



PEACEBUILDING FUND
Liberia

FINAL PROJECT NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT

FINAL REPORT COVER PAGE

Recipient Organization(s): UNOPS	PBF Priority Area: <i>(Not applicable for Emergency Window projects)</i>
PBF Project No: PBF/EMER/4 New PBF Project No: 66699 New Atlas No: 54699 PBF Project Title: Supporting Reconciliation in Nimba County -Liberia	Report Number: 1
Reporting Period: 1 Feb 08 to 31 Dec 08	Project Budget: PBF-funding: USD 788,644.00 Other funding: Interpeace (cash and in kind including personnel): USD 34'240.00 Ministry of Internal Affairs (in kind support through contribution of personnel and support cost): USD 25'200.00 UNMIL (in kind with in-county air transportation): USD 15'000.00 Total: USD 863'084.00
List Implementing Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none">UNOPS-SWOC, Joint Programme Unit for UN/Interpeace Initiatives (JPU), The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the Liberian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)	Project Coverage/Scope: Nimba County – Liberia (all six statutory districts)

Abbreviations and acronyms:

UNMIL: United Nations Mission in Liberia
MIA: Ministry of Internal Affairs

Project Duration:Start Date:

- *February 2008*

End date:

- *August 2008*

Budget Revisions/Extensions:

- *No cost extension requested and granted until the end of September for the final County Reconciliation Conference organized with MIA*

Project Closure:

- *The project was closed at the end of August with the County Conference and some minor works pending*

NARRATIVE REPORT FORMAT

I. Purpose

- 1.1 The project was implemented in Nimba County, a major theatre of combat during the Liberian civil war that has the highest number of ex-combatants; high levels of tensions which result in frequent instances of conflict; and rich mineral resources (it was the largest industrial area in pre-war Liberia). This combination of factors makes Nimba a critical factor for the consolidation of peace in Liberia. It can serve as a potential trigger for national destabilization and conflict or a source of inspiration for national reconciliation and catalyst for economic resuscitation.

- 1.2 Under a request from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the Joint Program Unit for UN/Interpeace Initiatives of UNOPS developed the project “Supporting Reconciliation in Nimba County”, as an effort to foster reconciliation, create conditions for the return and reintegration of refugees, develop a strategy for continued reconciliation for the County and identify mechanisms that prevents the emergence of conflict and promotes the resolution of property disputes. Building on gains made by the Government of Liberia with support from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to resolve the conflict which has manifested itself in the contestation for land and properties, the project was conceived as an inclusive and participatory consultation process.

- 1.3 The objectives of the project were to:
 - Foster coexistence and reconciliation between ethnic groups in Nimba County;
 - Strengthen local capacity for sustained conflict management and transformation;
 - Develop policy frameworks and laws that support continued property dispute resolution;
 - Facilitate arrangements for compensation over property disputes through the road expansion of Ganta City; and
 - Increase employment opportunities for disaffected youth in a way that encourages cooperation between groups.

II. Resources

- 2.1 The total cost of the project was USD 863,084 from which the PBF contributed USD 788,644, MIA contributed in-kind USD 25,200, UNMIL contributed in-kind USD 15,000 and Interpeace contributed in-kind and cash USD 34,200.

- 2.2 The Ministry of Internal Affairs contributed with time of its staff that was dedicated to support the project activities, assist to project training and dialogue events, and coordination in the ground. UNMIL contributed with its scheduled helicopter flights to the area when requested. In addition, Interpeace shared part of the costs of the initiative by covering the costs of the office space in Monrovia and by contributing to the training of the new team. Concretely, Interpeace sent its staff to Liberia to support in the areas of reflective practice, field participatory research and dialogue and financial management.

2.3 No budget revision was required, but UNOPS requested two no-cost extensions of the project. The first extension for one additional month was requested on the 2nd of July and granted the same day by email from the PBSO. The second request was sent to the PBSO on the 21st of August and approved on the 29th of that month. The purpose of this extension was to complete some pending activities like the evaluation, additional drainage work and the construction of two Peace Houses requested by the government (MIA) and the holding of the final Nimba Reconciliation Conference where the Minister would receive the results of the intervention and commit to follow up on its recommendations.

2.4 Human Resources:

- The project was implemented by a fully Liberian team directly recruited by the JPU / UNOPS. A coordination unit based in Monrovia with 6 employees was established to oversee overall implementation of the project. Three Research Teams of four researchers each were deployed to implement a participatory research strategy in the six districts of the County. A local legal expert was hired as a consultant for a study on statutory and customary property dispute resolution mechanisms. A Supervising Engineer was hired to oversee the private contractor in charge of implementing the plans for the construction of drainage in the expanded roads of Ganta City. Overall, the project had a staff of 24 persons.
- A Programme Officer based in Geneva provided continued support to the local team, including through regular visits. International consultants from Interpeace were used to train the team as well as for interim reviews.

III. Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements

3.1 The project was implemented directly by the Joint Program Unit for UN/Interpeace Initiatives of UNOPS through a wholly national team trained, monitored and supported by the Geneva JPU team. After an initial set-up process, during which training of the team took place, the project was implemented in three tracks, designed to provide specific peacebuilding outcomes:

- Track 1: a research and dialogue process implemented by three research teams hired directly by the JPU.
- Track 2: a local legal expert was hired to prepare a Consultancy Report on the harmonization of customary practices and statutory regulations for land management and dispute resolution.
- Track 3: a drainage construction in the newly developed streets of Ganta city as requested by the government. The works were contracted to a private local company under specific terms of reference and with the supervision of a UNOPS engineer. Towards the end of the project, given the fact that the construction effort was successful and there was some extra funding available for construction, this track was expanded to include:
 - Additional corrective work to the drainage of one of the streets, by the same contractor;
 - Upon request from MIA, the construction of two “Peace Houses”, intended to be used for community conflict-resolution processes in two

communities identified by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which were subcontracted to the same local contractor.

3.2 *Track 1* consisted of a research and dialogue process with key stakeholders in local communities in the six administrative districts of Nimba County, implemented in three phases aiming at identifying key actors and issues, facilitating discussions about sources of conflict and elements for collaboration, identifying areas of convergence and divergence, facilitating the development of shared visions, and finally putting forward consensual recommendations for action. Over one thousand inhabitants from different settlements in Nimba County participated in this six-month process.

3.2.1 *During the “Listening phase”* the Research Teams covered the County for consultations using different consultation methods from one-on-one interviews to town-hall meetings, aimed to “map” the conflicts as perceived by the local population and identifying the different individual and collective actors involved. More than one thousand individuals in 64 settlements in the six districts were visited in this process.

3.2.2 *During the “Visioning” phase*, and based upon the issues and actor mapping obtained in the previous phase, the Research Teams organized representative Focus Groups in each district, each one meeting three times over two-day sessions in which findings from the previous phase were validated, the identified problems were further analyzed, and convergence around common goals and recommendations on how to address these was facilitated.

3.2.3 *During the “Action Planning” phase*, the Research Teams integrated the results from the previous phase into concrete recommendations addressing the identified problems, as a strategy for reconciliation to be implemented through collaboration between national authorities, local communities and civil society. These recommendations were then validated with participants in the previous phase, and then presented to national authorities in a final conference with process participants from all over the County and the Acting President of Liberia and Minister of Internal Affairs.

3.3 *Track 2* consisted of a consultancy report combining desk and field study, exploring mechanisms for the harmonization of customary practices and statutory regulations for land management and dispute resolution that was handed to the Ministry of Internal Affairs for its consideration in the context of the development of national policies designed to address the problem. The Report included concrete recommendations on mechanisms to address inconsistency between the customary and statutory legal frameworks, and the development of functional property disputes resolution mechanisms.

3.4 *Track 3* consisted of the construction of drainage in the context of the Government’s plan to expand roads in the city of Ganta as a strategy to reduce tensions over prime property in the city between returnees and residents belonging to different ethnic groups. This expansion of the city was one of the outcomes of the Ad-hoc Presidential Commission for Nimba and the government requested that the project contributed to the finishing of the new roads. The construction involved the use of labour-intensive methods and ethnically balanced recruitment of ex-combatants, designed to support the peacebuilding outcomes of the process. This provided opportunities of

engagement to disaffected youth and demobilized ex-combatants, which allowed the process to provide a space –absent so far- for inter-ethnic collaboration and co-existence.

- 3.5 Procurement followed standard UNOPS rules and regulations. The only mayor procurement exercises were related to the purchase of two cars and the company selected to undertake the construction works.
- 3.6 The project established a monitoring system based upon its plan of action and carried out at different levels. In Liberia, the Monrovia coordination unit monitored implementation of the different components of the project (participatory research; consultation report on legal issues; drainage work; construction of peace houses) through regular visits to the field and a reporting protocol from each of these teams, contractors or consultants, based upon the agreed plan of work. The Geneva team monitored implementation of the overall plan through regular visits to Liberia, including visits to Nimba County, and a reporting protocol from the Monrovia coordination unit also based upon the plan of work. Conceived as a pilot project to assess the participatory strategy designed for a nation-wide research and dialogue project, the Nimba Reconciliation Project implemented regular review sessions at the end of each phase aimed to assess strategy and methods and identify lessons to improve practice. Those derived from the first two review sessions were immediately inputted into the next phases of the plan of work; those derived from the last phase were folded into the overall lessons learned from the project, to be inputted into the plan of work of the scaled-up National Project “Platform for Dialogue and Peace in Liberia”. The reviews were organized to coincide with visits of the Geneva team to Liberia, in order to facilitate support, advice and institutional learning. A final internal session on “lessons learned” was organized by the Monrovia Coordination Unit with the research teams in order to systematize the experience and reach conclusions that will feed the new project.
- 3.7 On-going coordination was also maintained between the Monrovia Coordination Unit, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and UNMIL through regular meetings and contacts where progress was discussed.
- 3.8 An external evaluation was conducted by an international consultant, Ms. Gwendolyn Taylor, selected by the Ministry of Internal Affairs from a list developed by the JPU-UNOPS and UNMIL. The terms of reference for the evaluation were prepared in collaboration between the JPU-UNOPS, UNMIL and CDA (Collaborative Learning Projects), a US-based non-profit research agency known for its development of peace and conflict assessment methodologies, which is supporting in the establishment of the Liberia Peacebuilding Office. CDA provided also additional support to the evaluation process by reviewing the Plan of Work before its implementation and the Final Evaluation Report presented by the consultant, as well as by presenting its own recommendations in an annex to the Final Report.

IV. Results

4.1 The project was implemented in seven months, and achieved concrete outputs as identified in the Project Document:

4.1.1 *The participatory research and dialogue processes* was carried out in the six administrative districts of Nimba and allowed the identification and analysis of root causes and fault lines for violent conflicts, as perceived by the local population. These findings were included in the Report on Findings and Recommendations presented to national authorities on September 2008 (see Annex 1).

4.1.2 *The series of visioning workshops* at the district level with the different ethnic groups and other social actors took place and contributed to the development of shared visions for future development and coexistence in the county, reflected in the consensual recommendations on how to address outstanding conflicts and tensions. These findings were included in the Report on Findings and Recommendations presented to national authorities on September 2008 (see Annex 1).

4.1.3 A Reconciliation Conference led by the Government took place on September 19, 2008. This event allowed the development and legitimation of a Reconciliation Strategy for Nimba as an agreement between the different ethnic and social groups and the national authorities. The practical measures to foster continued reconciliation in the county were included in the Report on Findings and Recommendations presented to national authorities on September 2008 (see annex 1). Actual implementation of this strategy requires a decision of the national authorities, who are currently in the process of considering the best way to implement the recommendations.

4.1.4 Research into customary law practices was conducted and allowed the identification of local resources for conflict resolution that can be integrated into a legal framework for the resolution of present and future property disputes, and made recommendations for the consideration of national authorities in the corresponding Consultancy Report (see Annex 2). The Report on Findings and Recommendations presented to national authorities on September 2008 contained also important insights into this issue. (See Annex 1)

4.1.5 Construction of drainage in the two expanded roads in the city of Ganta provided employment opportunities to disaffected youth and demobilized ex-combatants from the different ethnic groups (see Annex 3).

4.2 These outputs, and the process of research and dialogue itself as an opportunity where local actors engage in collaborative action and have the opportunity to transform attitudes and develop collaborative behaviour, allowed concrete progress towards the following outcomes:

4.2.1 *Co-existence and reconciliation between ethnic groups in Nimba County is fostered.* As the Evaluation Report noted, the project has succeeded in generating what is defined as “momentum for peace”, expressed in the combination of the identification of sources of conflict, the improvement of the lines of communication between the different ethnic groups, the creation of spaces for

- open participation by different social groups, and the transformation of attitudes and perceptions reported by participants. These, achieved through the activities in Track 1 –research and dialogue process- and 3 –drainage construction-, have also allowed the emergence of concrete recommendations on how to further pursue this goal through a series of activities that together constitute a plan for Reconciliation in the county. The concrete mechanisms recommended in the report developed under Track 2 also identify concrete measures to prevent property disputes from creating conflict between the different ethnic groups.
- 4.2.2 *Local capacity for sustained conflict management and transformation strengthened.* The project has contributed in several ways to the development of local capacity for conflict transformation: first, the research and dialogue process in Track 1 and the collaborative work undertaken under Track 3 have provided an important number of local actors with a positive experience on the possibilities for the use of dialogue as a tool for conflict transformation, and has mobilized key elements in the community to promote these approaches. Second, both in Track 1 and Track 2 concrete recommendations towards the establishment of community-based conflict transformation mechanisms have been identified and proposed.
- 4.2.3 *Policy frameworks and laws that support continued property dispute resolution developed.* The project has made explicit contribution towards the development of these mechanisms both through specific recommendations in the Findings and Recommendations emerging from its research and dialogue Track 1, as well as in the Consultancy Report in Track 2.
- 4.2.4 *Compensatory arrangements for property disputes resolution eased through the expansion of Ganta City.* The project concretely contributed to this through the construction of the drainage on the expanded roads in the city of Ganta under Track 3.
- 4.2.5 *Employment opportunities for disaffected youth increased.* The project effectively provided employment to over 50 youngsters from the different ethnic groups of Ganta for a period of 12 weeks, for a total of at least 3000 days/person, under Track 3.
- 4.3 As the outputs and outcomes evidence, in terms of its three overall goals, -to foster reconciliation; to create conditions for the return and reintegration of refugees; and to develop a strategy for continued reconciliation for the County- the project has had concrete achievements. As the evaluation report indicates, concrete follow-up by national authorities is now required to seize the momentum generated by the project and build upon its recommendations to move towards establishing sustained reconciliation (see Annex 4: Evaluation Report).
- 4.4 The project was implemented in close coordination with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the United Nations Mission in Liberia. Coordination with UNMIL was key to facilitate research by ensuring support by UNMIL personnel to the research teams in the field, in terms of guidance, protection and information. Coordination with the Ministry of Internal Affairs was critical in ensuring coordination with local level authorities, as well as in analyzing the results and considering follow-up activities. Coordination mechanisms with UNMIL and MIA will be enhanced in the implementation of the new, national scale project.

V. Future Work Plan (if applicable)

- 5.1 The only pending activities are linked to the extra construction work requested at the end of the project, in order to make maximal use of available resources. The work on one of the peace palaces and the extra drainage activities are being finalized with final payment pending confirmation by the Monrovia team that the extra works have been completed satisfactorily. The expenditures are reported in 2008.

- 5.2 Satisfaction on the results achieved through the Emergency Window project has resulted in the decision to allow the scale-up of the project nationwide. The Platform for Peace and Development in Liberia will start operations in April 2009 after receiving a grant of US\$ 1 million from the Peacebuilding Fund allocated by the Liberia Joint Steering Committee, and to be complemented by other funds. The new project will allow the JPU Liberia team to engage in a research and dialogue process at the national level, covering the rest of the Liberian counties, while allowing the implementation in Nimba of some of the recommendations that are part of the Reconciliation Strategy for Nimba, in close coordination with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who is also actively considering implementation of other recommendations.

Annex 1

Nimba County Reconciliation Project - Findings and Recommendations

Annex 2

Consultancy Report

Customary Law and National Legal Procedures for Property Dispute Resolution in Nimba

Annex 3

Final Report of the Ganta Street Drainage/Culverts Construction Work

Annex 4

External Evaluation