

Hi folks,

Good to talk to you again tonight.

I wanted to pass on the information about LEAD's new contract with the World Food Program (WFP). Upon returning from the US to Liberia, there was a call from WFP who had received LEAD's name from the UNDP as a someone who could help them administrate a new grant that they had been given to give business loans to women with HIV/AIDS. They were evaluating LEAD and one other NGO in town. After several meetings and submitting a budget for what this would cost them to have us do this, they decided to award the contract to us. (This was even after I recommended that they separate it out - let us do the training, and have the other NGO do the loan administration as they have more experience in working with group loans.) The contract will pay us to run a three day class, covering all expenses, will cover the entire cost of the loan, and will pay us a monthly fee to collect on the loans. It is expected that there will be 70 women in the class, organized into groups of five, with a total of 14 new businesses. Each woman will receive \$150, which whene multiplied by five, means \$750 to start their new business. Not a bad amount to start with. The loan will be for a short period (4 months) due to the unknown of the health of these women, and unfortunately for them, carries a 48% (no that's not a typo) interest rate, which works out to 4% per month.

LEAD is very excited about this opportunity. It gets our foot in the door with some of these larger NGOs. It gives us a chance to show what we can do at no risk to us - we aren't out any money to do it, only time. There is no worry about default - other than it not looking good for LEAD. We do not have to do any recruitment either. The one potential problematic area is in the disbursement of the loans - they don't want cash given but want us to make the purchases and distribute them. This may cause some headache and vehicle issues, but we'll see how it goes.

But mostly, it's an exciting opportunity to work with a population that has experienced prejudice and loss of hope - the opportunity to be involved in working with them to create a future is exciting.

We covet your prayers on this. We will have our first two day training on August 9 and 10. Please begin to pray for these women, that this may be a time of drawing near to God, of growing in hope for their future, and a time of sharing and support as well.

Blessings,  
Renita