

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

TRAVEL/MISSION REPORT SUMMARY

 <p>Empowered lives. Resilient nations.</p>	TRAVEL/MISSION REPORT SUMMARY
REPORT TITLE: Back-to-Office report on monitoring mission to Nimba, Lofa and Bong Counties to monitor PBF projects ahead of final evaluation.	
SUBMITTED BY: John R. Dennis, PBF Coordinator-LMPTF-PBF Secretariat. Patrick Baysahwala, designated driver, UNRCO	DATE: February 26, 2022
TRAVEL DATE: 16-20 February 2022	LOCATION: Lofa, Nimba, Bong Counties, the mission's return to Monrovia.
PARTICIPANTS: 30 participants (50% women) met in five communities.	
<p>I. OBJECTIVE/PURPOSE OF TRAVEL:</p> <p>Core reason of the mission was to access progress of LMPTF and PBF projects ahead of the final evaluation: Sustaining Peace and Improving Social Cohesion through the promotion of rural employment opportunities for youth in conflict prone areas and Cross Border Engagement between Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia to reinforce social cohesion and border security-phase II have operationally ended and the process of final evaluations commenced. The former, which was implemented by FAO, WFP and ILO, covered Lofa and Bong Counties while the latter, which was implemented by UNDP and IOM, covered Nimba and Grand Gedeh counties. The Mission should have originally returned to Monrovia on 19 February, adjusted its arrival date to 20 February in accordance with security guidelines to address unforeseen challenges while concluding the mission.</p> <p>II. <u>EXPECTED OUTCOMES</u></p> <p>a) Have a final assessment of field activities ahead of external evaluators; b) A final consolidated report capturing key findings.</p>	
<p>III. Background</p> <p>The SG's Peacebuilding Fund has been supporting Liberia since 2008, three years into the first term of the first postwar democratically elected government of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, after decades of civil crises, decimating the country's administrative structures, aside from thousands of innocent victims. PBF's support has helped with security sector reform-decentralizing security, rule of law and justice services to the counties through a regional hub approach, thus increasing access to justice for all. The PBF funded the construction of the Gbarnga Regional Hub-1; and provided funding for the provision of justice and security services in hubs two and three covering five counties: Maryland, River Gee, Grand Kru, Sinoe and Grand Gedeh. PBF's support to Liberia became predictable when the country became eligible in 2010 to receive funding; since then the Fund has supported Liberia through the UNCT, INGOs and CSOs to promote national reconciliation, human rights, law and policy reforms, border security, voice and accountability, gender and woman empowerment among other peacebuilding initiatives. PBF remains a strong partner to Liberia which is demonstrated through continued support to sustain the peace, addressing emerging challenges including land conflicts that pose huge threats to the fragile peace, particularly in the absence of a UN mission.</p>	

PBF estimated contribution to consolidating and sustaining the peace in Liberia is estimated at US\$76.2 million, with more than US\$10 million investment in ongoing projects,

A monitoring mission was undertaken to assess two projects: Sustaining Peace and Improving Social Cohesion through the promotion of rural employment opportunities for youth in conflict prone areas and Cross Border Engagement between Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia to reinforce social cohesion and border security-phase II that have operationally ended, subsequently commissioning evaluations. The mission provides an insight to each project delivery ahead of final evaluation.

IV. Summary of Findings of the Mission

The secretariat mission to the counties was successful, with minimum challenges recorded. The assessment took into account beneficiary contact monitoring, interviewing direct beneficiaries at each of the project sites apart from assessing the actual benefits being accrued by beneficiaries and the communities; as well as bottlenecks to implementation.

The team visited project sites to determine whether additional results have been achieved since the mission last visit from 23 May to 6 June in 2021. During last year's mission, the Sustaining Peace and Improving Social Cohesion through the promotion of rural employment opportunities for youth in conflict prone areas and the Cross Border Engagement between Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia to reinforce social cohesion and border security-phase II projects were assessed along with other projects including: Sustaining Peace and reconciliation through strengthening land governance & dispute resolution mechanisms and Advancing implementation of UNSCRs on Women Peace & Security (WPS) through strengthening accountability frameworks, innovative financing and Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) projects. The February mission limited its assessment to the two projects explicitly mentioned.

Below were the key findings of the mission per county:

Ganglota Community, Lofa County and Totota Community Bong

The mission verified the delivery of birds (chicks) by FAO to two poultries: one each in Gnaglota Community, Lofa County; and Totota Community, Bong County; as part of incentivising youth to increase their economic capacities to avoid engaging into violent conflicts. These two counties were previously headquarters of two rebel factions, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) consisted of mainly the Mandingo ethnic group based in Lofa, while the National Patriotic Front of Liberia of Charles Taylor headquartered in Bong County. Though this has been more than 20 years, the reflect of violence sometimes has an upshot on youth's attitude when they are not productively engaged. The PBF interventions are intended to strengthen local peacebuilding infrastructures and youth led (inclusive of women) initiatives to sustain the peace in communities prone to violence. Community members are excited to implement these initiatives which they see sustainability following closure of the project. For example, project beneficiaries have divided themselves into shifts to take care of birds, which they see as the first step towards ownership and sustainable economic empowerment. Prior to constructing and capacitating the poultries, WFP, ILO and FAO provided training opportunities to beneficiaries consistent with the following outcomes:

Outcome1: Young women and men have increased access to local conflict resolution mechanisms, with a focus on land disputes, and become active agents of peace;

Outcome 2: Rural young women and men have access to sustainable agricultural livelihoods addressing key drivers of conflict



Beneficiaries in project communities are excited about the project, which they jealously protect. A team member places the schedule of work on the walls of the poultry facility in Ganglota, Lofa County.

Impact of Rice Machinery in Yeala Community, Lofa County

The people of Yeala Community, Lofa County, may soon brief an air of relief upon the arrival of rice machinery following the construction of a post-harvest facility after years of struggling to refine seed rice harvested by small holder farmers in this border community along the Liberian-Guinean border. FAO has constructed the facility pending transportation of equipment bought with funding from PBF. Community members were seen enthusiastic about the support, which will cater for not only project beneficiaries but the entire community that has survived on machinery owned by citizens across the Guinean border. This movement of seed rice to guinea for processing has come with a cost which greatly reduced the quantity received and profit margins after processing. Owners of these machines in Guinea don't request money for services provided; rather request processed rice for service performed. Rice remains stable diet in both countries.



Elder Yarkpawolo Zayzay, above, expresses thanks to the PBF for providing support to construct the post-harvest facility to ease the burden of farmers to process seed rice. Ms. Kebeh Noko, a beneficiary, says the presence of the facility will reduce the current difficulties faced by farmers.

Cross Border Project

Though this project has operationally ended, followed by the commencement of final evaluation; its significance to peacebuilding and economic empowerment remains undoubtedly glaring as border communities and cross border traders utilize peace infrastructures left behind by the project. Provision of specialized peacebuilding trainings and awareness conducted for joint security officers and civilians along the borders of Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia coupled with the construction and expansion of border port of entries and ware houses for traders to store goods have improved security, social cohesion and economic activities. The mission's visit to three border entry points in Nimba has validated PBF support to strengthen conflict prevention and regional cooperation. The team saw border port of entries bustling with economic activities, which were hugely attributed by some Liberia Immigration Service personnel to support provided by PBF through UNDP and IOM to the communities.



A bustling Lougatou Border port of entry (above) with Cote d'Ivoire, Nimba County. A Cross border trader during busy market day. The warehouse constructed for the community and cross border traders has helped store goods before and after business day.



An enthusiastic youth at Kenlay Border Port of Entry recently rehabilitated and expanded has attracted increased commercial activities leading to revenue generation for both governments of Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire. Stockpiled of cacao ready to be shipped. This port of entry was virtually inactive until PBF funding restored hope for assigned officers, traders and community members. PBF support covered rehabilitation and expansion of the building to include gender responsive withholding cell, the only one in the area; solar light and water system.

Additional photos below:



Officers pose along with our team in the front of the Rehabilitated building



Buutuo Port of Entry also renovated and expanded with PBF Funding through IOM.

V. Generic Implementation issues and challenges:

- Delays of partners to complete project deliverables in time. This is mainly attributed to Recipient UN Organizations failure to ensure timely supply of inputs/materials to complete activities as agreed with implementing partners. This usually leads to last minute rush to complete tasks.
- Some agencies were not fully utilizing local administrative actors who are relevant to the achievement of project results.

Recommendation:

- Agencies need continuous follow up with partners they have agreements with to timely deliver to avoid last minute rush.

<p>VI. Lessons Learned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sustained community monitoring and engagement by the PBF Secretariat has proven to be effective, leading to agencies completing their respective activities which have led to high level outcome results.