we have been met by the *harmattan*, a phenomenon that dries the air, bringing down the humidity to seventy percent and creates a cloud cover that brings the temperature down to seventy-eight degrees Fahrenheit.

Our days are filled with making preparation for our new home. This includes ordering custom made furniture, selecting curtain material, overseeing the finishing of the woodwork, cleaning the cement floors, and installing appliances. Tarry will even be installing a solar powered hot water heater this week along with connecting the propane lines and tanks to operate our refrigerator, stove and clothes

dryer. There are lots of details to attend to in setting up our first home together.

Enough about us. . . ! Let us introduce you to the seven little Rafiki children we met the first day we woke up in Liberia. The eighth Rafiki child, Benjamin, arrived during our second week making it clear to us that God intends to use this place for His purposes. We agree with the report we shared above, that investing in the children of Liberia is the

key to Liberia's future. We want to use the rest of this newsletter to introduce some of those children to you.

First there is our five-year-old Trudy. She is a girly girl. She loves her hair braided with ribbons.



TRUDY

Next is Obadiah, with Adam and Kebah. Kebah is full of energy. She has a ready smile and likes to sing.



Next are Benjamin and Michael. Benjamin is the newest child at Rafiki. We look forward to the day he gives us his first sign of "settling in" with a big smile. He and Michael will attend school also. Michael is Kebah's brother.



There are two more little girls named Anna Blessing and Karen. Many of you received a picture of Karen in our Christmas card for 2007. We will introduce Anna Blessings to you next time. All of these children are being loved and cared for by the six Rafiki Mothers staying here at the Village. We look forward to sharing more about them and the other national staff we work alongside.

As you continue to pray along with us please:

- Join us in giving thanks for our safe arrival and the arrival of all our personal bags and boxes.
- Pray for Tarry's creativity as he continues to learn construction in this environment, patching and working with the "Liberian" way of doing things.
- Pray for Charmaine as she assists Donna as the assistant ChildCare director.
- Hold up our parents in prayer as Tarry's dad recovers from open-heart surgery and his mother recovers from a mild stroke.
- Pray for all who live and work at the Rafiki Village Liberia—that these children would see how God is working in their lives.

Thank you for making it possible for us to serve together in Liberia.

With love in Christ,

Tarry and Charmaine Nelson

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