



**Civil Society Engagement with the Government of Liberia
on Monitoring the Agenda for Transformation (AfT)
With a Human Rights Based Approach
13-17 November 2012
Workshop report**

Background

Given the weak but gradually improving institutional setting in Liberia, and the need to rebuild democratic institutions at the local level, a group of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), with support from UNDP Liberia and the Human Rights Protection Section of UNMIL (UNMIL/HRPS), started monitoring service delivery under the PRS 1 from a human rights perspective.

The Civil Society group wants to continue doing so under the Agenda for Transformation (AfT) while improving on their own effectiveness by involving citizens and local organizations more actively in service monitoring, and by strengthening their cooperation with Government during the implementation processes of the AfT. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs (MPEA), the Government ministry in charge of monitoring the AfT implementation, has confirmed its interest and willingness to take an active role in this innovative partnership between government and civil society, following a series of engagement involving the CSOs and the Government.

Therefore, as the government sails through VISION 2030 and begins the implementation of the AfT, it is necessary to provide civil society organizations wanting to track the implementation of the AfT with a thorough insight and understanding of the AfT to enable them to monitor its implementation from an informed basis. There is a need for the Ministry to expose to the CSOs the key components of the AfT, including the new pillar structure, the results framework matrix, the monitoring and evaluation plan and the link to the national budget.

Moreover, this information-sharing workshop between the Ministry and Civil Society is key in creating broad-based awareness for the AfT and in

explaining its linkages to the second generation of County Development Agenda (CDA) which will serve as 'sub-plans' for the AfT at the local (county) level. It is expected that the CDA will be developed based on several consultations at the county level. This CDA formulation process will also be informed by the results of the county-wide district consultations on the national visioning process, and from the results of CSO-led monitoring of the PRS-1.

Coordination between the CSO monitoring project management and the Government has been rather poor in the first phase of the PRS-1 tracking project, partly because CSOs preferred to work separately from Government in order to ensure the independence of their monitoring work. As a result, much-needed information held by Government was not forthcoming, when requested by CSOs.

For this second phase, cooperation between Civil Society and the Government needs to be formalized and activated from the very beginning. It is important first to reach an agreement on a set of indicators agreeable to all, with a view to enabling triangulation between government data and civil society data. This collaboration will require consistent engagement between Government and Civil Society in the course of both data collection and dissemination of findings.

In the spirit of mutually beneficial collaboration, a strategic joint planning meeting was proposed as an opportunity for the actors (the government and civil society organizations) to engage at both national and county levels.

The main objectives of this meeting were the following:

1. Familiarize all stakeholders with the AfT;
2. Explain and agree on the complementary of monitoring approaches used by the Ministry and CSOs;
3. Finalize the project concept note;
4. Draft an MoU detailing the Government-CSO partnership.

More specifically, the strategy meeting was aimed at addressing the following aspects:

- a. Explain the concepts of results-based monitoring, and the various monitoring structures and procedures that Government will use during the monitoring of the AfT;
- b. Mutually agree on the complementary character of the CSO's monitoring process (i.e. what is its added value) at both national and county levels;

- c. Mutually agree on the methodology and indicators to be used by the CSOs in their monitoring process, with a human right-based approach and special emphasis on gender sensitivity;
- d. Discuss how that information can and will be made available to government at various levels;
- e. Discuss how relevant government information (baseline data, plans and budgets, official monitoring data) will become available to the CSOs.

The strategic meeting was held at the St. Peter Claver Catholic Church Community Hall in the Port City of Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, on 14-16 November 2012. Participants at the meeting included representatives of four networks of CSOs, namely the PRS Tracking Network, the Human Rights and Disability Task Force, the Human Rights & Budget Forum, and the women NGO Secretariat.

Also in attendance were representatives from the National Civil Society Council of Liberia (NCSCCL), while the Government of Liberia was represented by Assistant Minister Harrison Luo and other staff from the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs and the LRDC. Other participants included County Development Officers and Monitoring & Evaluation Officers from Bong, Bassa and Lofa Counties as well as other staffs from Sectoral & Regional Planning, as well as representatives from UNDP Liberia and from UNMIL Human Rights and Protection Section. The Meeting was facilitated by four facilitators from MPEA and five Pillar Technical Advisors from MPEA.

Introduction

A three day strategy meeting was held at the St. Peter Claver Catholic Church Community Hall in the Port City of Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, on 14-16 November 2012, under the theme **“Civil Society Engagement with the Government of Liberia on Monitoring the Agenda for Transformation (Aft) with a Human Rights Based Approach”**.

The meeting was aimed at explaining the concepts of results-based monitoring, and the various monitoring structures and procedures that the Government will be using to monitor progress in the implementation of the Aft. Other objectives of the meeting included reaching agreement on the methodology and indicators to be used by the CSOs in their monitoring activities, applying a human rights based approach with emphasis on gender sensitivity, as well as discussing how the information collected by the CSOs will be made available to government at various levels.

Nine thematic areas were considered as the basis for the engagement for the first two days, while the third day was dedicated to a working session to

discuss the added-value of the CSO monitoring framework and the question of ‘what should be monitored’. The third day concluded with the plenary reaching a consensus on the design of a CSO monitoring framework which is complementary to the official M&E framework. A draft Memorandum of Understanding on this Government-Civil Society Partnership was also produced at the end of the meeting.

Day One: Taking Stock of the PRS-1, Lessons Learned for the PRS-2

The meeting opened with statements from CSOs, from the Government of Liberia, and from a representative from the UNDP. Speaking on behalf of the CSOs, Ms. Carolyn Myers-Zoduah welcomed participants to the three day civil society engagement meeting with the government on the process of monitoring the Agenda for Transformation, with a specific focus on the human rights based approach (HRBA). She stressed the need for more collaboration with all stakeholders during the implementation of the AfT.

Also speaking during the opening was Ms. Nessie Golakai, Assistant Resident Representative for Governance and the Rule of Law at the UNDP. In her statement, Ms. Golakai explained that this process was a follow-up on the earlier support provided to the CSOs for monitoring the PRS based on an HRBA. She welcomed CSOs’ desire to continue these tracking activities, especially at the county level. She added that through these kinds of initiatives, Civil Society is becoming stronger, and is playing a very positive role into transforming the society. Additionally, she informed participants that the formulation of a new five-year programme for UNDP was on the verge of completion, and that this plan called for more civil society engagement, especially during the implementation of the AfT. She concluded by calling for a fruitful partnership with Trust Africa and UNMIL/HRPS.

The government representative, Mr. Lee Mason, welcomed participants to the workshop and stressed the importance of CSOs’ understanding of the AfT. He stressed the need for CSOs to fully understand the Results Framework, the M&E plan and the 90 days tracking tools that should form the basis of their monitoring efforts.

Additionally, Mr. Mason emphasized that delivering services with a human rights based approach does not only involve the Ministry of Planning but all stakeholders, with the CSOs serving as “third eye”. He concluded by saying that a steering committee would be established and chaired by the President, which means that information reaching the committee should be validated. The Steering committee will be meeting at least twice a year.

Mr. James Monibah, Programm Analyst in Conflict Prevention & Recovery and Rule of Law, from the UNDP, gave the overview of the workshop. He began by giving highlights of the previous activities undertaken by CSOs and

urged participants to provide their full attention so as to well understand the role they have to play during the implementation and monitoring process of the AfT. He added that the meeting was expected to produce a draft MoU between the Government and the CSOs, to agree on indicators to be used by the CSOs for monitoring the AfT, and to improve participants' understanding of basic HRBA principles, of the AfT and of its M&E framework. Following the overview of the meeting, participants shared their expectations and agreed on the ground rules that would guide their activities during the meeting's proceedings.

Presentations: Overview of PRS1 implementation, Coordination & Field Level M&E

Presented by Lee Mason

During his presentation, Mr. Mason stated that Liberia's first post-war development agenda, the "Lift Liberia PRS-I" ended in 2011 with a focus on relief, recovery and reconstruction. Despite the many challenges, he added that Liberia has experienced robust growth and improvement in social, economic, and institutional indicators with several key lessons learned from PRS-I implementation.

Though the creation of the PRS-I came as a result of several consultative and participatory processes, he mentioned that it was written around set objectives and activities organized into four pillars:

- Peace and Security
- Economic Revitalization
- Governance & Rule of Law
- Infrastructure & Basic Services
- Cross-cutting issues, particularly capacity building and gender equality as a quasi-pillar

He said each pillar had a matrix of planned actions and responsible agencies, which focused mostly on OUTPUTS (deliverables), with 15 County Development Agendas also developed for each county to inform local activities related to service delivery. Mr. Mason said that the cost of implementing the PRS was estimated at US\$1.6 billion, of which US\$500 million came from the national budget of the Government of Liberia, while the donor community contributed US\$600 million. Mr. Mason also mentioned that implementation of activities during the first year was slow, with only 20% of deliverables completed.

Experience and lessons learned:

Building on the experience gained from the implementation of the PRS-1, Mr. Mason explained that a Rapid Results Approach (using 90-Day Plans) was introduced at the PRS Cabinet Retreat to reorganize agencies and accelerate the implementation rate, with a renewed emphasis on Civil

Society and private sector participation in the implementation of the PRS-1. He mentioned that the lack of effective monitoring of PRS-1 posed a challenge, and was caused mainly by a weak coordination between field-level M&E and the national M&E unit.

In terms of lessons learned, he mentioned that the national budget allocations and the budget process were not aligned to the national development plan (PRS-1); and that the coordination mechanism was built around donor assistance, while alignment and harmonization were very weak. Mr. Mason said that PRS-2 implementation must take deliberate actions to address issues of inequality and marginalization, with more focus on interventions and deliverables (outputs) than on development results (outcomes).

He concluded by saying that there was a weak monitoring and evaluation mechanism without clear baselines, targets and outcome-focused indicators, and with less participation from some key stakeholders (CSOs & private sector) during the PRS-1.

Understanding the AfT:

Presenting on the Structure of the AfT, Ms. Sedia Williams said that the National Vision (Liberia Rising 2030) articulates broad national aspirations to be achieved by 2030 as a long-term development agenda that has been reduced to a Medium-Term Growth and Development Strategy that includes the Agenda for Economic Transformation. This transformation, she added, can be viewed from two perspectives: the economic growth and the socio-political development perspectives, with corresponding sectoral strategies and plans.

This plan, she said, has been developed on the basis of various diagnostic studies and of several consultations, which incorporate issues of equality and inclusion. The aspirations of transforming Liberia into a middle-income country are clustered around the following pillars:

- a) Peace & Security, Rule of Law
- b) Economic Transformation
- c) Human Development
- d) Governance & Public Interest
- e) Cross-Cutting Issues

She then gave the structure of the reorganized pillars and sectors. For Pillar 1, Peace, Justice, Security & Rule of Law includes Peace & Reconciliation, Security Sector Reform, Justice and Rule of Law and the Judicial Reform & Rule of Law. The Economic Transformation pillar includes Private Sector Development (domestic), Macroeconomic issues, Infrastructure, Agriculture

& Food Security, Forestry and Mineral Development. The Human Development pillar includes Education, Health & Social Welfare, Social Protection, Water and Sanitation, amongst others.

In order to understand the result framework (RF), she then outlined the constraints, strategic objectives, agents of change, description of change process, the milestones/intermediate outcomes and interventions answering these following critical questions: *What are the critical issues to address? What strategic objectives describe the changes you want to see in the problem?*

Using the Rapid Results Approach for AfT Implementation, Coordination and Reporting:

The third presentation focused on the Rapid Results Approach to implementation. Discussing this topic, Mr. Fredrick Gbemie explained the strategic objectives and interventions and said it includes the 90-days activities to be carried out in four stages, upon which progress is going to be measured. He then discussed the table containing activity information that includes agents of change, responsible department, second agent of change etc.

Under the reporting framework for the AfT, he mentioned that the county-level M&E will include CDOs and M&E assistants who will be dedicated to the 90-day implementation scorecard. Mr. Gbemie added that the county M&E tools will be developed alongside the national M&E framework to track progress, and that the M&E report will feed into the 90-days implementation scorecard.

Implementation & Coordination Mechanism of the AfT:

Speaking about the National Coordination Mechanism, Ms. Cleopatra Watkins-Johnson said the mechanism will include representatives from government, development partners, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations. The organic structures include a National Coordinator, a Deputy National Coordinator, a Communication Director, and the National M&E Coordinator who will monitor and evaluate development results. Meanwhile, the AfT Implementation & Coordination, Aid Management & Coordination Unit (WB, USAID, NAO, AfDB, UN Bilateral, NGOs) will include LISGIS and CDOs amongst others.

With regards to the national-level coordination mechanisms, she added that technical working groups had been established and that these groups include MAC, DP, CSOs, and private sector. The function of these groups

will be to ensure coordination and information-sharing during the planning, implementation and reporting.

Defining the county-level coordination mechanism, Ms. Johnson explained that no new mechanism had been designed for the AfT, and that the PRS-1 County-Level Coordination Mechanism was the same as the National Coordination Mechanism.

Day Two: 2nd Generation CDA Development

Discussing the “County-Level Development Plans: Challenges, Successes & the 2nd Generation CDAs”, Mr. D. Emmanuel Williams explained that the implementation of CDA-1 was fraught with challenges which were related to issues of information/dissemination, lack of political will, linkages and coordination, and inadequate monitoring mechanism.

He added that as a result of poor information dissemination, there was a disconnection between Ministries and Agencies in Monrovia and their County staffs in terms of their roles in executing PRS deliverables & projects. A similar disconnect existed between Monrovia-based ministries and local authorities and CSOs.

Speaking about lack of political will, Mr. Williams mentioned that most of the projects implemented at the county level fell outside of the CDAs, with finances from the County Development Fund and the County Social Development Fund. According to him, local political leaders did not place much emphasis on CDA implementation.

He also mentioned that due to this lack of political will, there was a disconnection between CDA priority interventions and the national budget. He also said that the ineffectiveness of coordination meetings (CDSC, PWC and sector meetings), poor attendance and reporting (CSOs, LMAs, Local Authorities), and limited logistics & supplies also contributed to the limited achievements of goals in CDA-1. During his presentation, he also spoke about the lack of an M&E framework for CDAs, and about the disjointed monitoring initiatives led by both state and non-state actors, with limited information-sharing on monitoring results.

Despite these challenges, he stressed that some achievements during the CDA implementation were made. He said the counties experienced improved service delivery (education, health, roads, etc.), county-level implementation coordination structures were established, initial support was obtained from UN-CST and county authorities, a database on development projects and actors across the counties was established (i.e. “who is doing what and where”), and positive relationships were built

amongst government functionaries, partners, civil society and citizens at the local level.

Mr. Williams said that the 1st generation of CDAs comes to an end at the end of 2012. He suggested that priorities expressed by the citizens during the 156 district consultations of April 2012, as well as the CDA desk reviews conducted by the CDOs, should be compiled into a discussion document to inform the 2nd generation CDAs. These inputs could serve as a baseline to determine county-specific development priorities for AfT interventions at the county-level.

Proposed CSO monitoring methodology & general overview of the project proposal:

Mr. Maxim Kumeh began his presentation by defining the Poverty Reduction Strategy Tracking Network (PRSTN) as a network of credible, industrious, and committed Civil Society and Community-Based Organizations working to promote citizen participation, transparency and accountability through tracking the implementation of the PRS. The Network also seeks to promote participation in the budget process.

Mr. Kumeh explained that the methodology used by the Network included desk reviews and survey questionnaires, focus group discussions and citizen scorecards. Data analysis was outsourced to ensure independence. The Network ran a pilot of this methodology which provided the evidence basis for their advocacy. The Government responded that it did not consider HRBA when crafting the PRS-1, and therefore tracking PRS-1 achievements from an HRBA perspective was somewhat 'unfair'. Nevertheless, the Government has indicated its willingness to consider the HRBA in phase II, which is a significant breakthrough. Finally, Mr. Kumeh stressed the need for the Network to strengthen its engagement with CSOs at all levels.

Ms. Carolyn Zoduah explained that during the implementation of the PRS-1, the PRSTN was monitoring the extent to which services were delivered in consonance with HRBA, specifically in the sectors of Education and Health. She stressed the need to enhance the involvement of citizens and CBOs in PRS implementation. Responding to the question of why should there be monitoring from citizens and from a Human Rights perspective, Ms. Zoduah explained that it was important to complement 'official' data collection with other (citizen) sources, to improve service delivery. She also mentioned that such participatory monitoring served to enhance citizens' awareness about their entitlements to quality services, which is an important starting point for increased social accountability. She also stressed the importance of tracking inequitable delivery of services either geographically or between different socio-economic groups.

Finally, Ms. Zoduah explained how such an exercise would help prepare service users and providers for a more decentralized service delivery structure. It will also strengthen the capacities of CSOs/CBOs to play their role as a critical, but trusted and constructive, partner in the transformation process of Liberia.

Applying the Human Rights Based Approach to monitoring the implementation of the AfT:

Ms. Lucia Beato's presentation addressed the question of how to apply the Human Rights Based Approach in monitoring the development processes envisioned by the AfT. She explained that development processes are normatively based on international Human Rights standards and principles that recognize human beings as rights-holders and establish obligations for duty-bearers.

She added that the HRBA calls for a focus on discriminated and marginalized groups, for the progressive realization of all human rights, and for equal importance to be given to both the outcomes and processes of development.

Addressing the question of why it is important to apply an HRBA, Ms. Beato highlighted three reasons: 1) The intrinsic value of the HRBA, which is based on universal values and legal standards for a life with dignity; 2) The 'instruments' and intervention strategies provided by the HRBA to help address power inequalities and discrimination, to strengthen accountability systems, and to help prevent and manage conflicts; and 3) Institutionally, the UN provides an impartial platform with neutral stakeholders well positioned to deal with sensitive issues and to analyse complex situations holistically. Ms. Beato concluded by saying that all development programmes should further the realization of human rights as laid down in the UDHR and other international human rights instruments.

Day three: Value-added of CSO-led monitoring, what should be monitored, draft MoU

Day three activities included three working sections. In the first section, the discussion focused on the added-value of CSOs in relation to the official M&E framework for the monitoring of the AfT. The second section examined the question of "what to be monitored by CSOs, in addition to what the government will be monitoring". Finally, the third section was aimed at drafting an MoU between Government and Civil Society, on their joint monitoring of the AfT.

Following few hours of discussion by plenary, a consensus was reached on the design of the M&E framework, which should be based on Human Rights

and good governance principles, with indicators to be reviewed and modified accordingly. During the sectoral review, four sectors were reviewed, namely Education, Health, Agriculture and the WASH sectors.

During the deliberation on the added-value of CSO-led monitoring over the official M&E framework, the following recommendations were made for consideration by the parties (GOL/ CSOs):

- Increases accountability and transparency in the implementation of the AfT
- Strengthens GOL-CSO partnership/relationship
- Promotes ownership at all levels and reduces perception of being a “government’s thing”
- Provides rapid referral and response mechanism
- Enhances checks and balances
- Broadens scope for information sharing/access to information
- Enhances integrity of implementation process
- Increases acceptability of findings
- Increases participation and inclusiveness
- Interests of vulnerable groups will be visible and considered
- Makes CSOs more effective and proactive at all levels
- Enhances public trust in the transformation process
- Provides an evidence base to enhance uniformity and coherence when speaking on issues
- Makes the process more relevant
- Increases mutual confidence
- Speeds up development
- Improves service delivery
- Limits opportunities for mismanagement of resources

To conclude day three, the Government of Liberia, represented by the MPEA, and CSOs did reach a consensus and drafted an MoU for further review and official endorsement. This session was facilitated by Ms. Lucia Beato of UNMIL HRPS and James Monibah of UNDP.

The MoU took into consideration how the relevant government data can be shared with CSOs, as well as how the CSOs will involve local government staff in the monitoring process at the local level. Additionally, the MoU stressed the need for platforms to be established to facilitate interactions between government and non-government stakeholders on all aspects of service delivery. The MoU also considered the role to be played by the Desk Officer to be appointed in the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs as a focal person for the project, and who will actively interact with CSOs at the national level through their project managers.

A roadmap was developed, which set tentative timelines for all major activities agreed upon by the plenary during the three days of deliberations.

In closing, Rev. Fallah Bioma of the National Union of Organization of the Disabled said he was delighted to see that the Liberian society was now being truly transformed, and that this initiative had given rise to several positive interactions at all levels of the Liberian society. He then extended thanks to the organizers of the workshop (UNDP, MPEA and UNMIL/HRPS) for their support, and for a rewarding three days of deliberation, and stressed the need for sustaining such engagement.

Speaking for the UN family, Ms. Lucia Beato expressed appreciation for the the constructive and fruitful interactions between participants, which helped resolve most critical issues. She also expressed hope that participants would now use the skills acquired during the workshop to engage their local government at the county, district and clan level.

Speaking on behalf of the head of the Government's delegation, Assistant Minister Harrison Luo, Mr. Lee Mason said he was very pleased about the three days of productive engagement with civil society on the monitoring frameworks for the AfT, and reiterated the Government's commitment to collaborate with CSOs for the effective monitoring of the AfT. He then challenged the CSOs to further engage other stakeholders (notably the Legislature) during the AfT implementation, to seek their support in resolving some of the critical issues coming out of the monitoring process. He also called on the UNDP for its fullest support to the CSOs during the monitoring and implementation stages of the AfT, and warned that failure to do so will make the CSOs ineffective. Commenting on the CSOs' monitoring activities, Mr. Mason mentioned that a checklist will be developed to monitor their participation during the implementation of the AfT.

Key recommendations from discussions:

1. CSOs emphasized the need to play a very visible role at every level of the AfT implementation;
2. CSOs recommended that under the institutional arrangements put in place for the AfT, they should remain a separate entity conducting their own affairs, independently from development partners;
3. CSOs can approach Mr. Zangar Bright for any further clarification on issues related to the AfT, throughout the implementation of the AfT;
4. Rev. Boima from the National Union for the Organization of the Disabled (NUOD) highlighted the need to include issues of the disabled in the AfT;
5. Issues related to artisanal mining should be looked at critically while implementing and monitoring the AfT;

6. National development planning must be sensitive to the nexus between economic growth and social inclusion;
7. Implementation of the national agenda must be based on a clear results chain, with a focus on achieving outcomes and impact;
8. A strong coordination mechanism between Government, CSOs and private sector must be established;
9. A strong Monitoring & Evaluation framework with clear baselines, targets and outcome-focused indicators to measure development results must be established;
10. The national budget must be closely aligned to the national development agenda as enshrined in the AfT.