Monitoring Liberia's PRS II from a citizen and human rights perspective
Draft project proposal
Version 19-09-12

1. Introduction

During the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy 1 (PRS 1), a group of Liberian Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have started to monitor the effectiveness of service delivery in Liberia from a Human Rights Perspective. Party as a result of their efforts, Human Rights principles have been integrated in the design of the second phase of the Poverty Reduction Strategy which will be implemented between 2013 and 2018. This group of CSOs intend to continue their monitoring activities under the PRS 2 while improving on their own effectiveness by involving citizens and local organisations more actively in service monitoring themselves and by adding a strong gender perspective to their monitoring practices on the one hand and by strengthening their cooperation with the Government of Liberia in this process on the other hand.

Given the weak but gradually improving institutional setting in Liberia and the need to rebuild democratic institutions from the start and from the bottom upwards, especially at county level and below, the next phase of the project will focus primarily on the quality of basic social service delivery (including water, health and education facilities and agricultural support services) from a Human Rights perspective, as an entry point for dialogue between citizens and these service providers and a starting point for improving service delivery mechanisms and their underlying governance practices. Not only will that improve the efficacy and efficiency of service delivery but also help in establishing a different citizen-state relationship that is open, mutually respectful and that recognises the importance of active citizenship in building a stable democratic society in Liberia.

There is in Liberia a growing interest in and demand for monitoring the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy 2 (PRS 2) and related development programmes from a citizen and human rights perspective. Interested stakeholders are:
- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that want to monitor progress on the PRS and the "New Deal for fragile states" to enable them to hold government accountable;
- The Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and other sectoral ministries like the Ministry of Gender and Development, which would like to use such data to triangulate them with data from other sources;
- The Steering Committee of the National Human Rights Action Plan;
- Citizens themselves, who want better service delivery, who want to have a say in how these services are delivered and who want a government that is accountable for what it is doing;

Broadly speaking, monitoring the PRS 2 and related development programmes from a citizen and human rights perspective could serve the following (long-term) objectives:
- Complement and triangulate regular data collection and performance monitoring by government institutions to improve the efficacy and efficiency of service delivery;
- Enhance citizens' awareness regarding their entitlements to good quality services, which is an important starting point for increased social accountability;
- Expose inequitable delivery of services either geographically or between different socio-economic groups;
- Prepare service users and providers for a more decentralized service delivery structure, which the Government of Liberia wants to effectuate during the PRS 2 implementation period in which they interact more actively;

- Finally, if implemented by civil society organisations themselves, it would offer a practical opportunity to provide capacity building in order to strengthen their role in society, down to the local level and help to redefine the role of civil society as a critical, but trusted and constructive partner, in the transformation process of Liberia.

Compared to the bottlenecks experienced during the PRS 1 monitoring, the conditions for civil society-led monitoring of the PRS 2 have improved considerably:
- The Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) has been made a basic principle for the PRS II which means that government can be held accountable for its performance on improving human rights in general and the way it informs the provision of basic social services in Liberia over the next 5 years;
- A National Civil Society Council of Liberia (NCSCL) has recently been elected, which offers a platform for dialogue between Civil Society and the Government of Liberia;
- The Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs indicated a strong willingness to engage / partner with the CSOs in the next phase;
- A Freedom of Information Act has been passed through the National Legislature and is now operational, which will help resolve major challenges faced in the first phase regarding access to information from government;
- UNDP's new Country Programme Document (CPD) emphasizes the importance of strengthening Liberia's emerging civil society;
- Civil Society Organisations that were involved in the first phase have, as a result of their earlier involvement, enhanced their monitoring and project management capacities;

2. Objectives of monitoring the PRS 2 from a citizen and human rights perspective

The group of CSOs involved in the first phase of the PRS monitoring concluded that based on their rich experiences gained over the last few years, the second phase should:
- Have more involvement of local level CSOs/NGOs;
- Include more continuous monitoring of services provided;
- Have an improved method of data collection and analysis;
- Have a stronger focus on gender exclusion and inequalities;
- Make better use of the data for lobby and advocacy activities at local and national level;
- Improve the cooperation with the Government of Liberia to enhance the ultimate impact of the data collected.

The objective of this second phase will therefore be to improve the active participation of citizens in the planning and monitoring of service provision by the government in order to strengthening democratic processes at the local level by:
1. Informing community members about available services and their entitlements and thus enhance local ownership of the services provided;
2. Soliciting regular citizen feedback about the accessibility and quality of these services in order to improve the efficacy, efficiency, quality and equity of service delivery;
3. Enhancing the voice and agency of marginalised groups, especially women, youth and people living with a disability to demand for equity in access to services;
4. Providing an opportunity for direct dialogue between service providers and the community and to enhance the capacity of service providers to integrate this feedback into improved service delivery systems, which should improve the responsiveness and social accountability of service providers;
5. Comparing/benchmarking service delivery performance across counties/districts in order to identify best practices, create peer learning mechanisms and provide constructive policy advice to the implementing ministries at national level.

A government-civil society partnership

This also implies that both service providers and service users should be actively involved in this process, at both national and local levels. As a starting point to introduce the principle of social accountability, citizens should become more aware of their entitlements. Meanwhile, service providers should be capacitated to deal with these demands constructively and to take the citizen perspective into account when planning and delivering their services. The main advantages of establishing a strong government-civil society partnership in the next phase are the following:

- The involvement of county government ensures shared ownership and easier access to relevant county-level data;
- There is an increased likelihood of government taking the results seriously, which contributes to social accountability;
- It is in line with the spirit of the PRS II (i.e. operationalizing the Government-Civil Society partnership);
- It contributes to capacity enhancement of county government staff;
- It enhances the likelihood for the integration of Community-Based Monitoring in official government M&E practices.

During the preparation phase of this project memorandum both the CSOs involved in the project as well as the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, which is the key Ministry in charge of monitoring the PRS 2 implementation, have expressed their interest and willingness to become involved in this innovative partnership between government and civil society.

Enhanced data collection by both civil society and government

The second phase of the project will therefore work simultaneously on improving the demand- and supply-side of service delivery and governance at both local and national levels. To yield balanced, well-rounded results, any monitoring system should strive to combine both survey data and administrative data. While survey data can be collected by CSOs through a beneficiary survey, accessing reliable administrative data on planning and service delivery at local level proved to be particularly problematic during the pilot phase. The project will therefore push for and support improved data management at county and district level by government, provided that these data become accessible to the general public. Coordination mechanisms at both national and county levels need to be established for the collection, storage and analysis of these data.

Gender sensitivity

Governance assessments, if engendered properly, can describe and provide evidence regarding the actual process of exclusion and can be a starting point for rectifying the root causes of such exclusions by addressing the institutions, structures and systems that discriminate against women. The new phase of data collection should feed into such analysis.

3. Methodology

Looking at the experiences from the first phase and the monitoring activities of other organisations that feed into the PRS II monitoring (mainly LISGIS and sector ministries), it appears that monitoring the PRS II from a citizen and HR perspective will have maximum added-value if:

- It combines quantitative and qualitative data;
- It has a direct feedback component built-in;
- It is implemented at both local level and national level;
- The methodology is simple but robust at the same time.

After having assessed various methodologies available, it was decided that the project will use a combination of a Community Score Card and a Community Service Monitoring component.

Community Score Card

The Community Score Card consists of structured focal group discussions on the quality of service delivery in a certain community using a simple questionnaire and scoring system. This can either be applied with 'mixed groups' that are broadly representative of the various interest groups in communities, or with selected groups (women, persons living with a disability, youth, elderly, etc.), to assess service delivery from their specific perspective.

The main advantages of the Community Score Card are that it can:
- Integrate local issues/priorities next to standardized questions;
- Have a strong Human Rights focus (how is government respecting, protecting and ensuring the human rights of citizens);
- Have a strong empowering element if facilitated properly (i.e. data collected are used in a dialogue between service users and service providers, after the scorecard assessment);
- Be implemented by local CSOs if sufficient training is provided.

In order to be able to assess trends in service delivery, the Community Score Card will be implemented in year 1 (baseline), year 3 and year 5 of the project in a selected number of communities.

Community Service Monitoring

While the Community Score Card provides good base line data for progress monitoring, the project will also introduce a more ongoing monitoring of selected services (not projects) by service users and front line service providers (e.g. Parent-Teacher Associations monitoring the quality of education at a certain school).

The main advantages of service monitoring by the community itself are that it:
- Involves both service users and service providers;
- Has a direct impact on the management of services and is empowering especially if it can be combined with using social media/ICT to achieve real time monitoring;
- Improves transparency of service provision if budget analysis is integrated;
- Allows for inclusion of perspectives of women/persons with a disability on service delivery (who is in and who is out, why, what must be changed);
- Provides important qualitative information on how services function/fail.

Monitoring a selected number of services in the participating communities will be done by existing community groups if available (like school boards, health committees, water committees, etc.) and will take place on a regular basis (quarterly) using a set of simple indicators.

In order to keep constant track of service delivery improvements, the project will explore the possibility of using mobile phones for data collection.

Gender sensitivity

In order to ensure that the methodology used is gender-sensitive, the project will:
a. Enable disaggregation of all data that will be collected according to sex;
b. Ensure 50/50 participation of men and women in any survey and/or data collection activity;
c. Include gender-specific questions for services specifically aimed at women or men in the Community Score Card;
d. Focus on issues important to women (like those related to maternal health);
e. Assess and stimulate female representation and participation in decision-making structures and institutions;

The data collected from both methods will be used at three different levels:

1. **The community level.**
   The local groups or CBOs that will collect the data from a certain service provider (primary school, health facility) will be trained to use these data actively in a dialogue with the front line service providers to address existing bottlenecks in service delivery. They will receive training, support and regular mentoring from a county level CSO to enable them to fulfil this role;

2. **The district/county level.**
   The coordinating CSO at county level will collate data and reports coming from the communities and liaise on a regular base with (Assistant) County Development Officers, M&E staff from service providing ministries as well as heads of departments at the county level, to compare survey data with administrative data, identify bottlenecks in service delivery and collectively search for innovative solutions to these bottlenecks. They will provide the communities with feedback on their reports and issues and provide the national level CSOs consortium with relevant data and progress reports.

3. **The national level.**
   At the national level, the consortium of CSOs will collate and analyse the county level data and reports and brief both the MPEA and the relevant sector ministries on a regular base on progress made, on bottlenecks encountered and on solutions found and when relevant come up with practical policy recommendations that will either lead to a an improvement in service delivery, in governance of the sector or citizens-state interaction.

4. Scope of the project

Given the fact that the infrastructure in Liberia is of poor quality, that there is no experience yet with cooperation between Civil Society and Government on joint monitoring of service delivery, and that the capacities of CSOs at both national and local levels are limited, the project will start on a limited scale. It is proposed to select one county per region (3) and Monrovia (in order to be able to monitor geographical differences). In each of these counties 20 communities will participate that are spread over the whole county and together represent the characteristics of the county and its population.

Later on, if successful and more funding becomes available, other counties could be added.

The project would therefore be implemented in two phases:
- Phase one (18 months): Development and testing of methodology, and one CSC run in the selected four counties;
- Phase two (if phase one is successful): Monitoring activities scaled up in more (all?) counties, same time frame as PRS II.

5. Project activities

Given the innovative character of the project and the limited capacities presently available, the project will start in 80 community in 4 counties for the first two years and, if successful, it will be scaled up to a full programme including all 15 counties in Liberia during its second phase, which will last for an additional 3 years. During the initial phase, the project will focus on water, health, education and agriculture services.

In order to achieve the above objectives, the project will have a civil society and a government capacity development component and a third component that will focus on improving government-civil society interface at all national, county and community level.

A. Civil Society component:

Under this component the capacities of Civil Society Organisations will be strengthened to play their roles in the proposed monitoring system and prepare them to interact with government constructively once more functions and resources are delegated to lower levels of government administration. The project will support CSOs at three levels:

1. National NGOs will provide technical and mentoring support to county level NGOs and will receive training and support to analyse and utilise data at the national level for policy revision at ministerial level. Each of the four networks of CSOs will provide technical training to the CSOs in all four counties (The PRS tacking network on M&W skills, Thee women NGOs on gender sensitive monitoring, the HR and budget forum on budget tracking and the disability task force on HRBA), while they will each "adopt" one county CSO for ongoing mentoring support, visiting them at least 6 times over a 18 months period.

2. County level CSOs will provide the staff to implement the Community Score Cards (complemented with staff from other CSOs if necessary) and support and capacitate the 20 community CBOs in their county to do basic data collection and monitor the performance of local service providers. Besides providing the community organisations with basic training, they will visit and mentor these community groups on a regular base (at least once every two months). The county level CSOs will on the other hand receive training and mentoring support from the national NGOs to analyse data at their level, engage with government at the county level and gain access to and use relevant planning data to conduct service and budget monitoring. In order to ensure full transparency and accountability, the county level CSOs will enter into a service contract with the national level project manager.

3. The 80 community CBOs or community groups will actively monitor, either for a general or from a specific stakeholder group perspective, the quality of ongoing service delivery and report that to the higher levels (both civil society and government). They will receive extensive training and ongoing mentoring support by the county level NGOs as well as from ACDOs.

The project will explore possibilities to make use of social media for data management to speed up data management and improve the response time from service providers.

B. Government component:

On the government side, the project aims to support CDOs and ACDOs as well as departmental staff in the four sector ministries to enhance:
-   Their planning, monitoring and data management skills and capacities;
-   Their communication and interactive skills and capacities;
-   Their capacities to monitor services from a Human Rights perspective;
-   Their awareness about the rights of citizens to access government information;
-   Their ability to visit communities more actively to provide and collect relevant information;

The actual support provided top government staff will depend on the outcome of a capacity needs assessment that needs to be conducted before the finalisation of the project proposal.

C. Enhancing government-civil society partnership:

At national, county and possibly district level, platforms for interaction between government and civil society will be established and supported that will facilitate an active interaction between stakeholders regarding all aspect of service delivery. It is proposed that a desk officer will be

appointed in the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs who will be the focal point for the project and who will actively interacts with CSOs at national level through their project manager.
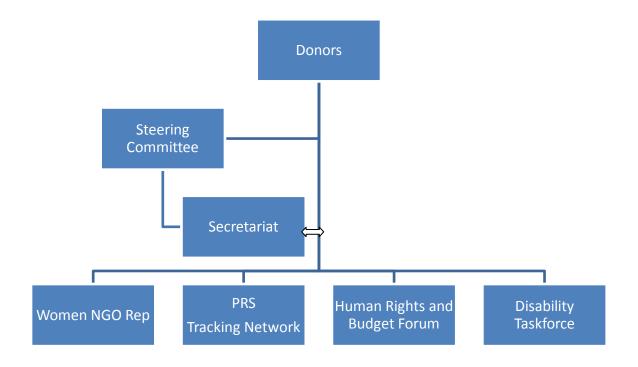
On both government and civil society side appropriate project management structures will be created that will ensure that the project will adhere to the principles of transparency and accountability.

6. Project management

In order to implement the second phase successfully, the management structure of the project needs to be simplified substantially. Several CSOs involved in the first phase did not contribute in a substantial manner to the actual work on the ground. Moreover, there was poor coordination (due partly to the lack of a centralized secretariat, fully capacitated to assume the coordinating role) amongst the participating CSOs, individual interests tended to dominate over collective interests, and as a result, nobody took responsibility for mistakes made. It is imperative for the success of the second phase to improve the project management structure.

In addition, coordination between the project management and the Government has been very poor in the first phase, partly because in order to ensure the independence of their monitoring work, CSOs preferred to work separately from the Government. As a result, much-needed information held by Government was not forthcoming, when requested by the CSOs. With the slightly changed perspective of this second phase, the cooperation between civil society and the Government needs to be formalised in some manner not only to ensure constructive collaboration in data collection and sharing of findings, but also to secure funding from interested partners, who also consider this collaboration to be key to the success of the next phase. More collaboration would also ensure agreement on a set of indicators agreeable to all, thus creating an opportunity for triangulation.

In view of the foregoing, the participating CSOs have agreed on the following management structure:

Steering Committee: UN Family (2 Reps); Government (2 Reps) CSOs (4 Reps). The Steering Committee is to provide overall strategic guidance and facilitation throughout project implementation, and to review all reports from the project before submission of the consolidated

report to the donors. The Steering also would be responsible for making managerial decisions on the project in its entirety.

Secretariat: Three persons: One Finance and Administration officer (possibly part-time, perhaps sharing one staff from a bigger NGO), one Project Coordinator and one Monitoring and Evaluation specialist. The Project Coordinator is answerable to the Steering Committee and responsible for ensuring that the different networks implement their respective assignments on schedule and as agreed in clear contracts which will be drafted between them and the Coordinator, on behalf of the Steering Committee. The Monitoring and Evaluation specialist/statistician advises on the design and implementation of methodologies for data collection, and is responsible for the M&E of the project itself. This Secretariat is jointly recruited by the civil society networks.

Four civil society networks: Each Network implements a specific assignment, for which clear contracts will be drafted between them and the Coordinator on behalf of the Steering Committee. Each Network therefore controls its own funds, but reports to the Project Coordinator. The different network roles would be defined in the overall project document. The Project Coordinator should in addition have the flexibility to engage other service providers outside the NGOS that are members of the 4 networks, if necessary.

Formalizing the relationship with Government: To foster a constructive and mutually beneficial relationship with Government, a formal MOU is proposed to be signed between the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs and the "CSO PRS II Monitoring Platform", which will (1) outline the main advantages of establishing a strong government-civil society partnership for this exercise, with a focus on how this project can be used as a 'testing ground' for the integration of Community-Based Monitoring in official government M&E practices; (2) define the 'rights' and 'obligations' of each party for a smooth implementation of the project, and (3) describe the modalities for strategic and operational collaboration between the two parties (at both national and county levels). The CSOs would draft the MOU and share the same with the Government for finalization and endorsement.

7. Budget

The proposed budget for the first phase of the project will be:
1. Civil Society component (including coordination): $ 353,480.00
2. Government component: $
Total requested budget: $

See annex 1 for budget details

Annex 1 PRS II CSO component budget for 2 years

Description	No. of units	unit costs in USD	total costs in USD
1. Renumerations project staff			
1.1 Programme Manager / month	24	$1 000	$24 000
1.2 M&E specialist / month	24	$750	$18 000
1.3 finance + admin contribution to host organisation	24	$300	$7 200
Sub-total renumerations			**$49 200**
2 Operational cost project staff			
2.1 Equipment, furniture, software and maintenance	1	$4 000	$4 000
2.2 Contribution for Office rent/month to host org.	24	$250	$6 000
2.3 Communication costs/month	24	$200	$4 800
2.4 Stationary and sundry/month	24	$100	$2 400
2.5 Vehicle rental/petrol + local transport/month average	24	$500	$12 000
2.6 Accommodation and DSA for core staff/ month	24	$400	$9 600
Sub-total Operational costs			**$38 800**
3. Training and backstopping			
3.1 Training of national level NGOs	4	$3 000	$12 000
3.2 Initial training of County level NGOs	4	$4 000	$16 000
3.3 Backstopping of County level NGOs	18	$400	$7 200
3.4 Initial training of CBOs.	48	$1 500	$72 000
3.5 Mentoring of CBOs by County level NGOs	64	$1 000	$64 000
Sub-total training and backstopping			**$171 200**
4 Research and publications			
4.1 Implementation of CSC in 80 communities	1	$47 280	$47 280
4.2 Publications	2	$4 000	$8 000
Sub-total research and publications			**$55 280**
5. Other costs			
5.1 National Conference to present findings	1	$10 000	$10 000
5.2 PR activities	1	$5 000	$5 000
5.3 Steering committee meetings	4	$500	$2 000
5.4 Operational costs County level coordination platforms	4	$1 000	$4 000
5.4 External support	2	$5 000	$10 000
5.5 Equipment for county level NGOs	4	$2 000	$8 000
Sub-total other costs			**$39 000**
TOTAL COSTS			**$353 480**

Budget notes:

2.1 Equipment includes 2 lap tops, one laptp screen + software and basic furniture for project staff

2.2 - 2.6 Includes only the costs for project staff

3.1 National level CSOs will receive training in M&E, mentoring, lobby and advocacy skills, leadership depending on needs each of the 4 networks will have a training budget of $3000.00

3.2 Initial training of county level CSOs will be done by each of the 4 networks at national level in: intro in HRBA, budget tracking, M&E, monitoring PRS from a gender perspective. In addition they will receive lobby and advocacy and leadership training. Training will take place in month 3 and 4

3.3 Mentoring of county CSOs by national networks: each national network will mentor one county NGO over an 18 month period, visiting them 6 times for one week = 24 times. Costs include travel ($150,00 on avarage), fees and accommodation and food for one person (@50/day for 5 days average) = $ 400

3.4 Initial training of CBOs: County level CSOs will conduct 3 succcesive trainings of 20 CBOs in 4 groups of 5, each CBO participating with 4 people = 20 people/training and 12 training sessions per county = 48 sessions for 4 counties. Training 1 = explaining the project and role of CBO, training 2 = explaining the method, training 3 = actual data collection. Trainings will take place in month 7 and 8 of project

3.5 Mentoring of CBOs by County level CSOs: County level CSOs will enter into a service contract with the project to mentor and visit local CBOs once every 2 months over a 16 months period (month 9-24). The service contract includes fees, transport, accommodation, overhead costs, material, etc. = 64 months

4.1 CSC implementation
80 CSCs will be conducted (20 communities/county)
Each county will have 2 teams of 2 facilitators, each team conducting 10 CSCs = 16 enumerators
A CSC takes 4 days (1 travel, 1 organising, 1 implementation, 1 reporting)
total days for 80 CSCs = 320 days
Including training and travel, the enumerators will be engaged for 46 days
They will receive a fee of $40 a day including accommodation and food
Each CSC will cost $50 per community for tea/lunch

	days			
fees enumerators	16	46	$40.00	$29 440.00
transport costs teams	16		$100.00	$1 600.00
fees supervisors	4	46	$60.00	$11 040.00
transport supervisors	4		$300.00	$1 200.00
running costs CSCs	80		$50.00	$4 000.00
total costs				**$47 280.00**

5.4 External support
Two support missions are budgeted for, one after core staff is recruited to design methodology details
one towards the end of the first phase to assist with analysing results and report drafting

5.5 Equipment county level CSOs includes a laptop and software and basic furniture