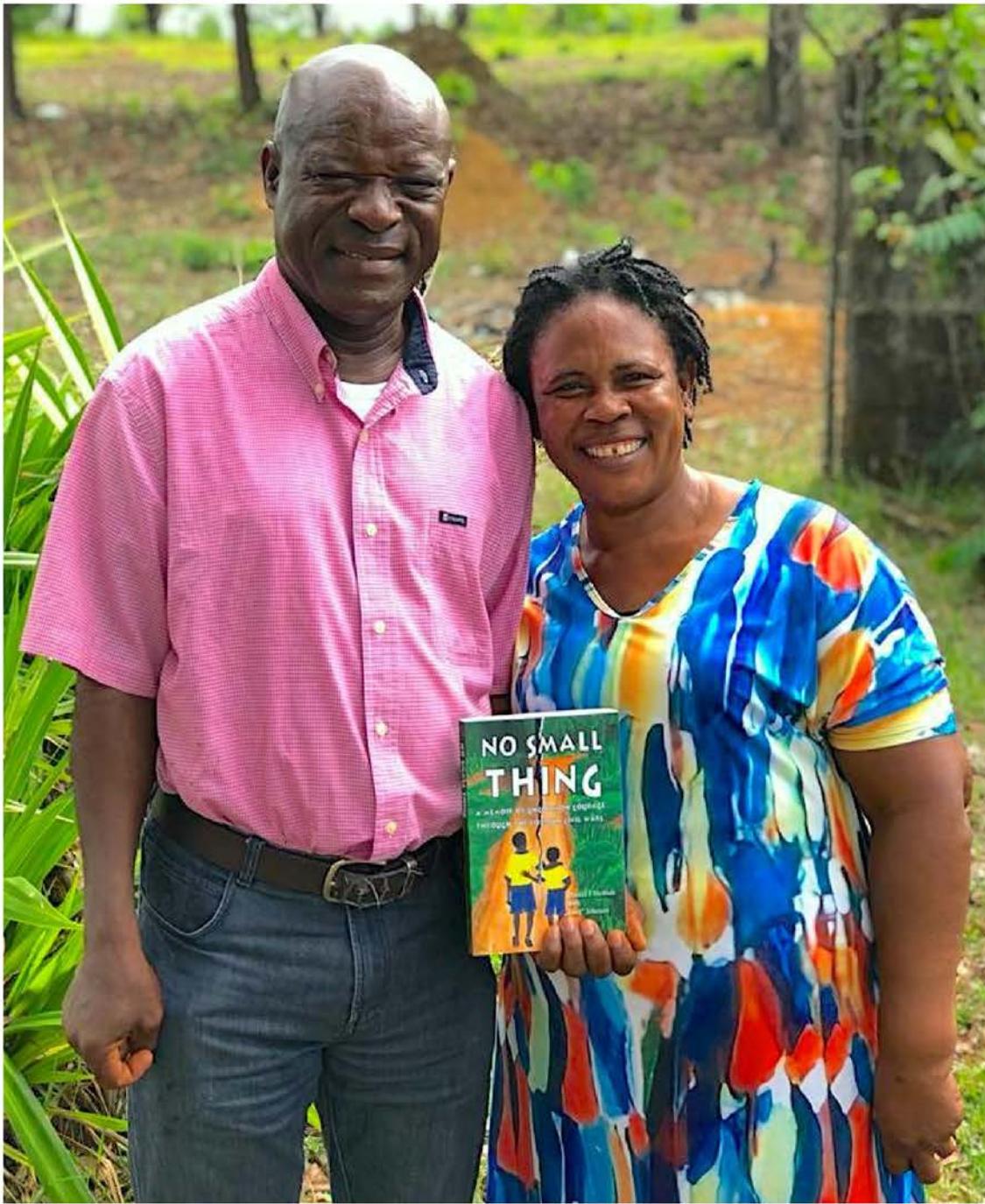


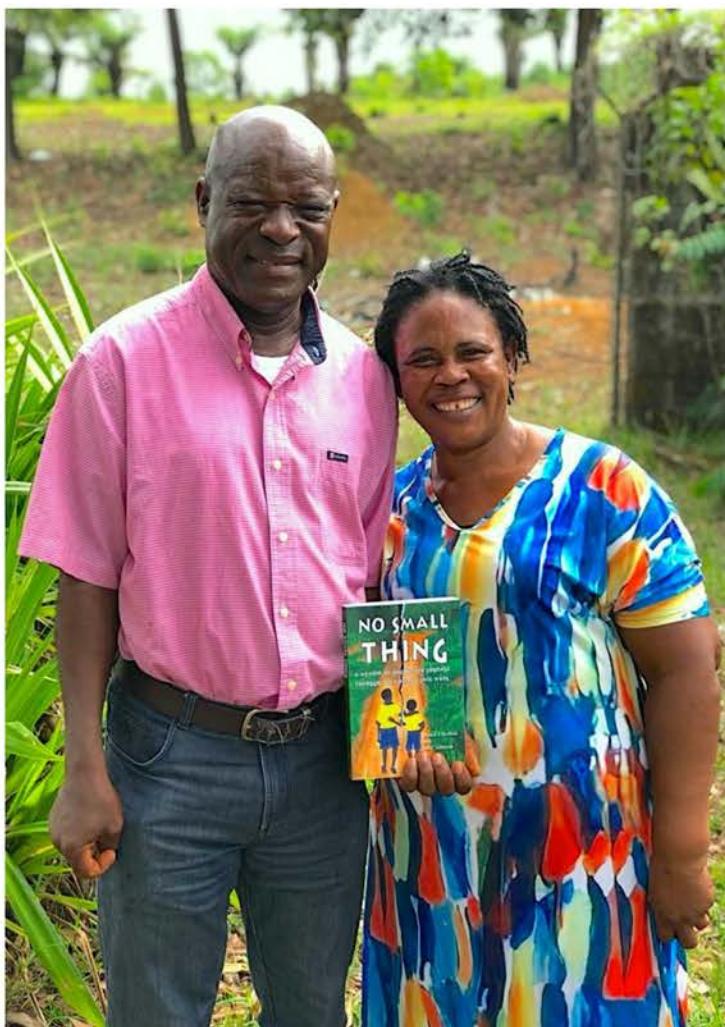
No Small Thing

Resource Guide



Hello!

This informational resource was created to accompany No Small Thing: A Memoir Of Uncommon Courage Through The Liberian Civil Wars, written by Jan C. Johnson with Daniel J. Mellish. The book isn't required to enjoy this resource, though; Anyone who wants to learn more about Liberia, West Africa is welcome to read through these pages!



"No Small Thing recounts the life of Daniel Mellish, from struggling schoolboy through the horrors and deprivation of Liberia's two civil wars. See how his struggles were redeemed as he found an avenue for relieving others' suffering."

-Jan C. Johnson

Where In The World?

LIBERIA

Continent: **Africa**

Officially Known As: **Republic of Liberia**

Border Countries: **Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire**

Coastline: **Atlantic Ocean**



At A Glance

Area: **111,369 km² (43,000 sq mi)**

Population: **>5 million people**

Capital City: **Monrovia**

Other Large Cities: **Buchanan, Ganta, Gbarnga, Kakata, Harbel**

Government Type: **Republic**

Constitution: **6 January 1986**

Official Language: **English**

Currency: **Liberian Dollar (LRD)**

Per capita income: **\$1,250 USD**

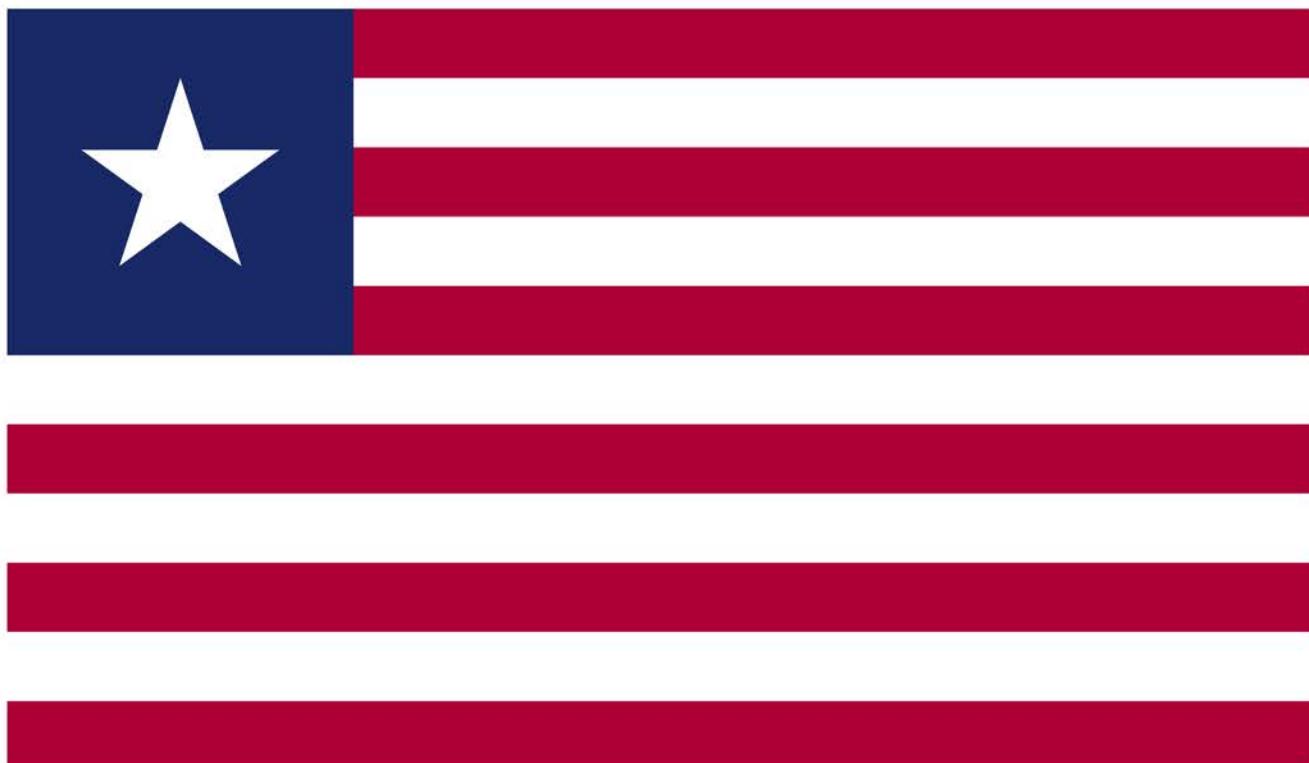


Redemption Beach in Monrovia.

A view of Waterside Market, a district of Monrovia, the capital of Liberia.

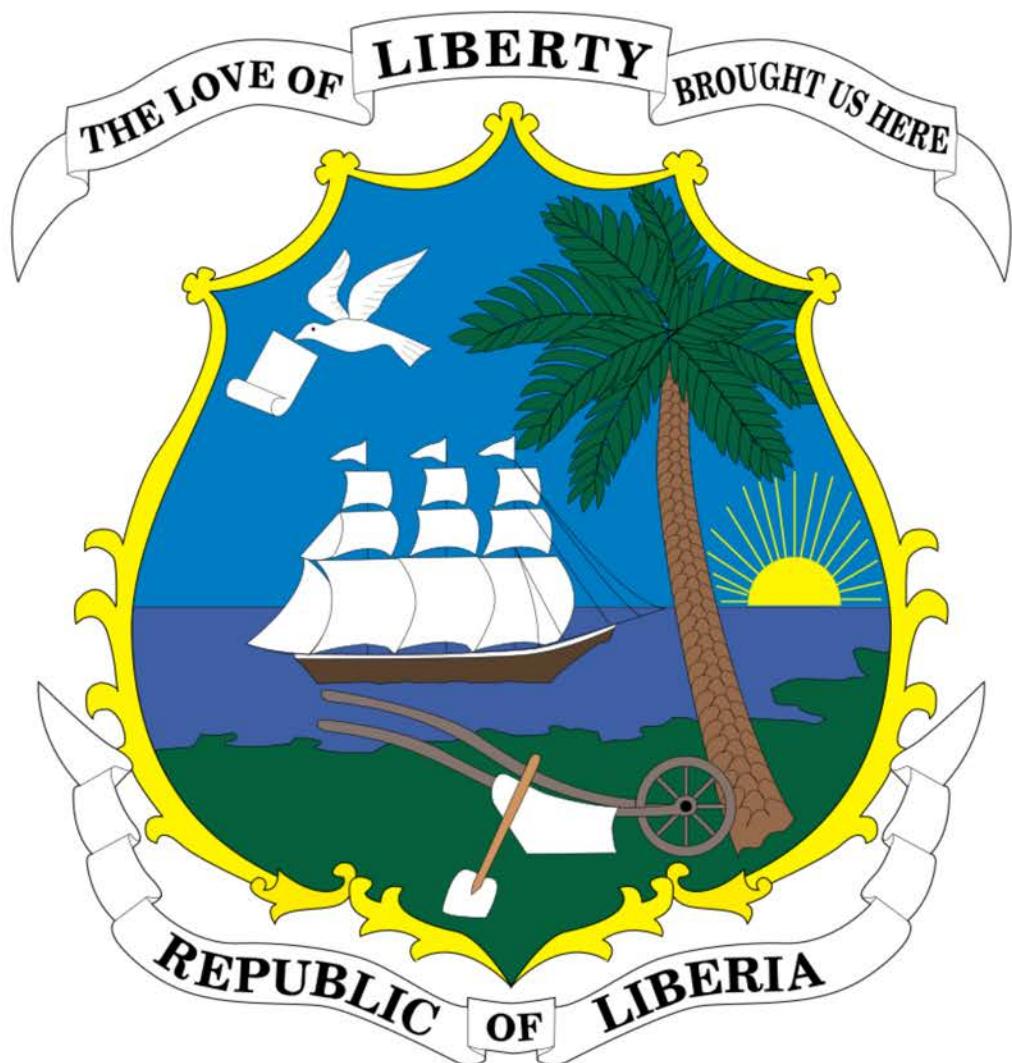
Flag of Liberia

The Liberia's national flag is called "LONE STAR". The eleven horizontal stripes represent the eleven signers of the declaration of independence and the constitution of the Republic of Liberia. The blue field symbolizes the continent of Africa, with the five pointed white star depicting Liberia as the first "independent republic" on the continent of Africa. The red color designates "valor", the white, "purity"; and the blue, "fidelity". Although these representations are uniquely Liberian, the flag itself is a replica of "Old Glory", the national flag of the United States.



Seal of Liberia

The national seal consists of a palm tree representing the natural resources of Liberia, a plow and spade which illustrate the means of developing those resources, a dove with a scroll, which represents communication and living in peaceful coexistence with other nations, the emerging sun, which represents the birth of Liberia, a sailing ship representing arriving settlers, and the motto "The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here" which represents the wishes, dreams, and hopes of arriving settlers.



Geography

Located on the Equator, Liberia is a tropical and coastal country with many biomes. There are mangrove swamps and beaches along the coast, wooded hills and semideciduous shrublands as you move further inland, low mountains in the north east of the country, and dense tropical rainforests and plateaus in the interior. Liberia has 40% of West Africa's rain forest.

There are only two seasons in Liberia--Rainy and Dry. From November to May it is hot and humid with little rain. From June to October it is rainy. There can be as many as 120" of rain in a single month during Rainy Season. Temperatures vary from 65 to 85 on the coast during Rainy Season, and 70 to over 100 in the Dry Season. Dust-laden winds, called harmattans, blow in from the Sahara during this season as well.



Sandy beach with tropical coastline and city areas.

Rainforest mountains with low hanging foggy clouds.



What countries make up West Africa?

Geography - Animals

Western Africa's biodiversity hotspot, Liberia boasts a variety of habitats that 140 mammals, over 600 bird species, plus 75 reptiles and amphibians call home. Offshore, scores of south Atlantic marine animals dart around its coastal waters, including the African manatee.

The national animal of Liberia is the Asiatic Lion. There are many endangered and vulnerable animals in Liberia, including the pygmy hippopotamus, chimpanzee, and the elusive Liberian Mongoose.



Aellen's Roundleaf Bat
African Grey Parrot
Desert Locust
Pygmy Hippopotamus
African Jacana
Royal (Ball) Python
Asiatic Lion
Liberian Mongoose
African Golden Cat
Chimpanzee



What other animals live in Liberia?



Economy

Liberia is one of the poorest countries in the world with a high unemployment rate (85%) and rampant corruption at every level of the Liberian government. The country is recovering from a 14-year civil war where 250,000 people were killed and many thousands more fled the fighting.

Liberia's economy is constrained by a small domestic market, lack of adequate infrastructure, high transportation costs, and poor trade links with neighboring countries. This makes it difficult to bring in outside resources. However, Liberia has the second-largest maritime registry in the world behind Panama. The Liberian Registry is comprised of 5,600+ vessels aggregating over 242 million gross tons, representing 15 percent of the world's ocean-going fleet.



The backside of a Liberian one hundred dollar bill.

The currency code for the Liberian dollar is LRD. LR is the country's code and D stands for Dollar.

What is the current exchange rate of the Liberian Dollar?

Economy - Info

Natural resources: Deposits of iron ore, rubber, timber, diamonds, gold and tin, hydropower; crude oil along Atlantic Coast



Agriculture products: Coffee, cocoa, sugarcane, rice, cassava, palm oil, bananas, plantains, citrus, pineapple, sweet potatoes, corn, and vegetables



Industries: Iron ore, rubber, palm oil processing, timber, diamonds, gold, beverages, construction



Exports: rubber, timber, iron, diamonds, cocoa, coffee



Exports Partners: Poland 32.9%, China 20.7%, India 9.3%, USA 5.1%, Greece 4.7%, France 4.3% (2015)



Imports: fuels, chemicals, machinery, transportation equipment, manufactured goods; foodstuffs



Imports Partners: Singapore 28.7%, China 16%, South Korea 15.3%, Japan 10.3%, Philippines 6.6% (2015)

Rubber, Diamonds, Oil Pumping, Coffee Beans, Gold, Cocoa Beans

What kind of resources does America import from Liberia?



History

The American Colonization Society (ACS), dedicated to the resettlement of free people of color outside the United States, was founded in 1816. The ACS used private funds donated by wealthy white contributors to "purchase" land in west Africa and recruit African-American settlers, the first group of whom arrived in 1822. Although white administrators appointed by the ACS governed the colony in the early years, in 1847 the settlers declared independence and became the first sovereign black republic in Africa. Along with the settlers, there were immigrants from other African countries to the north and east, as well as many indigenous Liberian tribes.

Beginning in 1989, Liberia was plagued by years of civil unrest. Wars broke out and lasted for many years! The turmoil has been very disruptive to Liberia's growth, and the country is still faced with the challenging task of rebuilding societal and economic structures ravaged by the war.

The Civil Wars in Liberia saw thousands of children being forced to participate in armed conflict, resulting in an estimated figure of 21,000 child soldiers counted as in need of assistance after the fighting finally concluded.



Who is the capital of Liberia named after?

Culture

The people of Liberia are classified into three major groups: the indigenous people, who are in the majority and who migrated from the western Sudan in the late Middle Ages; black immigrants from the United States (known historically as Americo-Liberians) and the West Indies; and other black immigrants from neighboring western African states who came during the anti-slave-trade campaign and European colonial rule. This means that there are many cultural practices in Liberia.

A common thing that's shared amongst nearly everyone is rice. Rice is the staple food of Liberia and forms the basis of most meals. Meat or fish is used as a garnish or ingredient, rather than being the focus of the dish. Snacks, if available, typically consist of mangoes, bananas, sugarcane, coconut, fried plantain or cassava, and pineapple.



What do you like to eat with rice?

Culture - Families

Families in Liberia look different across the country. In more settled areas, especially where the immigrants from America settled, the law says a man can only have one wife, but in tribal or more rural areas, customary law allows a husband to have up to four wives. It's a strong belief across the nation that wives are expected to produce children for their husbands, and the primary wife in a polygamous marriage often raises all of the husband's children together.

Babies in Liberia are constantly carried, tied to the back of the mothers or another care giver. Children take on chores at an early age and are expected to learn through observation and imitation (see and do) rather than through formal verbal instruction and the asking of questions. In fact, there are a large number of children that, unfortunately, never go to school.



Why do so many Liberian children never go to school?



Culture - Housing

In the cities, especially the capital of Monrovia, imposing public buildings from the prewar period were built mostly in the post-World War II International Style, including the Executive Mansion, which became an armed fortress during the civil war. Houses from the nineteenth century are similar to antebellum architecture of the American South, with verandas and classical columns. The civil war reduced many buildings to ruins and left others occupied by homeless refugees.



While rural communities still contain examples of traditional round huts with thatched conical roofs, most newer houses have a rectangular floor plan and are roofed with sheets of corrugated zinc or tin. Wattle and daub construction, in which a lattice of sticks is packed with mud and covered with clay or cement, is the most common building method regardless of the shape of the structure, but many people aspire to a house built of cement cinder blocks and may spend years acquiring the blocks. Rural communities have a "palaver hut," an open-sided roofed structure that functions as a town hall for public discussions and the hearing of court cases.



Culture - Religion

The Constitution of Liberia provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The main religions represented in the country are Christianity, Islam, and traditional tribal practices, including spirit & ancestor worship, witchcraft, and magic use. There is also a small number of people that believe in the Baha'i faith.

Some societal abuses or discrimination based on religious belief or practice do occur. Despite this, a large number of foreign missionary groups work openly and freely in the country.



Christian Liberians at a church service; an Islamic mosque in a town; a masked Poro dancer.

What is it called when the government respects religion?

Culture - Celebrations

Liberia has several public holidays. Some are recognized in other areas of the world, while some are exclusive to Liberia. There are also many holidays and festivals throughout the various tribes and ethnic groups.

New Year's Day

January 1

Armed Forces Day

February 11th

Decoration Day

2nd Wednesday in March

J.J. Roberts Birthday

**1st President of Liberia –
March 15th**

Fast & Prayer Day

2nd Friday in April

National Unification Day

April 14th



Do you celebrate any of these holidays?



Culture - Celebrations

Independence Day
July 26th (1847)



Flag Day
August 24th

Thanksgiving Day
1st Thursday in November



W.V.S. Tubman Birthday
November 29th

Christmas Day
December 25th



What is your favorite way to celebrate something?



Government

Liberia is a democratic republic unitary state with a presidential representative and a multi-party system. The constitution of 1847 was patterned on the American constitution and provided for a separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The country's legal system is a mixed system of common law (based on Anglo-American law) and customary law (based on unwritten tribal practice). At the local level, each county is administered by a superintendent appointed by the president and further divided into districts, chiefdoms, and clans. The system of "native" administration retains much of the older system of indirect rule in which local chiefs are empowered by the central government to collect taxes and judge minor court cases.



The Liberian Capitol Building

The president is elected by popular vote for a six-year term (renewable). The cabinet is appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. The Senate has 30 seats, with members elected by popular vote to serve nine-year terms. The House of Representatives has 73 seats, with members elected by popular vote to serve six-year terms.

What is a cabinet in government?



Power Sector

Hydropower was common in Liberia before the civil wars.

Liberia's civil war, which ended in 2003, destroyed much of the country's power sector. Now, there is almost no mains electricity available in the country. In fact, much of the power is purchased and imported from neighboring countries like Sierra Leone. Outside of the Capitol, nearly all power is generated by gas-run generators or solar systems. It is dangerous and fires from faulty wiring occur often.

In the capital city of Monrovia, less than 20% of the population has access to electricity. That number is less than 5% in the rural areas. The Government of Liberia has been working for many years to rebuild the infrastructure, but corruption has stalled any meaningful progress.



Damaged power lines in a Liberian city.

The Mount Coffee hydroelectric plant undergoing rehabilitation after being heavily damaged. This station was built in 1967 on the St. Paul river.

What other kinds of energy resources could Liberia consider as it rebuilds its infrastructure?



Education

The long-lasting effects of the civil wars, compounded by the 2014 school closure due to the Ebola outbreak, had a huge impact on the education system. Only a few schools remained open during the conflict, mainly in urban areas, leaving thousands of children out of school. The conflict also destroyed or damaged close to 60 per cent of school buildings, including water and sanitation facilities which are key to keeping children, especially girls, in school. Teachers fled the country or took up other forms of employment.

Liberia has one of the world's highest levels of out-school children, with an estimated 15 to 20 per cent of children ages 6-14 not in school. Just over a third of preschoolers have access to early childhood learning programs, and only 54 percent of children complete primary education. Due to late entry into grade one, the vast majority of Liberia's students are older than the appropriate age for their grade and are therefore at high risk of dropping out. Universities exist but are extremely expensive for most Liberian adults.



What subjects are vital to a good education?



Health

Close to one in three children and adults live three miles or more from a health facility. Also, trained health staff is in short supply and medicines are not always available. Because of this, up to 11,000 children under the age of 5 die every year in Liberia to easily preventable diseases such as neonatal causes, malaria, pneumonia, diarrhea, and measles. The most vulnerable are newborn babies; at least a third of all under-five mortality occurs in the first month of life. Liberia has one of the world's highest rates of maternal mortality. One out of every ten women dies while pregnant, giving birth to their babies, or in the aftermath of delivery. When a mother dies, the likelihood of her baby dying increases.

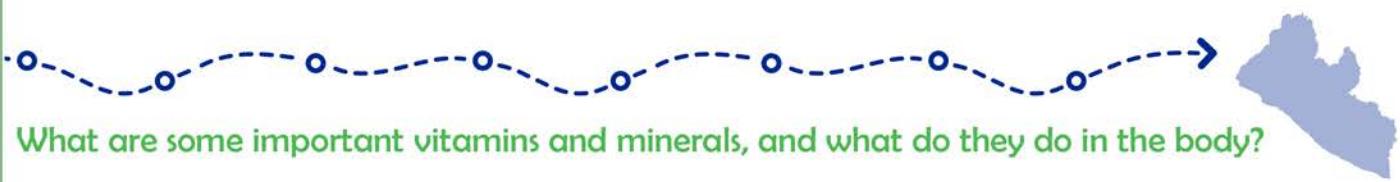


Why is access to healthcare so important?

Health - Malnutrition

One in three children under the age of 5 are stunted or too short for their age, as a result of not getting enough nutritious food over a long period of time; Liberia has one of the highest levels of stunted growth in children around the world.

Malnutrition can negatively affect a child's brain function, organ development, and immune system. Micronutrient deficiencies are also common, with 13 percent of young children lacking in Vitamin A, an essential vitamin that supports healthy immunity and eyesight. More than half of all children under 5 and close to 40 percent of women are anemic. Malnourished children have a higher risk of death from common childhood illness such as diarrhea, pneumonia, and malaria.



Health - Ebola Outbreak

In 2014-2015, Liberia experienced the worst Ebola outbreak in history. Over 4,000 people lost their lives. Ebola is extremely infectious, and can be spread by coming in contact with body fluids from an infected person, either directly or from contaminated objects, or by butchering infected animals.

Since "bush meat" is often the only source of food for some Liberians, and there is no test for infected animals, Ebola could be spread without any awareness. The medical system hadn't recovered from the civil wars, and people couldn't find space in the hospitals for their Ebola-stricken relatives, so they were forced to take care of them at home, usually without any protective gear. It was difficult to convince people to put a halt to the tradition of washing their dead relatives before burial, which also contributed to the spread of the virus.

The Ebola outbreak severely impacted the provision of healthcare services and caused setbacks in the treatment and control of other serious diseases, including HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria. If the deaths from these additional diseases that were the effect of no available medical care were counted, there's no telling what the actual number of deaths contributed to the outbreak would be.



What are the symptoms of Ebola?

Liberian Life In Pictures

Even though Liberia has faced many challenges in the past and has many more to face in the future, it is a beautiful country with fantastic people! It can be a great place, and many that live there are happy.



Liberian Life In Pictures



Liberian Life In Pictures



Liberian Life In Pictures



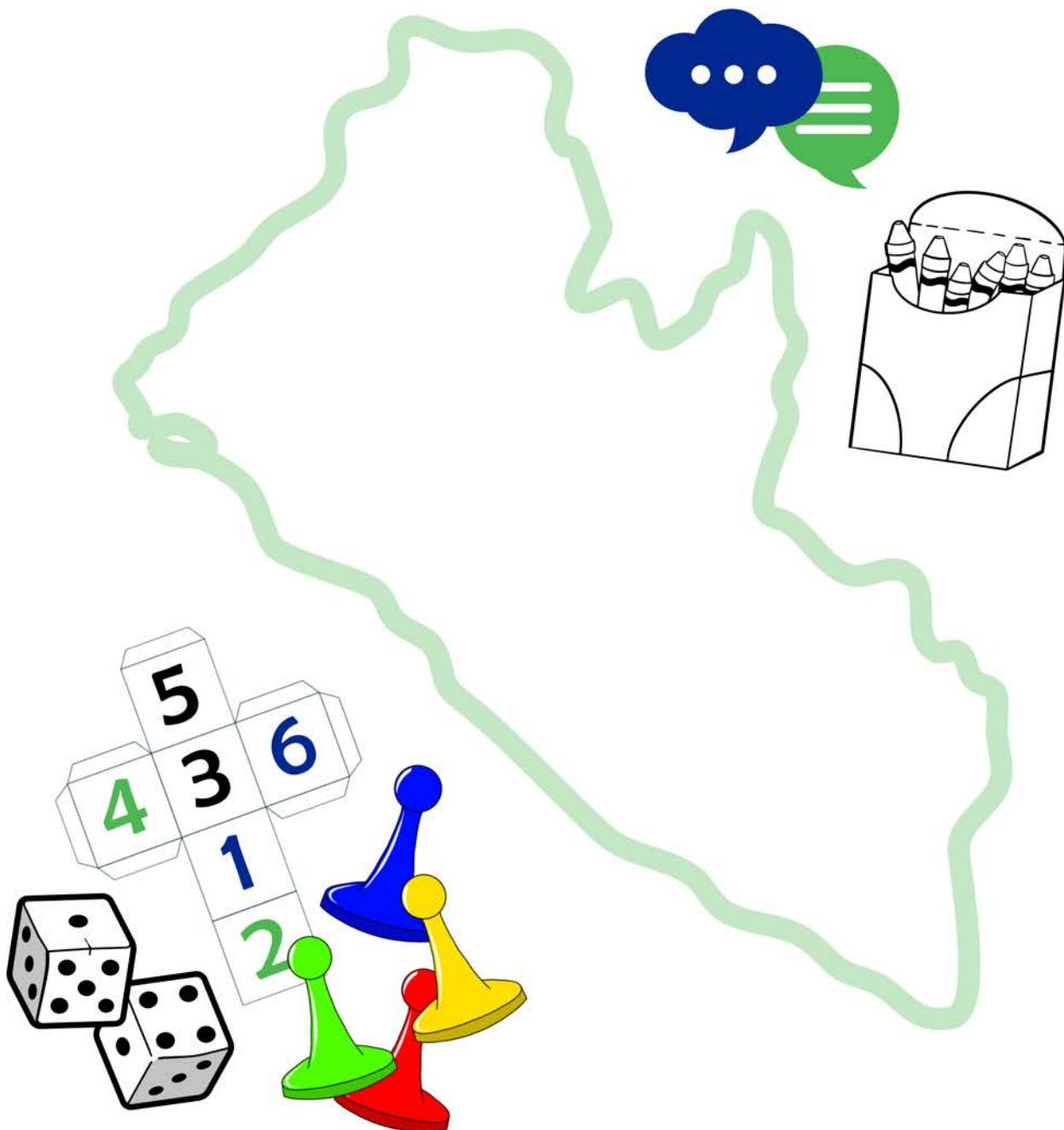
Sources & Further Reading Links



- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberia>
- <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/liberia/>
- <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/liberia.htm>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/liberia/>
- https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/liberia/pdf/CDC_Liberia_FactSheet.pdf
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- <https://www.unicef.org/liberia/combating-malnutrition>
- <https://www.unicef.org/liberia/child-maternal-and-newborn-health>
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- <https://borgenproject.org/corruption-in-liberia/>
- <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1355&context=dissertations>
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- <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2014/12/16/371174806/a-game-of-ludo-helps-liberians-catch-a-break-from-ebola>
- <https://lhsliberia.com/hydrology-for-the-curious/hydropower/>
- <http://www.gaboronedclaration.com/liberia>
- <https://a-z-animals.com/animals/location/africa/liberia/>
- <https://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/LIBERIA.html#SourcesofLawinLiberia>

*Some information may be sensitive for young children. Please use discretion and preview content first.

Interactives & Printables



Liberian English

Beg

- solicit; plead; a request - "I beg you." (Pleaded.); "I begged him." (I pleaded with him.); "He came to me with a beg." (He came to make a request of me.)

Bossmen

- anyone who is the head of something

Carry

- take; convey - "Carry me." (Take me.)

Da-me

- "It is me."

Da-nat

- "That is not."

Different different

- varied; many kinds - "In Monrovia, the people are different-different."

For true-o

- really; actually; a fact - "For true?" (Is that so?)

Getting me clear

- "Do you understand me?"

I getting you clear

- "Yes, I understand you."

In the house

- privately; within the family - "The matter was settled in the house."

Quick-quick

- right away; on time; hurry

Small small

- slowly but surely; a little; somewhat

Too-fine

- excellent; wonderful; magnificent

Trying

- trying; getting along; so-so - In response to "how are you?"

Trying small

- hanging in there; struggling but trying to make it

Vexed

- angry

Wait small

- "Hang on a second."

Who-dat

- "Who is that?"

For more Liberian English definitions, check out this link:

<https://www.universaloutreachfoundation.org/liberian-english>

To hear Liberian English spoken:

<https://www.facebook.com/johnmarksheppard/videos/10157830110156891>



Liberian Greeting

When greeting someone in Liberia, you would do the special handshake below and say "Morning-o, how de day?" It is very common to add an "O" to the end of words in Liberian English.



1 - Shake hands once the American way.



2 - Switch to an overhand grip.

3 - Switch back to an American grip.

4 - Touch pointer and middle fingers as you move out of the handshake.



5 - Pinch each other's pointer and middle fingers with your thumbs.

6 - Perform a snap as you continue to pull your hand away.

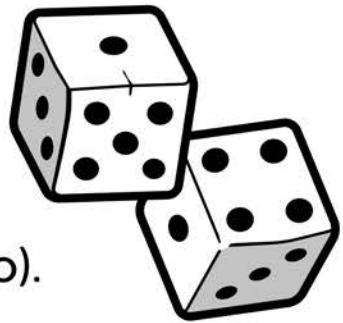


7 - Fist bump to finish

Carvings of the Liberian handshake are a popular souvenir. These are made by hand and stained with shoe polish.

Having A Little Fun

In Liberia, a popular board game for two to four players is Ludo (pronounced LOO-doo). Ludo is similar to Parcheesi or Sorry.



According to the roll of the dice, players race their pieces around the track on a board, taking turns of course. If a player's piece lands on another player's piece, it's bumped back to the start. When they get back to their matching home zone, they zoom up to the finishing square. The first to get all of their pieces to the square wins!

Ludo isn't just for kids. Lots of adults play it, too! Many adults, especially those that struggle to find jobs, play Ludo to take their mind off of their struggles.



Try For Yourself

Print the next few pages, cut out the elements, and play a game of Ludo with your friends or family!

Rules

- Each player chooses a color. Place your pieces on the circles in your colored box (it looks like a diagonal square with four dots).
- Use your favorite method of choosing who goes first! Play flows in a clockwise manner.
- You must roll a 6 on the die for one of your pieces to leave the box. If you don't roll a 6, the next player gets a chance to try for a 6.
- Once you roll your first 6, move a piece from your box to the board path square marked with your color and the word START. You also get to roll again! Move your piece the number of squares shown on the dice, following the direction of the arrow.
- As the game continues, whenever you roll a 6, you can either move a piece around the board OR you can move another one of your pieces from your box to your starting square. You also get to roll again!
- You can move any of your pieces on your turn, as long as they have been released from the box.

rules continued on next page



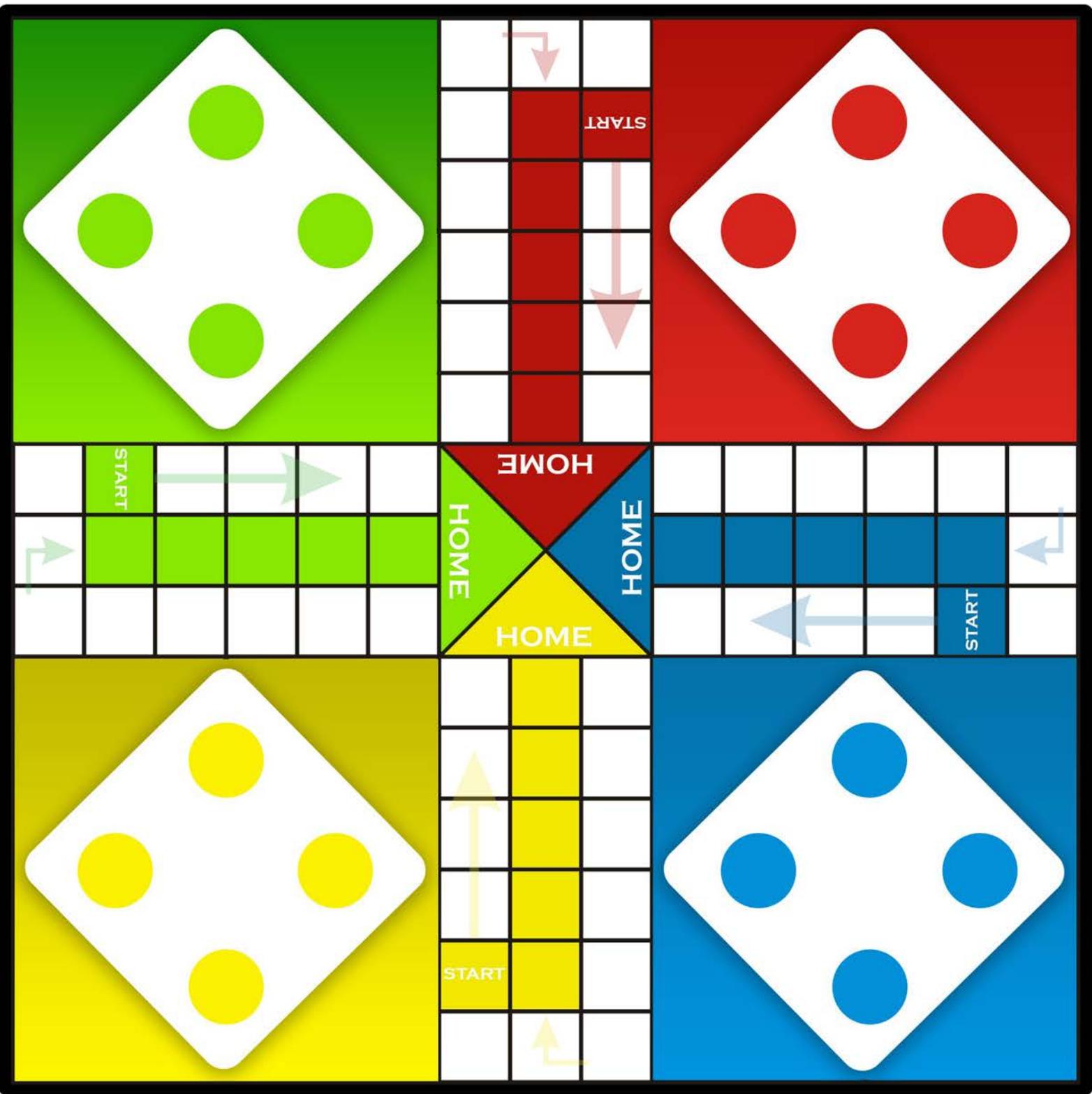
Rules, continued

- If you land on a space that is already taken by someone else's piece, send their piece back to their box and take the space!
- If you land on a space that is already occupied by one of your own pieces, it forms a block. Place your piece on top of your other piece. No other player can land on or pass this space.
- When your piece has been around the entire board path, move your piece up the row of colored squares that lead to your home triangle, following the turn of the arrow. Once inside this path, your piece cannot be sent back to your box by other player. Only you can move your pieces into your colored path.
- You must roll the exact number needed to land your piece on your home triangle, marked with your color and the word HOME.
- The first player to get all their pieces into their home triangle wins the game.

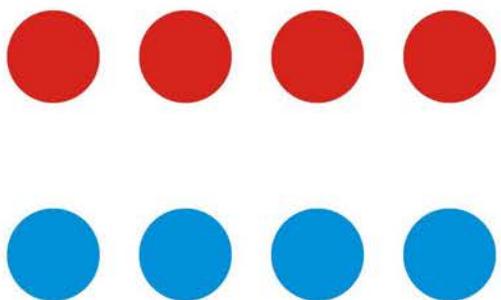
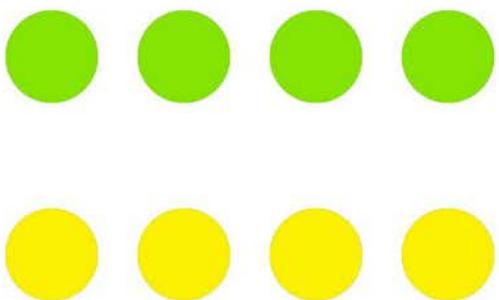
Optional Rule

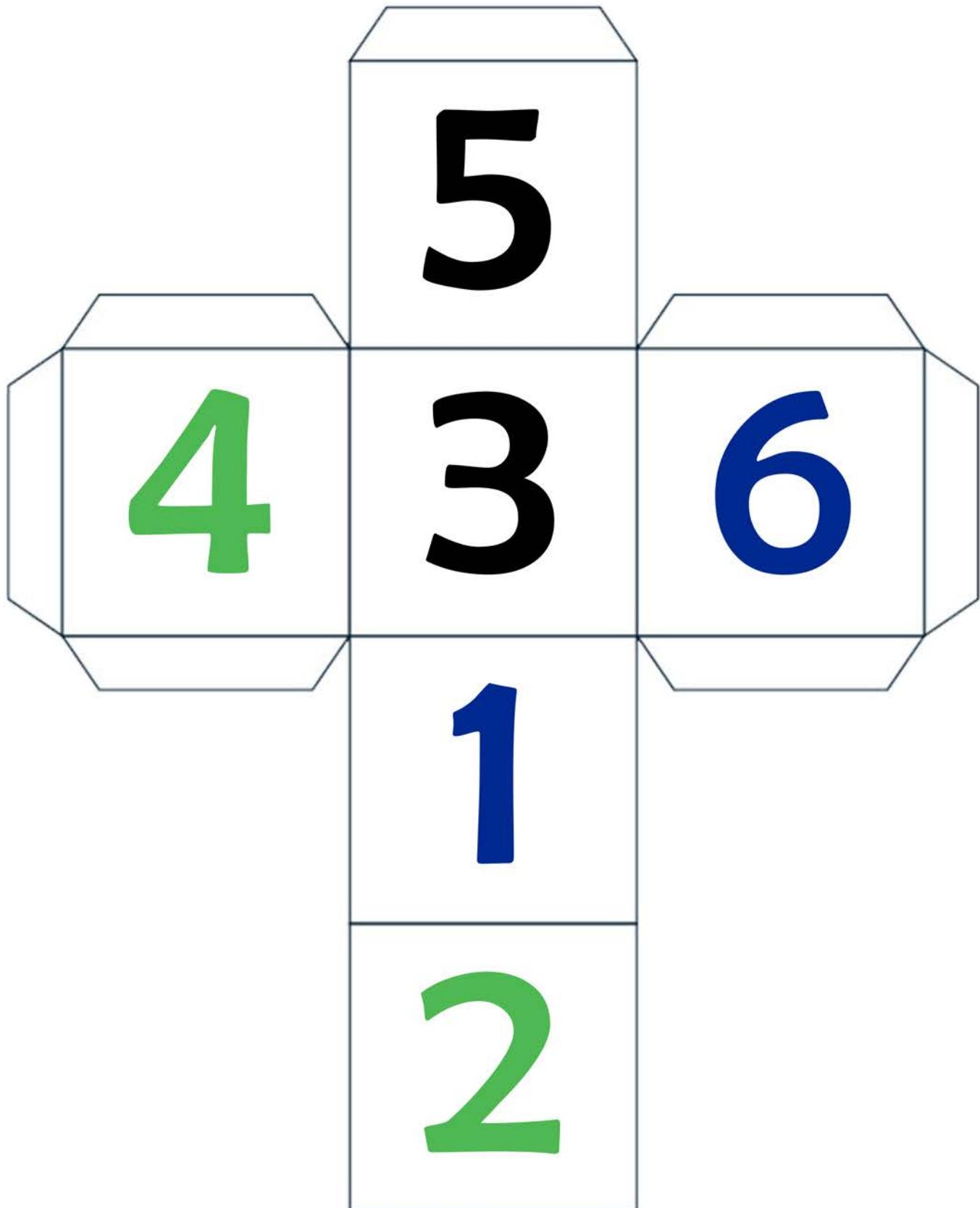
If you are playing with young children, you can speed up the game by moving pieces out of your box by rolling a 1 or a 6.





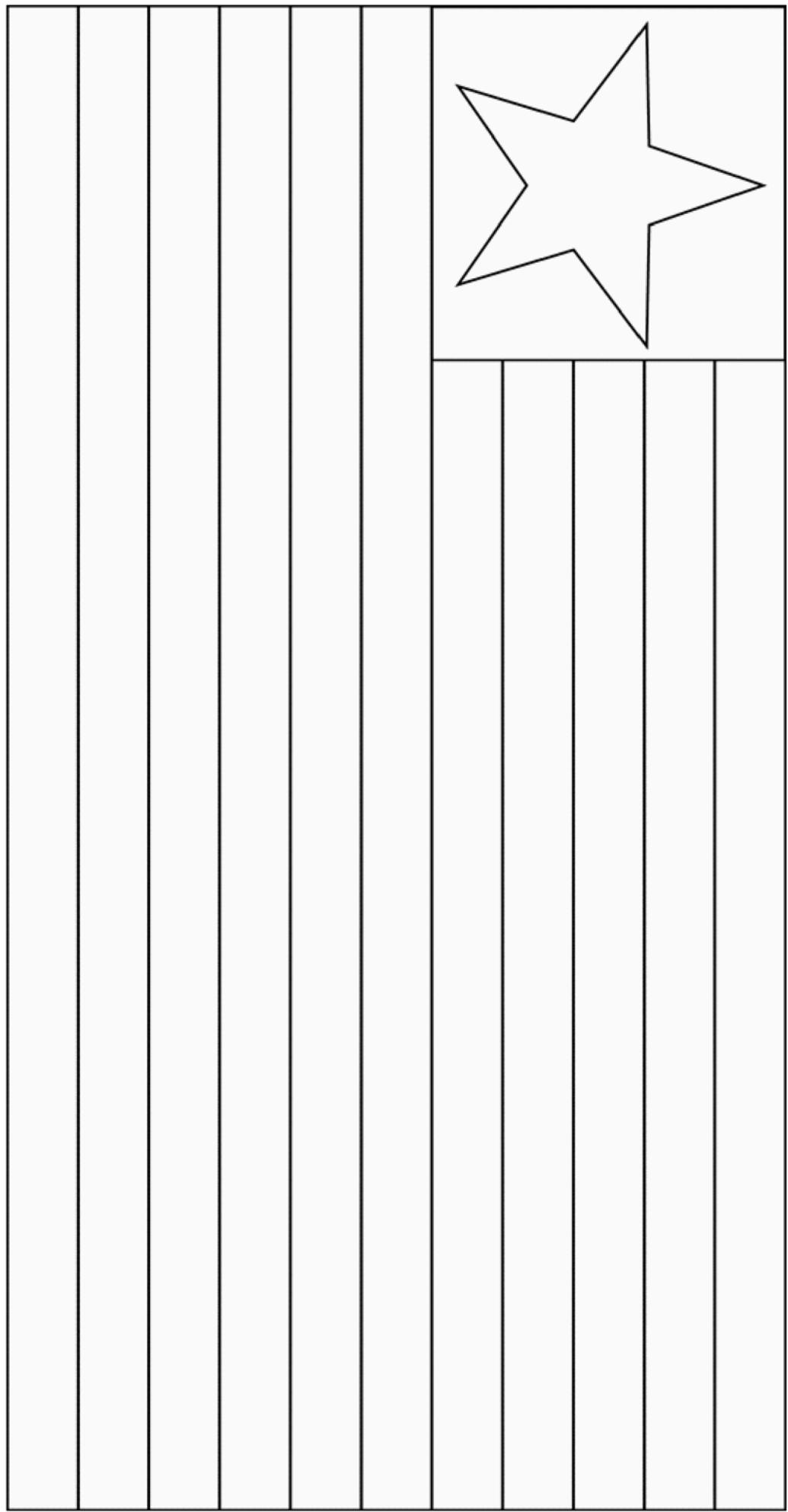
Cut out the board
and each
individual piece
for the four
colors.





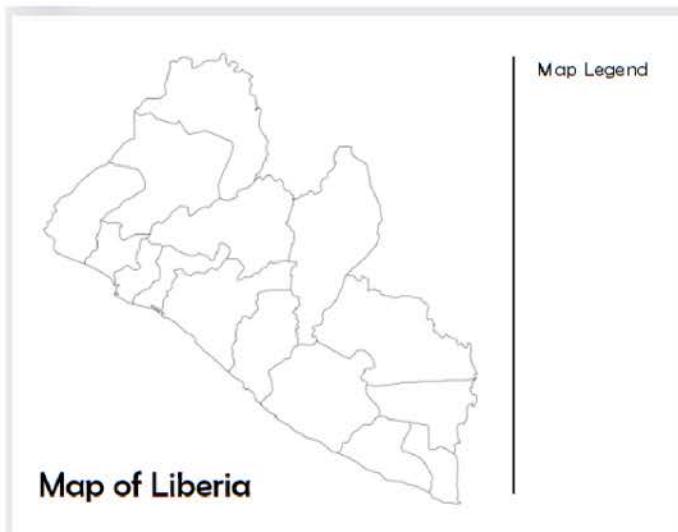
After cutting out the die, fold and either glue or tape along the edges.

Flag of Liberia



The colors of the Liberian flag are white, blue, and red. The star and the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th stripes are white. The background behind the star is blue. The 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, and 11th stripes are red.

Liberian Map Ideas

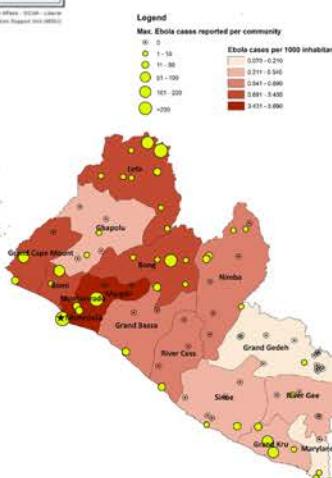
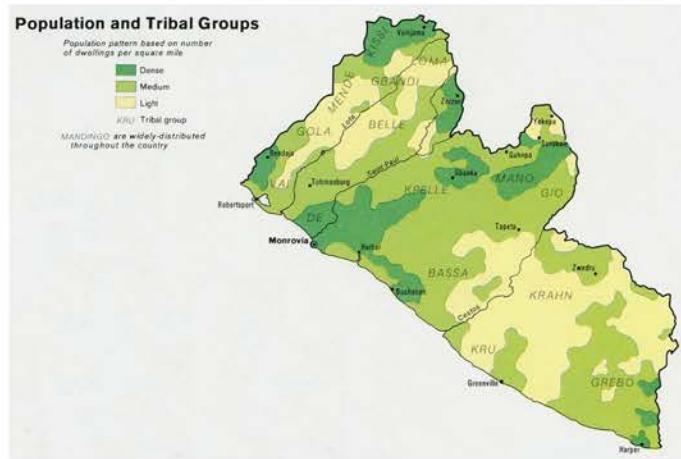


The following page is an activity for multiple age levels. Here are some ideas for how to use the map:

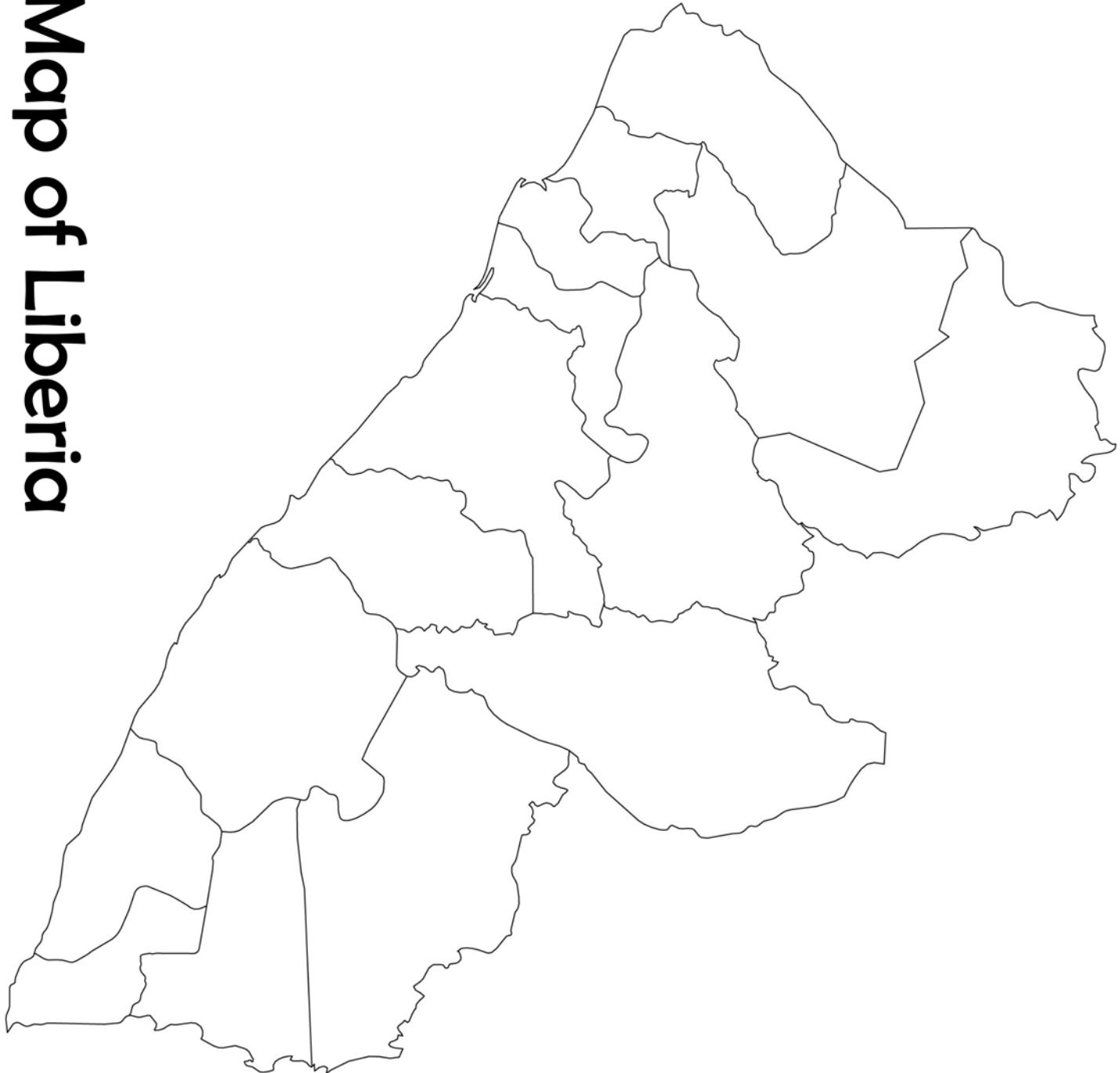
Young children can simply color in the counties, marking the names in the space on the right. Older children can mark major cities, roadways, bodies of water, etc.

The map can also be used to display biomes, climates, population, etc.

Be creative and have fun!



Map of Liberia



Map Legend



Find out how you can transform lives in Liberia by providing food, medicine, education, and the gospel. www.bestwa.org