



Liberia



Country Overview:

Location: Western Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone

Size: 111,369 sq km

Population: 3,989,703 (July 2013 est.)

Capital: Monrovia

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

Imports-commodities: fuels, chemicals, machinery, transportation equipment, manufactured goods, foodstuffs

Currency: Liberian Dollars (LRD)

Ethnic groups: Kpelle 20.3%, Bassa 13.4%, Grebo 10%, Gio 8%, Mano 7.9%, Kru 6%, Lorma 5.1%, Kissi 4.8%, Gola 4.4%, other 20.1%

Religion: Christian 85.6%, Muslim 12.2%, Traditional 0.6%, other 0.2%, none 1.4%

Government type: Republic

Chief of State/Head of Government: President Ellen JOHNSON SIRLEAF (Since 16 January 2006)

Language: English 20% (official), some 20 ethnic group languages few of which can be written or used in correspondence

Republic of Liberia/Liberia

Meetings and Negotiations

-Time is relative. There are very **few** expectations about being on time, and meetings rarely start on schedule.

-Small talk generally is dissuaded, though many will drop small talk into the business points they are making.

-Bargaining is **expected** even if the first price is acceptable. An agreeable price can be reached in a short amount of time (i.e. five – ten minutes).

-**Refer** to Liberians by their business title.

-Present business cards with one hand, and **use** your right hand.

Business Attire

-**Men:** suit or nice attire, but not always as many people cannot afford a suit

-**Women:** nice business suits or

dress/skirt and blouse. Many people cannot afford nice attire and most clothing is second-hand.

Behavior

-Handshake with a finger snap in casual situations. A traditional handshake is common for formal and business situations.

-Less than arms length of personal space is common for most situations. Liberians tend to be very physical.

-A **high level** of touching is appropriate. The manner of touching **depends** on the relationship between the speakers (if they are sitting down, etc.). When standing, a speaker might rest a hand on your shoulder or touch your hand. When sitting, a speaker might rest his hand on your leg.

-Women are generally accepted to do the majority of the housework. There is growing

realization that there should be an equality of the sexes, but though many men agree to this in theory, it doesn't seem to translate into action.

-Many Liberians will ask foreigners for money and assume that you are wealthy.

Gift Giving

-Gifts are expected only if you are doing business with traditional (rural Liberian native) people.

-Gifts are **never** discouraged, though some might take this to represent a bribe.

Appropriate Gifts:

- books, music
- gifts from your home country

Gifts to Avoid:

- avoid** expensive gifts

Business Tips continued

Conversation

-People tend to say what they mean; however, it takes a long time to say it. Emphasis is put on being a good orator, and it's normal for the speaker to feel like they have to talk for a while to get their point across.

-It is **important** to say hello to people who make eye contact

with you.

-Direct eye contact is **always** acceptable. Depending on hierarchy and the nature of the relationship between the speaker and listener, eye contact may vary.

-It's considered **rude** if you don't say hello and/or shake hands with people you pass on the street.

Topics to Discuss:

- soccer
- music
- family

Topics to Avoid:

- homosexuality
- civil war in 1990s

