

BWW President's Message, at Convention 2021 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Madam Vice President and National Officers, Mr. Chairman and Members of BWW Trusteeship, BWW Chapter Presidents, Committee Chairpersons, Distinguished Guest, our loyal and strong membership, Ladies, and Gentlemen:

Let me start once again by welcoming and appreciating you for risking all to attend this convention during these tough times, when our country and the world is faced with the global COVID-19 pandemic. I am convinced you are ready to do anything for Bolahun.

We want to extend our appreciation to you for allowing us to serve as your National Officers for more than three years. Our leadership was supported by a core group of elected officers, chapter leaders, and several members who served on committees. Together we executed a leadership concept that welcomed everyone into the decision-making process. We conducted regular leadership and general teleconferences where we deliberated on issues relevant to our Bolahun agenda. We made every effort to reach all Bolahun stakeholders with our message of unity and teamwork and we clearly articulated our development agenda for Bolahun.

Upon assuming the responsibility of managing the affairs of Bolahun Worldwide USA, we developed an aggressive agenda to expand formation of more BWW Chapters to involve more Bolahun family members in our effort to identify the best approach to the Bolahun agenda. This effort resulted in the formation of the Midwest Chapter in 2017, which played host to Convention 2018 in Cleveland, Ohio, and the formation of the New Jersey/New York Chapter. This new chapter also hosted Convention 2019 in Newark, New Jersey. Our leadership engaged in developing partnership with reputable institutions to help us promote our agenda. This effort resulted in establishing partnership with three institutions: World of Life International in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Christ Our Savior Episcopal Church in Florida, and Christ Church New Brighton, located on Staten Island in New York.

We successfully executed the constitutional requirement of setting up various committees to assist our national administration in implementing the affairs of BWW. We established the Bolahun Worldwide Trusteeship and Account. Unfortunately, we were not able to establish the board of directors.

During the fiscal year covering the period June 2019, immediately following the convention in Newark, and June 2020, our leadership focused on following resolutions:

- Implement proposed Pilot Sustainable Agricultural Project in Bolahun,
- Replace the Roof of St. Mary's Church in Bolahun,
- Revamp relationship and strengthen established chapters and to establish additional ones,
- Establish and registered BWW in Liberia as a local non-governmental organization (NGO),
- Travel to Liberia to evaluate how our investment of about \$11,000 in the St Agnes School Pilot project and others have affected Bolahun.
- Identify and interact with our Bolahun Family, and to understand their real needs. We also had plans to meet with Episcopal Church Bishop the Rev Dr Johnathan Hart.

Our decision to travel to Liberia and access BWW operations in Liberia and to establish and register BWW Liberia as an independent entity was challenging and not only right but it allowed us to understand the BAFFA leadership structure, the Bolahun stakeholder community outside of Bolahun, and to connect directly with the people of Bolahun which give us the opportunity to understand what their actual needs are and how we can better partner in fulfilling a unified Bolahun Agenda. Here are a few lessons learnt:

Our Trip to Liberia/Bolahun in February of 2020

All Three Institutions in Bolahun, The Church, Health Center, and The School System Established by the Missionaries are in Dire Need of Support. The church Needs Renovation and Improvements, The Health Center Needs Modernization, Qualified Staff and Medications. The School Needs Complete Reconstruction, Management Structure, and Sustainable Strategy.

- The Outcome of BWW Pilot St. Agnes Project executed in partnership with BAFFA is a disappointment. BAFFA implemented this project without Oversight and Monitoring. Building is poorly constructed and up to date BAFFA Leadership has not concluded inspections making it impossible to turn over financial reports and Keys to the Building to BWW. The Amount of \$10960 was allocated for this project. Of this amount, BAFFA reported to have used \$8960 for the building classroom. The Amount of \$2000. For landscaping and Warehousing is pending.

- BWW's Decision to establish and register as an Independent entity in Liberia was successful. BWW Liberia is Now a Legal Non-Governmental Business Entity. All documents relevant to certification process are approved. An application for membership to the Liberia NGO Association Is in Progress. This effort will enable BWW to solicit support locally for our Bolahun Agenda and will also Support our desire for Partnership, Transparency, and Accountability.

- The BWW, WLI, and Roads To Health Sustainable Agriculture Project is on Schedule. Mr. Andrew Fuah is the agriculturist in charge of Project execution. He assisted by Principal Maxim and Closely Monitored By our BWW Liberia Team. The team have identified Marketing strategy to increase maximum income. We received \$2000.00 cash donation of \$5000.00 needed for this project. A full report on project is in report submitted by BWW Liberia.

- The roof of St. Mary's Church in Bolahun was replaced by eighteen gauge long span Aluminum Zinc. This is the first time this Church's roof has been replaced. The project was executed by The BWW Liberia Team, with the support of the Priest in Charge Fr. William Korpu, Principal Lawrence Maxim, and the people of Bolahun. BWW awarded technical contract to Future Builders Incorporated. The total cost to replace the roof of St. Mary's Church is \$13,093.00. Of this amount, Christ Our Savior Episcopal Church Donated \$8000.00 and BWWUSA contributed \$5593.00. World Of Life Intentional allocated \$1460.00 for the Painting of the interior and Exterior of St. Mary's church.

- In support of my trip to Liberia/Bolahun, we asked for voluntary contributions to support the painting of the St Mary's church and other trip related expenses. This effort raised the amount of \$592.00. Our appreciation to the Minnesota Chapter, Mr. John Morlu Sr., Korpo Morlu-Mendscole, Felix Yallah, Moniba Fofe Nye, Fayah Kanda, Steven Pelima, Fatuma Margrete Kekula, and all who supported this effort.

· During our discussions in Liberia at the BAFFA Meetings, BWW Leadership Meetings, Bolahun Town Hall Meeting , and Discussions with Individual Bolahun Stakeholders, we all agreed that the Bolahun Agenda requires a United Approach, that BAFFA need to conduct leadership elections, that BAFFA BWWUSA/Liberia, all Bolahun Stakeholders, and The People of Bolahun must work together in planning and executing a Successful future Agenda for Bolahun.

Our trip to Liberia and Bolahun have helped us understand the current state of affairs of BAFFA, the three institutions in Bolahun, (Church/School/Health Center), Bolahun as a district headquarter, and how these entities relate to each other. Our trip concluded at the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic which have impacted our leadership's ability to execute a normal agenda which is why we are meeting here today in October instead of our normal convention schedule in June. We cancelled convention 2020 and election of National Officers because of the Global lock down.

This Global Crises as we know impacted our agenda to Revamp relationship and strengthen established chapters and to establish additional ones. Our leadership was unable to travel to various parts of the country to support chapter leaders and motivate members as planned. However, we continued to collaborate with them remotely and hosted regular teleconferences, personal phone calls, send emails, text messages, and use social media platform to disseminate information. These platforms enabled our leadership to conduct normal Association Business, identify with family members who lost loved ones and provide moral support and encouragement to many who were physically and psychologically impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic and other personal difficulties. We were also able to identify with family members who had positive life changing events during this period.

Bolahun Family, Ladies and Gentlemen, we were blessed to have elected a resolute and committed team of people who love Bolahun. We are blessed to have been surrounded by such talented individuals who believe in collaboration, transparency, and accountability. Because of them and you love and commitment to Bolahun we are able to accomplish for the first time since the missionaries departed Bolahun a tangible Infrastructure project, establish partnership with institutions and show positive results, and attempt to create a forum for BAFFA and BWW-USA to identify problems and harmonize differences through a reconciliation process. Our leadership explored working relationship directly with the Mother Chapter BAFFA. We are proud to announce that we funded several projects which should have been executed by BAFFA. These projects include:

- Survey of Mission land: An amount of \$800 was allocated to BAFFA to survey of Mission land to determine current boundaries. Unfortunately, this project was not implemented and BAFFA leadership has yet to give account of the funds or future project execution plans.
- Old Church Project: BWW was in possession of funds raised by Bolahun family members in the United States to renovate the Old Church in Bolahun. The total amount of \$1500 was transferred to BAFFA's account. Unfortunately, project was not implemented up to date.
- St Agnes Pilot Project: To help us determine the actual cost of building the proposed St Agnes Elementary School Designed by BWW, we asked BAFFA to give us an estimate for a single instruction ready classroom. BAFFA leadership submitted a proposal for \$10960. BWW Transferred the amount of \$10960 to the BAFFA Leadership in Liberia. The funds were accompanied by a memorandum of understanding which would outline project execution protocols to insure accountability. Unfortunately, BAFFA leadership ignored the MOU and poorly executed pilot school building out of scope and budget.

The disappointing result from these three projects motivated our leadership to ask our membership to allow us to establish BWW team in Liberia and Register BWW as a legal entity in Liberia. We are pleased with the performance of the BWW team in Liberia which includes: Cyprian A Yama, Una Thompson, Una Dunor Merfee, and Raymond Hina. This Team successfully executed project to replace the St Mary's Church Roof, Monitor Pilot BWW/WLI Sustainable Agriculture Project, facilitate transfer of funds to Bolahun to fulfill Teachers Salary, Work with the people of Bolahun to develop Current Proposal to build several classrooms at St Agnes Elementary School. We are grateful to this team for their commitment to our Agenda and accountability.

Partnerships:

Our partnership with the Christ Savior Episcopal Church, World of Life International, and Christ Church New Brighton have blessed our people of Bolahun with incredibly positive results:

Christ Our Savior Church Episcopal of Florida established the St Mary partnership with Bolahun before our relationship with them. During this time a deacon, Thomas Williams, from their Church travelled to Bolahun with Fr. Vaney. During Our Partnership with them, the Church donated \$8000.00 towards the replacement of the Roof for St. Mary's Church. The Current priest in Charge Rev Dr. D Wellington Bright has reiterated the Church's commitment to our Partnership. We are grateful to Retired Deacon Thomas Williams, Fr D Wellington Bright, and congregation for their love for Bolahun.

Our partnership with *World of Life International Inc.* operated by our own Rev Dr. Sam Kparku Ndorleh is another blessing to our Bolahun Initiative. This organization's establishment in Liberia helps BWW enjoy seamless transfer of funds to Liberia, in addition to being the largest single contributor to many of our fund-raising initiatives. During the last school year, the administration at the Bolahun Mission Schools threatened to cease working without receiving their salary arrears which was about \$20,000 USD dating back to 2014. World of Life International Inc asked the BWW and BAFFA administration to negotiate with the Bolahun School administration and teachers. If they were willing to waive half of the total salary arrears, WLI would donate the total amount equivalent to half of the total arrears owed. The Bolahun School administration and teachers accepted the offer. WLI International President donated about \$10,000 USD to BWW for settling the salary arrears. Funds were transferred to BWW-Liberia Associates who travelled to Bolahun and executed payment of salary arrears. As of the beginning of the 2021/2022 school year, Bolahun School administration and teachers arrears were up to date. We are very grateful to Rev Dr. Ndorleh and WLI Inc for their generosity and support to a successful Bolahun Agenda.

Prior to World of Life Inc.'s donation to fulfill Bolahun teacher's salary arrears, BWW raised about \$5000 in fulfillment of Bolahun teacher's salary.

Christ Church New Brighton: Our partnership with donors continues to get even better. The partnership negotiated by Mr. Richard Ballah Zayzay of the New Jersey/New York Chapter between BWW, and Christ Church New Brighton on Staten Island have undertaken a fund drive to support a mission trip to Liberia which will allow these missionaries to visit Bolahun Mission and St John's Episcopal Mission in Cape Mount County Liberia. The church has launched a walk and t-shirt sale to raise funds for the mission trip.

The leadership of the church of New Brighton, headed by Father Trevor Babb, has also launched an initiative known as: Rescuing the Next Generation of Liberians from Darkness: Developing Electricity for

Two Episcopal School Complexes in Liberia. The church leadership submitted a Sustainable Development Goals Grant Application to the Global Mission Commission for funds to install solar street lighting on the school campuses of both institutions. We are excited to inform you of the good news that the grant application for \$10,000 has been successful. Bolahun Mission will benefit from about half this amount. This is the beginning of series of grant proposals that will be submitted in support this church's sustainable development goals for our institutions.

We will notify you about details for funds disbursement and project execution when we receive such information. We are thankful to Mr. Richard Zayzay fostering this partnership and grateful to Fr Trevor Babb and congregation of Christ Church New Brighton for their love and vision for Bolahun. We also want to thank Susan Fowler for researching and writing this grant and future grant proposals.

Bolahun Family, Ladies and Gentlemen, as you can see, our commitment to establishing an inclusive association that will allow us to assemble and discuss ways we can help our people in Bolahun is the right thing to do. Though with many challenges, we are excited to stand here and present our accomplishments and disappointments. I want to at this time salute our national officers, chapter leaders, and committee chairpersons for your support and hard work. We got this far because of your commitment, resilience, and love for Bolahun. Let us now work together harder than ever to improve in the areas we score good grades and develop new partnerships and strategies to make necessary corrections in area where we fell short of meeting expectations.

To our critics and those Bolahun family members who are still standing by the fence, we hear your criticism and concerns loud and clear. Please do not continue to be back seat drivers—we welcome you to sit with us at the round table; bring your ideas so together we can make better decisions for Bolahun.

Albert Einstein once said, “The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.”

The situation in Bolahun requires the attention of every Bolahun stakeholder. As president of this Association for more than three years, I have heard from many concerned citizens including former missionaries, former teachers, previous and potential donors, prominent Bolahun family members, and friends. Most of the leadership crises and donor fatigue can be eliminated when all Bolahun stakeholders decide to become committed to a common cause and become honest about their true intent for Bolahun. There are too many red flags raised that will discourage people with good intent to continue to spend their money in Bolahun. **We must Unite to Succeed in Bolahun.**

We can do this, Family: Yes! Bolahun can again become the Citadel of Knowledge, The Center for Religious Excellence, and one of the Best Health Care Centers in Liberia.

We would like to encourage all Religious Scholars (Pastors, Ministers, and Evangelists) to unite and restore the vision of the missionaries by making Bolahun the center for religious education it once was.

We would like to encourage all Educators, Legal Personal, Engineers, and Social Scientists to create the best Institution of Learning in Bolahun.

We would like to encourage all Medical Practitioners (Doctors Nurses, Medical Assistants) from Bolahun to unite and turn the Bolahun Health Center into a first-class hospital.

Acknowledgements

Let me know extend my heartfelt appreciation to all of you Bolahun family and friends here in the USA and Liberia especially to those who worked hard to establish this association, attend several meetings and teleconferences, travel to several conventions, and have supported us morally and financially to get us this far. A-WU-MAMA-HO.

In every institution, there are some individuals who will always go beyond the call of duty. In our association I would like to call out the following members for meeting this criterion:

Dr Vivian Ballah-Swaray: National Vice President and Convention Planning Chairperson. Dr Swaray lunched the Ballah Family Scholarship and decided even though she did not go to school in Bolahun, she would honor her parents by offering scholarships to needed young girls in Bolahun. Up to date, about seven young girls have graduated from high school as beneficiaries. She is currently sponsoring about ten Girls in Bolahun High School. Of the Seven Girls who graduated from High School, three are currently enrolled at the Lofa County Community College studying Nursing. Her commitment to each female beneficiary of The Ballah-Family Scholarship through College.

Rev. Doctor Sam Kparku Ndorleh: Treasurer of the BWW Trustee and Acting Chaplain. As founder of WLI Rev. Ndorleh's Association is committed to working with BWW to Accomplish a sustainable Solution for the Bolahun Mission Schools. WLI Recently Donated \$10 thousand US dollars to settle Bolahun Teachers Salary Arrears.

Mrs. Korpo Morlu Mends-Cole: Assistant Secretary for BWW has committed the last three or more years serving as general secretary and one of the principal donors to every BWW project. She and her husband and family currently have a garage filled with books and other supplies ready to ship to Bolahun.

Mr. Christopher Konneh Sr: Chaired the Constitution Committee; serves as BWW Project Manager, and most recently chaired the BWW/BAFFA Reconciliation.

Uncle Fayah Kanda: National Treasurer; also Served as National Financial Secretary for the last three years. He spearheads all collection initiatives undertaken by BWW.

Our Dynamic Chapter Presidents and Vice Presidents: Albert Ngafua and Cicely Hina Minnesota Chapter: Garwee Kebeh Johnson and Dr Lanfia Ts. Waritay of the Philadelphia Delaware Chapter: Thomas Ansumana and Gladys Moniba Payne of the Washington DC/Maryland/Virginia Chapters:

Moniba Fofe Nye: Vice President of the Midwest Chapter, and Victoria Cheeks and Joseph Kamara of the New Jersey/New York Chapters.

The Honorable Judge Cyprian Yama: Leader of Our BWW Liberia Team: Honorable Yama's close proximity to Bolahun has enabled him to effectively execute and monitor all projects undertaken by BWW.

Our Committee Chairpersons and Members, Board of Trustees, BWW Liberia Associates, and everyone who have made our leadership successful.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are very thankful for allowing us to serve you as national officers for more than three years. God Bless America, God Bless Liberia, and

God Bless Bolahun.

Asumana K Pelima Sr.

National President, BWWUSA