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Ellen to Receive Africare Award

The Inquirer (Monrovia)

NEWS
10 October 2007
Posted to the web 10 October 2007

President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia will be the Guest of Honor at this year's Africare annual fundraising event, The Bishop John T. Walker Memorial Dinner on October 18, 2007. On this occasion, President Sirleaf will receive the Bishop Walker Humanitarian Award.

A Press Release from Africare-Liberia says The Bishop Walker Dinner is the largest single annual benefit event for Africa held in the United States; the venue has always been Washington, DC.

The gathering of those committed to Africa - former ambassadors and USAID Mission Directors, members of the diplomatic corps and the international development community, as well as academics, journalists, businessmen, and NGO executives - makes for an extraordinary event.

The Bishop Walker Dinner brings together people of goodwill who are united in their concern for Africa and their desire that the United States be a constructive partner to the people of the African Continent.

The Africare Dinner was first held in October 1990 in memory of the Rt. Rev. John T. Walker the first African-American Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington who served as Africare's Board Chairman for 15 years until his death on September 30, 1989.

The dinner has since become Africare's major fund-raising activity each year and attracts some 2,000 people from all walks of life. More than $1 million is generated annually in support of Africare's mission in Africa.

As the 2007 recipient of the Bishop Walker Humanitarian Award, President Sirleaf will join the list of other distinguished leaders and advocates for Africa, including Bishop Desmond Tutu, Sargent Shriver, Nelson Mandela, the late Rev. Leon Sullivan, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Dorothy Height, Andrew Young, Graca Michael, James Washington, Dr. Louis Sullivan, Harry Belafonte, Bill and Melinda Gates, Senator Richard Lugar and Representative Donald Payne and the 2006 honoree and former United States President Bill Clinton..

Africare was founded 37 years ago, as a direct response to the draught of 1970 that was causing widespread famine and suffering in the Republic of Niger and in neighboring Sahelian countries.

Two Americans, Dr. William D. Kirker and his wife Barbara sought to help drought victims and formed Africare to provide medical services and health care to remote villages in Niger. The then-President of Niger, Hamani Diori quickly sought the assistance of his good friend Mr. C.

Payne Lucas, former Peace Corps Director in Niger and then Africa Director for Peace Corps.

The vision then became an organization which would promote cooperation between the peoples of African descent in the Unites States and all the peoples of Africa. Mr. Lucas became Africare's first president and served in that capacity for over thirty years. The current president, Mr. Julius E. Coles, is a former USAID official in Liberia and Mission Director in Senegal and other countries, and has been a close personal friend of President Sirleaf for 35 years.

Africare currently operates offices in twenty-five (25) African countries. It has always placed a special emphasis on improving the quality of life for rural Africans, although its mandate is dictated by a country's and/or a region's specific development needs. Africare manages projects which include community-based assistance to AIDS orphans to emergency, multifaceted food security projects, water and sanitation initiatives, and capacity building for local organizations.

In Liberia, Africare is implementing a 5-year USAID-funded $10 million dollar Improved Community Health Care Project (ICHP) which provides support for the rehabilitation and recovery of Liberia's health-care delivery system, focusing on maternal and child health.

The ICH Project provides support to over 37 Ministry of Health clinics in rural Montserrado, Bong and Nimba Counties. In conjunction with ICHP activities, Africare is managing smaller grants furnished by UNICEF, UNFPA, and WHO.

Africare is also involved with the nation's food security situation: Africare is a member of the Liberia Integrated Assistance Program (LIAP) Consortium, led by Catholic Relief Services, and including Samaritan's Purse, another US-based private voluntary organization. The donor agency is the Food for Peace division of USAID. Africare's focus is on agriculture, aquaculture, health and nutrition and infrastructure rehabilitation in Nimba County.

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