



**PEACEBUILDING FUND (PBF)
FINAL PROGRAMME¹ NARRATIVE REPORT**

REPORTING PERIOD: FROM AUGUST 2009 TO MAY 2010

<p align="center">Programme Title & Project Number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Title: Rapid Rule of Law Assistance to Reduce Overcrowding in Monrovia Central Prison Programme Number (if applicable) PBF/LBR/D-7 Monrovia Prison MPTF Office Project Reference Number:³ 00072005 	<p align="center">Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results²</p> <p>(if applicable) <i>Country/Region</i> Liberia, Montserrado County</p> <p><i>Priority area/ strategic results</i> Critical Interventions to Promote Peace and Resolve Conflict/ Strengthening State Capacity for Peace Consolidation</p>						
<p align="center">Participating Organization(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations that have received direct funding from the MPTF Office under this programme United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 	<p align="center">Implementing Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National counterparts (government, private, NGOs & others) and other International Organizations <p>Washington and Lee University School of Law; Judiciary of Liberia (under the aegis of its supervisory role of Judicial Scholarship Program)</p>						
<p align="center">Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</p> <p>Total approved budget as per project document: MPTF /JP Contribution⁴: 50,000US\$</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> by Agency (if applicable) <p>Agency Contribution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> by Agency (if applicable) <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Government Contribution (if applicable)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Contributions (donors) (if applicable)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>TOTAL:</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Government Contribution (if applicable)		Other Contributions (donors) (if applicable)		TOTAL:		<p align="center">Programme Duration</p> <p>Overall Duration (months) 8 Months Start Date⁵ 12 August 2009</p> <p>Original End Date⁶ 10 March 2010</p> <p>Actual End date⁷ 15 May 2010</p> <p>Have agency(ies) operationally closed the Programme in its(their) system? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Expected Financial Closure date⁸:</p>
Government Contribution (if applicable)							
Other Contributions (donors) (if applicable)							
TOTAL:							
<p align="center">Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.</p> <p>Evaluation Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date: (mid-term) March 2010</p> <p>Evaluation Report - Attached <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Date:</p>	<p align="center">Report Submitted By</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: Title: Participating Organization (Lead): United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Email address: 						

¹ The term “programme” is used for programmes, joint programmes and projects.

² Strategic Results, as formulated in the Performance Management Plan (PMP) for the PBF, Priority Plan or project document;

³ The MPTF Office Project Reference Number is the same number as the one on the Notification message. It is also referred to as “Project ID” on the project’s factsheet page on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#).

⁴ The MPTF/JP Contribution is the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations – see [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)

⁵ The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the MPTF Office as Administrative Agent. Transfer date is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)

⁶ As per approval of the original project document by the relevant decision-making body/Steering Committee.

⁷ If there has been an extension, then the revised, approved end date should be reflected here. If there has been no extension approved, then the current end date is the same as the original end date. The end date is the same as the operational closure date which is when all activities for which a Participating Organization is responsible under an approved MPTF / JP have been completed. As per the MOU, agencies are to notify the MPTF Office when a programme completes its operational activities. Please see [MPTF Office Closure Guidelines](#).

⁸ Financial Closure requires the return of unspent balances and submission of the [Certified Final Financial Statement and Report](#).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The “Rapid Rule of Law Assistance to Reduce Overcrowding in Monrovia Central Prison” project worked to systematically reduce prison overcrowding and prolonged pretrial detention in Monrovia Central Prison (MCP) while simultaneously training Liberian law students in critically-needed practical legal and administrative skills.

Over the course of the eight (8) months-implementation, the project, through the deployment of 12 Judicial interns who assisted Magistrates, kept the prison population from increasing and assisted to provide justice to a number of pre-trial detainees who would have remained in prison without any hope for legal redress. Given the fact that over 90% of those incarcerated were legally innocent but had yet to be brought before a court, the project played a critical role of ensuring access to justice for the target group and helped to restore prisoner’s confidence in the justice system and thereby reduced tension in the prison.

Considering the high rate of arrests and detention of criminal suspects, the discontinuity of clerkship to Magistrates in the face of the project termination was likely to reintroduce overpopulation in the prison. The continuation of the judicial clerkship program was highly recommended because it played a catalytic role in giving the Magistrate Sitting Program the critical momentum needed by assisting the magistrates to prepare for trial in MCP.

I. Purpose

Liberia Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) Priority Plan articulated “weak justice systems” as one of the major challenges to peacebuilding. Due to the extended period of the civil war in Liberia, infrastructure as well as legal and justice systems were either totally destroyed or became dysfunctional. Correctional facilities were no exceptions. The Monrovia Central Prison (MCP) was rebuilt in 2007 with the assistance of UNHCR but had been overcrowded in recent years. At the beginning of project, the MCP housed half of the country’s 1,420 prisoners, which was over four times its designed population capacity. The excessive use and length of pre-trial detention as well as wrongful detention stood out as one of the contributing factors to prison overcrowding. Pre-trial detainees were held in the same space holding convicted prisoners. Detention records revealed a severe backlog of cases of pre-trial detainees with some accused persons incarcerated for years without necessary legal proceedings. Inadequate capacity and infrastructure, poor case management procedures, a lack of sufficiently trained legal practitioners, and overburdened public servants resulted in the harsh living conditions at the MCP.

To address the prison overcrowding at the MCP, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and the Supreme Court launched the “Magistrate Sitting Program (MSP)” in early 2009. The program brought Magistrates from their jurisdictional courts in and around Monrovia to the MCP to begin processing pre-trial detainees. Magistrates from six districts – Monrovia City, Paynesville, Brewersville, Gardnersville, West Point, and New Kru Town – held hearings Monday through Saturday at the prison. The initiative started with significant momentum, and led to the release of an estimated 239 inmates as of April 4, 2009. However, the initiative later began to experience challenges due to inadequate staffing and a poor recordkeeping system. . The initiative was in need of further support and assistance.

It was against this background that *the Rapid Rule of Law Assistance to Reduce Overcrowding in Monrovia Central Prison* was conceived. The objective of the project was to relieve severe prison overcrowding by systematically reducing the number of pre-trial detainees at Monrovia Central Prison (MCP). The intent of the project was to assist magistrates to process fair and timely hearings through Judicial Interns who were Liberian law students on Judicial Scholarship and were obligated to work in the criminal justice sector upon graduation. Judicial Interns were expected to help magistrates keep and organize records of prisoners and

hearings, while simultaneously receiving on-the-job training under the oversight of magistrates and mentoring by a Law Practicum Fellow who served as a coordinator of the project. To be able to offer skilled and knowledgeable assistance, the law students also receive advanced training in “Access to Justice” issues and critical administrative skills. Finally, the project aimed to rebuild a public trust to judiciary through developing the capacity of the judiciary in processing pre-trial detainees as required by Liberian law.

II. Assessment of Programme Results

i) Narrative reporting on results:

The judicial interns began to work with the MSP in mid-September 2009 and up to the end of the program in April 2010, they assisted the Magistrates to identify detainees for hearings. They worked closely with the court clerks to locate case files of pre-trial detainees; consulted with the Magistrates and the court clerks to prepare the docket for the hearings at MCP; assisted the clerk in distributing the schedule of cases to be heard to the city solicitors, defense counsel and the court liaison officer of MCP; assisted the Magistrates in preparing for hearings; attended all proceedings on their scheduled days. They also worked closely with the clerks of court to improve record keeping; kept clear and accurate records of the hearings at MCP and gave copies to the Magistrates and the supervising law fellow; worked closely with the prison court liaison officer to ensure that the correct detainees were brought to the hearings; and facilitated better communication between and among the courts and the prison as well as between the courts and the supervising law fellow.

The judicial interns developed and improved on their administrative and record keeping skills by working closely with the court clerks to improve the record keeping systems in the magisterial courts. They also kept clear and accurate records of the hearings at MCP and gave copies of these records to the magistrates. By working closely with the courts and attending hearings at MCP, the judicial interns also learned practical skills such as proper application of legal codes and procedures. This enhanced the quality of their legal education and training as law students. Through the clerkship, the students also developed a better understanding of the shortcomings of the Liberian justice system. The judicial interns also benefited from a video conference class held every Tuesday at the American embassy from 1-3pm. The class culminated in a site visit by students from Washington and Lee. The Law Practicum Fellow, the coordinator of the project, used these opportunities to conduct training for groups acting within the ‘access to justice’ arena.

During the course of the program, the presence of the judicial interns systematically reduced the severe backlog of cases of prolonged pre-trial detainees at MCP. From mid-September 2009 to April 2010, 798 pre-trial detainees cases were heard at MCP and of the 798, a total of 584 detainees were released. Each day the magisterial court sitting at MCP heard between 4-15 cases often resulting in the release of between 4-7 pretrial detainees. In some instances as many as 12 detainees were released per day.

The program kept the prison population from increasing and assisted to provide justice to a number of pre-trial detainees who would have remained in prison without any opportunity for legal redress. Considering that over 90% of those incarcerated were legally innocent, but were not brought before a court of competent jurisdiction for justice, the project played a critical role to ensure access to justice for such detainees, helped restore prisoner’s confidence in the justice system, and reduced tension in the prison.

Key partnerships and collaborations

In achieving these outputs, the project developed and maintained a number of key partnerships and collaborations. The partnership with Louis A. Grimes School of Law and the Judiciary through the Liberia Human Rights Practicum was a key in the operationalization of the project. The project also benefited from various cooperative and collaborative relationships with stakeholders working in MCP. For instance, the

Law Practicum Fellow was able to liaise with UNDP and obtained a computer and a printer for the MCP. This made it easier for the prison to generate electronic versions of lists of detainees at MCP and to monitor individual prisoners. The Law Practicum Fellow also participated in the Pre-Trial Detention Task Force that was created by the MOJ to address the issues faced by the MSP. The Task Force was made up of various parties, such as the American Bar Association (ABA), the Open Society Initiative (OSI), PAE, UNMIL, and two Magistrates. The Law Practicum Fellow raised number of constrains the project had faced to the forum and were able to find solutions.

ii) Indicator Based Performance Assessment:

Using the **Programme Results Framework from the Project Document / AWP**s - provide details of the achievement of indicators at both the output and outcome level in the table below. Where it has not been possible to collect data on indicators, clear explanation should be given explaining why.

	<u>Achieved Indicator Targets</u> (Cumulative over funding period)	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
<p>Outcome 1⁹ Prison overcrowding at Monrovia Central Prison is reduced.</p> <p>Indicator: Baseline: Planned Target:</p>	<p>The program has systematically lessened the severe backlog of cases of prolonged pre-trial detainees at MCP. From mid-September to April 2010, when the judicial interns started clerking for the Magistrates, 798 pre-trial detainees cases have been heard at MCP and of these 798, a total of 584 have been released. Each day the magisterial court sitting at MCP hears about 4-15 cases and most often between 4-7 pretrial detainees are released. On some occasions as many as 12 detainees are released per day.</p>	N/A	Case records
<p>Outcome 2 Number of backlogged cases of pre-trial detainees at Monrovia Central Prison on magisterial courts' dockets is decreased.</p> <p>Indicator: Baseline: Planned Target:</p>	<p>The number of backlogged cases of prolonged pre-trial detainees charged for crimes other than rape at Monrovia Central Prison has tremendously reduced. For instance, Brewerville, West Point and Paynesville magisterial courts have processed most of their prolonged pre-trial detainees' case files.</p>	N/A	Case records
<p>Outcome 3 Judicial Interns increased their legal skills through advanced training in "access to justice" issues and critical administrative skills to supplement their legal studies and to prepare them for future work in the justice sector.</p> <p>Indicator: Baseline: Planned Target:</p>	<p>The class has bolstered the students understanding of national, regional and international norms of human rights and the rights of pre-trial detainees as well as the importance of providing speedy and timely justice to all.</p>	N/A	Interview with Judicial Interns
<p>Outcome 4 Capacity of Judiciary strengthened by having skilled and knowledgeable assistance in processing cases and assisting with record-keeping.</p> <p>Indicator:</p>	<p>The work of the program has assisted the Judiciary by helping to make the hearings at MCP more structured and efficient. Additionally, the Judicial Interns have been</p>	N/A	Program Coordinator/Practicum Fellow's Report

⁹ Note: Outcomes, outputs, indicators and targets should be as outlines in the Project Document/Priority Plan or PMP specific so that you report on your actual cumulative achievements against planned targets. Add rows as required for Outcome 2, 3 etc.

Baseline: Planned Target:	helping the magisterial courts through various tasks such as finding and processing older cases, identifying cases previously transferred to circuit court to update and reconcile court records and prison records, ensuring proper records are kept during the hearings at MCP, and ensuring that cases that are scheduled for later hearing (at the prison or at the court) are held and/or appropriate action is taken		
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iii) Evaluation, Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Evaluation

The PBF Liberia mid-term review evaluated the project in March 2010. Peacebuilding Fund Liberia mid-term review noted that “immediate results indicate that pre-trial detainees were released from prison that still have been in detention if the program did not exist. The program was effective in speeding up the processing of pre-trial detainees”. The Judicial interns and equipment (laptops and filing cabinets) provided through the project gave the MSP the critical capacity required.

Best Practices

The judicial clerkship program was a success both in terms of addressing prison over-crowding and enhancing the knowledge and capacity of law students who participated. It has been recommended that this internship component should be mainstreamed in the law school curriculum for to ensure that law students have a good practical experience as part of their study. Up to the end of the project, the Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law of the University of Liberia did not display much enthusiasm in the proposal to integrate the internship component into the law school curriculum.

Challenges

Funds for the project were transferred to UNHCR HQ thirty-nine (39) days after the project approval by the PBF Liberia JSC. LAC/W&L had to cover operational costs until the funds were transferred into the accounts of the UNHCR Representation in Liberia. Since the project duration was linked to the academic calendar of Liberia, the delay in releasing funds for the project would have affected project results if LAC/W&J had not intervened to pre-finance the project.

While the project played a critical role by introducing an interim measure to the problems at the Monrovia Central Prison (MCP), considering the high rate of arrests and detention of criminal suspects, the discontinuity of clerkship to Magistrates is likely to reintroduce overpopulation at the Monrovia Central Prison. The judicial clerkship program should be supported and continued because it is instrumental in bolstering the capacity and preparedness of the magistrates. As evidenced by the project, this initiative reduced case processing time in some courts thereby strengthening the criminal justice system. A continuation of the program could only ensure consistency and prevent a breakdown of the existing structure.