



The Republic of Liberia



Liberia

TRC Final Reconciliation Initiatives



Participants at the National Conference

PBF Project No: PP/R5/A1/03

PBF Project Title: TRC Final Reconciliation Initiatives: County Consultations and National Reconciliation Conference

Report Number:

Reporting Period: March to June 2009

Project Budget: US\$350,000

List Implementing Partners: TRC, Umbrella Civil Society Organizations, Relevant Government Agencies and Ministries

Project Coverage/Scope: National

Duration of Project: Three Months

Submitted by: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)
July 2009

Abbreviations

| | |
|----------|---|
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| TRC | Truth and Reconciliation Commission |
| GOL | Government of Liberia |
| GC | Governance Commission |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organizations |
| UNMIL | United Nations Mission in Liberia |
| UNPBF | United Nations Peace Building Fund |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| FIND | Foundation for International Dignity |
| WONGOSOL | Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia |
| MIA | Ministry of Internal Affairs |
| MPEA | Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs |
| GSA | General Services Agency |

I. Purpose

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Final Reconciliation Initiatives aimed to promote national peace, security and reconciliation in Liberia. It had the objectives to provide opportunity for the local population to actively participate in harnessing the TRC recommendations in relation to the four policy issues of Reconciliation, Amnesty, Reparation, and Prosecution; to facilitate a forum for victims and perpetrators mediation and to provide a forum for discussion and dialogues among Liberians.

The two main activities of the final reconciliation initiatives included the County Consultations and National Reconciliation Conference. These activities sought to harness peace and reconciliation in Liberia by providing the opportunity and space in which Liberians could discuss reconciliation and deepen their understanding of the four policy issues. The key outputs of the TRC Final Reconciliation Initiatives were:

1. Increased participation of local Liberian populace in harnessing the TRC's recommendations, with the aim to prevent conflict and promote peace and reconciliation at regional and county levels.
2. National peace and reconciliation initiatives strengthened to sustain peace and stability in Liberia.

The project relates to the PBF planned objectives in that it helps to strengthen the capacities and understanding of counties on the importance of promoting and sustaining peace in Liberia.

The project addresses issues of the Liberian civil war and its impact on the country as well as what can be done to move the country forward with the aim of promoting reconciliation and sustaining peace. It is a collective effort and a prerequisite to accelerating economic and social growth and development in Liberia.

The TRC collaborated with various institutions to ensure the full implementation and success of this project such as the Human Rights and Protection Section of UNMIL, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), The Governance Commission (GC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), UNOPS/Interpeace, Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as Civil Society Organizations including the Foundation for International Dignity (FIND), Women NGO Secretariat (WONGOSOL), Talking Drum Studio, Peace Building Resource Centre (PBRC), and West Africa Network for Peace building (WANEP) among others.

The roles and responsibilities of these agencies and organizations was the provision of technical support to the TRC's Secretariat, assistance in the development of the training and consultation package/module for the county/regional consultations, support to the mobilization of the counties for the consultations, help to conduct training for County coordinators/mobilizes and mediators, facilitated the county/regional consultations, support to the planning and implementation of the National Reconciliation Conference. Many of these agencies and organizations also served on the Steering Committee for the National Reconciliation Conference.

II. Resources

Adequate resource mobilization was essential for the planning and conducting of activities of the TRC Final Reconciliation Initiatives. Both financial and human resources were mobilized to ensure the conduct of the County/Regional Consultations and the National Reconciliation Conference. At the insistence of the ICGL (of which the UNDP is a part of) the entire process was opened to the greater participation of the civil society and other government agencies. It is important to note that the leadership provided by the G C through their representation, added great value to both the regional consultations and the national conference.

2.1 Financial Resources

The Commission received from the Peace Building Fund the total amount of US\$350,000.00 (Three hundred and fifty thousand United States Dollars) to conduct the county/regional consultations and to conduct the National Reconciliation Conference. The Government of Liberia through the TRC contributed the total amount of \$110,000.00 for the process. Other contributions in kind came from local organizations.

2.2 Human Resources

The Commission set up a secretariat to implement and provide overall coordination of the TRC final reconciliation initiatives. The secretariat was headed by a Coordinator and comprised a cross-section of TRC staff from the various units. Staffs from other civil society organization including WONGOSOL, ICTJ, AHR, TJWG, PUL, UNDP, GC, GSA, ECOWAS, NARDA and NTCL also participated on the steering committee.

The Human Rights Section of UNMIL and the GC provided technical staff to review county consultation modules, trained county coordinators/mobilize, planned and facilitated the county/regional consultations. Other areas of support included the Steering Committee for the national reconciliation conference. The Committee had the responsibility to:

- Provide technical support to the TRC in the planning and execution of the conference.
- Provide advice to the Conference Secretariat on the planning and execution of the Conference.
- Review conference preparatory documentations
- Provide technical support in the writing of the conference report
- Participate in the validation of conference outcomes

III. Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements

Several organizations supported the development of county/regional consultations package/module, the training of county coordinators/mobilizers and the mobilization and preparation of the counties for the consultations. The consultations were held at regional level as follows:

Region 1: Consisted of Maryland, River Gee, Grand Kru, Sinoe in Grand Gedeh. The consultation was held in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County and more than 65 representatives from the 5 counties attended the consultation.

Region 2: Included River Cess, Grand Bassa, Lofa, Nimba and Bong Counties. The consultation was held in Gbarnga, Bong County and more than 65 representatives from the 5 counties attended the consultation in this region.

Region 3: included Margibi, Bomi, Cape Mount, Gbarpolu and Montserrado counties. The consultation was held in Tubmanburg, Bomi County and more than 65 representatives from the 5 counties attended the consultation in that region.

Due to time constraint the county/regional consultations were held simultaneously in the three regions from 18 to 23 May 2009. This was intended to ensure that all regions and counties had the opportunity to participate in the consultations.

The National Reconciliation Conference brought together over 500 delegates from the 15 counties and from the diaspora as well as representatives from other national and international institutions. The conference provided a forum for county delegates to present county/regional specific recommendations on peace and reconciliation and an opportunity for all delegates to discuss national issues on peace building, reconciliation and the TRC's recommendations.

This implementation approach provided county delegates the opportunity to share, learn together, hear and discuss each other perspectives. It also provided the space for sector (youth, women, etc) and county specific discussions to be conducted thus enabling for greater participation and inclusiveness and for participants to take ownership of the outcomes of the consultations.

The project was continuously monitored and supported by the programme department of TRC and the project Secretariat. The secretariat provided regular backstopping to the facilitators and county coordinators through regular contact based upon project objectives and logical framework analysis.

Also regular reporting and follow up activities were designed by the Commission. These consisted of regular reports, updates and review meetings. The project team updated the Chairman and Commissioners of the TRC on project performance, challenges, and other related issues and received feedback on possible strategies to achieve project objectives.

The Steering Committee for the National Reconciliation Conference provided technical guidance and coordination to the national conference. The committee held bi-weekly meetings in the month of May and later daily meetings in the last week leading to the week of the 15th of May 2009. Regular review of progress on the conference was held and feedback made to Commissioners for their advice and guidance.

These events were monitored by our partners from the UN, Civil Society and international non government organizations. The TRC Commissioners were assigned in each of the regions of oversight to ensure that implementation was done as planned. At the level of the Steering Committee, it was decided that each member take a region to monitor. UNDP monitor region 2 and UNMIL Human Rights Section monitors region 3. It is important to note that the chairman of the TRC visited every region during the course of the regional consultations. After these consultations, a meeting was held to discuss the findings.

Details on Procurement procedures

The Commission, in anticipation that the funds would be late and given the time bound nature of the mandate, held a series of extensive meeting with UNDP. The meetings were held at ECOWAS to discuss the importance of following the regulations required for the procurement of services and goods. In accordance with the budget, the following categories were discussed:

- Personnel and consultants: it was agreed that expertise drawn from the public domain should be advertised, short listed, interviewed and selected on that basis. However, due to the time constraint, the Commission was advised to select an additional 3 experts from the pool and select the best candidate for the position. In the case of facilitators and mobilizers, the Commission drew from former county coordinators who had long periods and track records with working with the Commission. As for the facilitators, the Commission recruited from partners.
- Contracts: (1) contracts for venues were limited to the regional sites and the Unity Conference Centre in Virginia, Montserrado County. (2) For the buses that conveyed the delegates to the conference in Monrovia, the Liberia Transport Authority was the only company with vehicles that had the capacity to transport at most 100 people at a time, 2 buses were rented for 5 days. (3) The contract with Cartoon INC- this was the only company with the expertise and the knowledge of where the mass graves are in Montserrado County. The Commission entered into a contract for the preparation of seven mass grave sites. (4) Travel: there were series of travel arrangements with local transport vehicles for participants to travel to the capitol of their respective counties from their original towns; travel from the 15 county to the regional county consultations and later from their counties to the national conference. These arrangements were made by the local TRC representatives at the county levels. (5) Lodgings and feedings: the Commission made arrangements to feed all the participants during the county consultations. The vendors selected to provide these services were credible organizations with track records such as the Catholic Diocese in Gbarnga and Bomi and the Zwedrew Multilateral School. In Monrovia, the P A Rib House provided the services. (6) Supplies and commodities: the supplies and commodities were awarded to two companies. The Global Stationery Center and Metro Stationery were the two companies that won the bids.

Monitoring: Assessment reports

The regional/county consultations and national conference were informed by the TRC's activities including the county hearings, individual and thematic hearings in all 15 counties, and institutional hearings among others. In 2008, the European Commission provided support

through the conduct of the National Conflict Mapping Programme, a programme that mapped and mapping recorded current conflict that may threaten Liberia's peace and security including voice accountability in decision making processes, land and property disputes, identity conflicts as well as youth issues. This mapping project, along with other investigations and research on economic crimes, the roles and experiences of women and children, the religious and traditional dimensions of the conflict, have highlighted the need for proactive actions, stronger and sustained reconciliation initiatives that will help sustain and promote peace and security in the country.

IV. Results

The results of this intervention can be measured both qualitatively and quantitatively. For example, there was a high level of interest in participating at the rural level. At the regional consultation all stakeholders including perpetrators were very passionate about the policy issues of reparations, reconciliation, amnesty and prosecution. Other areas that generated extensive discussions were county specific conflicts and events of mass killings. At the national conference, the 5-day event was attended fully with both international and national participants attending all the activities until late at night. The one single result that adds the most value to the outcomes is the Virginia Declaration, a declaration of the aspirations of the Liberian victims.

The following results were achieved from the implementation of the Regional/County consultations as well as the Conduct of the National Reconciliation Conference:

Regional/County consultations

1. More than **350** County delegates participated in the regional/county consultations held in the 5 regions of the country. The delegates discussed well and articulated the 4 pillars of the TRC's recommendations (Amnesty, Reconciliation, Reparation and Prosecution) and provided their perspectives to harness the TRC's recommendations and peace and reconciliation in Liberia.
2. Each of the 15 counties provided their county specific recommendations to inform the TRC process and recommendations as well as peace and reconciliation in Liberia.
3. At regional level, sector specific recommendations were made. These include recommendations from youths, women, religious groups, and elders among others.

National reconciliation Conference

4. More than 500 delegates from the 15 counties and the Diaspora including national and international participants attended the one-week National Reconciliation Conference and participated in discussions on national issues on sustaining peace and reconciliation in Liberia.
5. Retired Bishop Joseph C. Humper of the Sierra Leone TRC served as the keynote speaker of the conference and provided the Liberian people a range of alternatives to restore and sustain peace and reconciliation in Liberia.

6. The conference declaration “THE VIRGINIA DECLARATION” Calls for a Way Forward to a New Liberia through Reconciliation and Justice resulting from the National Truth and Reconciliation Processes Culminating in the National Conference on Reconciliation Held at the Unity Conference Centre in Virginia, Liberia. The declaration provided 38 recommendations to be considered in the TRC final recommendations.
7. The Commission’s final reconciliation initiatives provided a forum through which inclusiveness and genuine participation in the TRC process was enhanced and generally Liberians took ownership of the outcomes and the outcomes of the process informed the TRC’s final recommendations.
8. The project provided opportunity for the Liberian people to provide the Government through the Virginia Declaration, concrete recommendations and strategies to enhance implementation of the TRC final recommendations to the people and government of Liberia.
9. The project approach was a bottom-to-top one that started with people at the county level and results fed into the wider national discussions/dialogue or consultations. The results of the process present the wider perspectives of the Liberian populace and Liberian from the Diaspora.

V. Future Work Plan (if applicable)

The project was written with the understanding that the TRC would phase out as of June 30, 2009. Not with standing, it was agreed that the most crucial period of the report was its implementation and that when the report was presented to the Liberian people, it would not sit on shelves to gather dust. The mechanism put in place to remedy this was the creation of the Independent Human Rights Commission. The Commissioners have been appointed but not confirmed to date and the TRC mandate is expired. At best, the TRC sees it prudent to support CSOs to disseminate the report. Given the controversy surrounding the report and the public sentiments based on misinformation and half-truths, the Commission recommends that other organizations be given grants to engage the Liberians on the outcomes of the recommendations or at best support Civil Society initiatives as provided for in Article X section 46 to disseminate the TRC final report

Appendixes: the following appendixes have been attached to the document.

- I. Sector and county specific recommendations
- II. List of Steering Committee members of the national Conference
- III. Programme agenda for Regional/county consultations
- IV. Programme agenda for National Reconciliation Conference
- V. List of delegates to the National Conference
- VI. The Keynote Speaker address (Presentation)
- VII. The Virginia Declaration
- VIII. Pictorial of the events



Symbolic burning of Liberia's brutal past



TRC Chairman receives the Virginia Declaration



Participants at the National Conference



Disabled Position Statement



Reading the Virginia Declaration



Regional Consultations