



[Peacebuilding Fund]

ANNUAL PROGRAMME¹ NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT

REPORTING PERIOD: 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2009

<p>Submitted by: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)</p>	<p>Country and Thematic Area² Liberia Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) Priority Area: 2.1 Fostering National Reconciliation and Conflict Management, 2.2 Critical Interventions to Promote Peace and Resolve Conflict</p>
<p>Programme No: MDTF Office Atlas No: 66680 Programme Title: 54680</p>	<p>Participating Organization(s):</p>
<p>Implementing Partners: The Carter Center</p>	<p>Programme Budget (from the Fund): <i>For Joint Programme provide breakdown by UN Organization</i> UN Org A: UN Org B: Etc.</p>
<p>Programme Duration (in months): <u>Start date³:</u> 7 October 2008 <u>End date:</u> 31 January 2010 • <i>Operational Closure Date⁴, if applicable:</i> <u>Budget Revisions/Extensions:</u> <i>List budget revisions and extensions, with approval dates, if applicable</i></p>	

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

² E.g. Priority Area for the Peacebuilding Fund; Thematic Window for the Millennium Development Goals Fund (MDG-F); etc.

³ The start date is the date of the first transfer of funds from the MDTF Office as Administrative Agent.

⁴ All activities for which a Participating Organization is responsible under an approved MDTF programme have been completed. Agencies to advise the MDTF Office.

NARRATIVE REPORT

I. Purpose

Due to historic abuses and the damage caused by the war, today there is little public trust in Liberia's justice system and very little capacity. This project focuses on underserved rural areas to develop capacity by establishing a transitional mechanism of Community Legal Advisors (CLAs) and by educating all citizens (including traditional leaders) about their rights and obligations under the law.

The *Strengthening the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict Liberia* project addresses three of the seven interrelated 'conflict factors' detailed in the PBF Priority Plan, specifically: weak justice systems, lack of shared vision, and poor leadership and the misuse of power. The project is divided into three elemental objectives:

1) *Increase Access to Justice by Establishing Credible Transitional Tools to Help People Identify Appropriate Dispute Resolution Venues.*

The main element of the program is the creation of a sustainable cadre of CLAs in target counties. The CLAs are individuals from local communities who have been given training in mediation, advocacy, domestic laws, and the roles of the different legal agencies. They are available at no cost to provide referrals, advice, and advocacy, or to help disputants negotiate local problems. They provide an immediate alternative in the transitional period to other local justice mechanisms that may not be accessible or trusted by all. While not official agents of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the CLA approach receives the MOJ's full support.

2) *Increase Legal Literacy through Community Sensitization*

The war has seriously damaged people's own understanding of what justice is and how it should be dispensed, leading to local confusion as well as space for abuses. Effective, functioning institutions and methods of justice require an informed citizenry with a knowledge of the rules, procedures, and outcomes within the forums of justice. Under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the MOJ, this project has worked with local civil society organization (CSO) partners to develop and implement innovative and effective capacity building programming based on an MOJ-approved training manual and in line with Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) deliverables. This public education, conducted by CSOs at the community level and through radio, provides the information with which citizens can begin to hold local leaders and institutions to account. This education is particularly effective when coupled with the increased access to justice provided by a gradually improving justice system and the emergences of alternative community opportunities for justice such as the CLAs.

3) *Promote the participation of traditional leadership in the rule of law.*

Effective institutions and methods of justice require the understanding, if not support, of all the people they intend to protect. Historically, the chieftaincy system has been the bedrock of local community governance and still remains highly significant. Despite the destruction of the war, which lead to the

institution's credibility and capacity being significantly weakened, chiefs retain a significant measure of local authority, either through formal local governance processes or through customary or secret society mechanisms. Yet the war significantly diminished the power of chieftains, as it was usurped by the power of the gun. Connections between traditional leaders and the youth have been broken, but remain in some forms. This project works with the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the National Traditional Council (NTC), to train traditional leader, county-by-county, on the rule of law.

To achieve these three objectives, the project has established the following outputs:

1. CLAs function in 8 target counties.
2. 16 hours of workshop consultations on the rule of law for an average of 100 traditional leaders in each of the 8 target counties.
3. 84,000 citizens educated on the rule of law.
4. 1,520 hours of radio programming conducted in 8 target counties.
5. CSO partners meet quarterly with the Ministry of Justice and other relevant ministries.
6. County-level dialogues held in two regions (northwest and southeast) with the full range of rural justice stakeholders, including MOJ, MIA and other interested government partners.
7. Office space is provided for the National Traditional Council.

II. Resources

Financial Resources

The project receives additional funding from the Open Society Initiative and Humanity United. These other sources of funding contribute \$1,722,113 to the project, bringing the total project sum to \$2,866,200.

Budget revisions

During this reporting period, there have been no revisions to the amount requested or required from the PBF.

Human Resources

- National Staff: 12 Operations Staff, 7 Programme Staff.
- International Staff: 3 Programme Staff.

III. Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements

Implementation Mechanisms

The project has been implemented by the Carter Center under the standard UNHCR sub-agreement applicable to all UNHCR implementing partners. As the primary implementing partner, the Carter Center ensures the overall daily management of the project. The Carter Center provides legal and conflict resolution training, capacity building, sub-grants, and oversight. In addition, the Carter Center uses its historic ties to policymakers to provide a strategic link between rural activities and the policy process.

The CLA program is implemented in partnership with the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC). Legal education on the rule of law is implemented in partnership with a number of CSOs, including the Bong Youth Association (BYA), Modia Drama Club, the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL), the South Eastern Women's Development Association (SEWODA), Lofa Youth for Progressive Action (LYOPA), the Special Emergency Action to Restore Children's Hope (SEARCH), Flomo Theatre, Crusaders for Peace, and Traditional Women United for Peace (TWUP). Additionally, the project relies on the Carter Center's longstanding partnerships with various government actors in the MOJ, Judiciary, and MIA.

Monitoring System

The Carter Center monitored the activities in the counties through field offices in Harper and Gbanrga.

- CLAs are monitored in the field. Given that many communities they visit are extremely remote, CLAs are required to record their movements with GPS tracking devices to ensure that they visit all communities on their work plans. They submit monthly narrative reports and case-tracking forms to Carter Center field offices for their review. Every eight weeks, CLAs receive training and ongoing capacity-building support from the Carter Center's Senior Legal Associate. These sessions offer invaluable back-and-forth on a range of issues between the Senior Legal Associate and the CLAs. Lessons learned from these meetings help fine-tune the overall program and establish best practices in legal aid delivery
- CSO groups are also monitored as needed in the field by Carter Center office staff. They also keep a log of the communities they visit and submit periodic narrative and statistical reports to Carter Center field offices.

UNHCR, the funding recipient, provided guidance, monitoring, and support to the project through field offices in Voinjama (Lofa), Saclepea (Nimba) and Zwedru (Grand Gedeh) and Harper (Maryland). UNHCR staff based in Monrovia also conducted periodic field visits in coordination with the Carter Center and their sub-grantees in the field.

Procurement

As a UNHCR implementing partner, the Carter Center follows established UNHCR procurement procedures.

External Evaluation

The Carter Center and UNHCR have partnered with Oxford University's Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE) to conduct an evaluation of program activities at the beginning, middle, and end of the project, focusing both on the CLAs and on civic education. In this period, CSAE has completed a representative household survey of 2,500 households in 176 rural communities. The survey covers demographics, dispute incidence, processes and mechanisms of dispute resolution, and a wide range of characteristics of local police, magistrates, commissioners and community justice providers (chiefs, elders or secret society leaders). Half the surveyed communities have been randomly selected to receive the treatment (visits from CLAs), and the remainder have been assigned as control communities (no visits from CLAs). The final evaluation will be conducted in both treatment and control communities roughly after a year of exposure to measure differences in key outcomes such as the incidence,

reporting, and resolution of disputes; reported satisfaction and trust in the justice system; household economic status and decisions; and the behavior of justice providers.

IV. Results

The project is well on course and has completed fifteen months of a 16-month program duration. CLAs' case intake has been impressive. During this reporting period, 32 CLAs handled a total of 1,431 cases. The number of cases that CLAs handled in the last six months has increased by 67% from the first six months. Of the CLA cases closed, 73% were solved by a CLA, 6% were solved without the help of CLA and 13% were unsolved. The increment of the case intake is indicative of increased recognition and acceptance of tools by historically marginalized communities as an alternative to resolve disputes. The high rate of resolution by CLA also proves effectiveness of the tool in resolving local disputes. As for legal education, the target output of reaching 84,000 citizens through civic education has already been attained without waiting for the final month of the implementation. Signs of a positive change in their knowledge and attitudes were also noted among traditional leaders who participated in the country-level trainings on the rule of law. Following the trainings, many of them voiced support for laws that they had previously either been unaware of or did not support. One example is the rape law, even though they tend to disagree with the age for statutory rape and the issue of marital rape. On trial by ordeal, although it is still a contentious issue, many leaders are beginning to see the need to do away with harmful forms of trial by ordeal. Specific outputs achieved during this reporting period are as follows:

1. CLAs function in 8 target counties.

From January to June 2009, CLAs opened 578 cases and closed 310 cases. From July to December 2009, CLAs opened 853 cases and closed 537. Liberians have been provided more tools to resolve local disputes and they are using them. CLAs receive ongoing training every 8 weeks from the Carter Center personnel.

2. 16 hours of workshop consultations on the rule of law for an average of 100 traditional leaders in each of the 8 target counties.

Under a Memorandum of Understanding with the MIA, 3-day workshops for traditional leaders on the rule of law were conducted in each of the 8 counties collaborating with the MIA and the Ministry of Gender and Development.

3. 84,000 citizens educated on the rule of law.

88,380 citizens have received legal education on rule of law in six target counties; Bong (151 communities); Grand Gedeh (60 communities); Maryland (69 communities); Grand Kru (91 communities); Lofa (89 communities) and Nimba (167 communities)

4. 1,520 hours of radio programming conducted in 8 target counties.

10 radio stations are contracted in each county to disseminate the programme for 2 hours per week.

5. CSO partners meet quarterly with the Ministry of Justice and other relevant ministries.

CSO representatives met one-on-one with Minister Banks on May 7, October 13 and December 15 for the purpose of discussing directly the justice-related concerns of rural citizens. MOJ is kept informed on rural realities and perceptions through the meetings and has requested lower level working group meetings with CSOs, which suggests that the MOJ sees feedback from the CSOs useful. The cooperation and partnership between the MOJ and CSOs resulted in the cessation of activities of 'Justices of the Peace' in Nimba county - an outdated lower level judicial position that has been ruled unconstitutional by the Chief Justice.

6. Office space is provided for the National Traditional Council.

The NTC office has been maintained since its opening in late 2008. The opening ceremony for the new office was held on July 17 2009.

In achieving these outputs, the project has maintained strong partnerships with a wide range of national and international partners. MOJ is the key partner in CSO work on increasing legal literacy, working under an MOU with the Carter Center. The project has a number of partnerships with Liberian civil society groups, discussed earlier, who implement CSO work in the counties. The NTC and MIA are the key partners in working with traditional leaders. JPC, as noted above, is implementing the CLA program.

Additionally, the project enjoyed collaborative input and support from a number of international partners, including the American Bar Association (ABA), Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE), the International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) and Emory University's Institute for Developing Nations (IDN), and UNMIL's Legal and Judicial System Support Division and others.

Other highlights and cross-cutting issues

Building sustainable organizational capacity of CSOs has been a challenge. CSOs who partnered with the Carter Center are the stronger organizations in advocacy work, but have suffered from weak managerial skills. The Carter Center put an additional effort to enhance their managerial capacity through more frequent monitoring and capacity building.

Formal discussion needs to be held with stakeholders on whether the MOJ or other governmental agencies are ready to take over the CLA program upon completion of the project in January 2010. If it is not the case, a decision needs to be made whether to sustain the CLA program by non-governmental agencies.

V. Future Work Plan (if applicable)

VI. Performance Indicators (optional)⁵

VII. Abbreviations and Acronyms

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
CLA	Community Legal Advisor
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
CSO	Civil Society Organization
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
NTC	National Traditional Council
JPC	Catholic Justice and Peace Commission
CSAE	Centre for the Study of African Economies

⁵ E.g. for the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund and the MDG-F.