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**[Peacebuilding Fund - Liberia]**

**ANNUAL programme NARRATIVE progress report**

**REPORTING PERIOD: 1 April – 31 December 2009**

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| *Programme No:* 00070665*MDTF Office Atlas No:* PBF/LBR/A-4*Programme Title:* Platform for Dialogue and Peace in Liberia (P4DP)  |  | *Participating Organization(s):* UNOPS Joint Programme Unit for UN/Interpeace Initiatives (JPU) |
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| *Implementing Partners:* *National counterparts:*- Government: Ministry of Internal Affairs - Civil Society: FIND, IPC, IRCL, KAICT, LDI, PBRC, WANEP and WONGOSOL. |  | *Programme Budget (from the Fund):*USD 1,000,000 |
| *Programme Duration (in months):*Start date: 23 April 2009End date: * *Original end date:* 31 March 2010
* *Revised end date:* 30 June 2010
 |

# Purpose

# The Platform for Dialogue and Peace in Liberia (P4DP) project aims to contribute to increase positive social and political cohesion by creating better capacities in state and non-state actors to deal with conflict through collaborative action. The project focuses on the development of spaces for inter-sectoral dialogue and action-oriented collaboration, and the instilment of abilities that, in society as well as in formal political structures, can strengthen the capacity to assess challenges, address tensions and resolve conflicts in non-violent ways.

# The key outputs of the project over the 9 months were strengthening of the capacity of eight collaborating civil society organizations (CSOs) and a core group of staffs at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) in participatory action research methodologies including facilitation, audio-visual data capture and documentation techniques in conducting research and dialogue processes. The deployment of these CSOs throughout Liberia will culminate (at the end of this phase of the programme) in a comprehensive report on key challenges for peace consolidation from the perspective of grassroots community members from different sectors of Liberian society and state. The programme is also following up on the implementation of three of the recommendations from the Nimba Pilot Project that was implemented in 2008 also with support from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund:

1. A public awareness campaign

2. A network of Peace Committees

3. A County-wide youth programme

The programme addresses two of the three priorities identified in the Proprity Plan for the Peacebuilding Fund in Liberia (2008). The first priority “Fostering National Reconciliation and Conflict Management” is addressed by facilitating national reconciliation, including managing ethnic division, and developing an onward shared vision for the nation. The programme also helps to institutionalize mechanisms for peaceful settling of conflicts. It also tries to follow up on the efforts by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by creating safe spaces where the local communities can express freely about the conflicts that affect their coexistence. Efforts to to create a broad, inclusive society, where all citizens can participate and enjoy the benefits of progress, must be supported within overall efforts for ‘good governance’ in Liberia. In addition, as recommended in the Priority Plan, the second phase of the programme (2010-2011) will facilitate a national dialogue, including Liberians from all walks of life through a transparent, participatory process.

The second priority to be addressed is “Strengthening State Capacity for Peace Consolidation”. The programme is providing hands-on training and support to key officials at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, specifically at the Research and Development Planning Department, to improve their capacity to engage in participatory approaches to peacebuilding in the country. They are already using the new skills on their research activities in different counties with positive results.

# Resources

1. *Financial Resources:*

The Joint Steering Committee of the Peacebuilding Fund in Liberia approved in March 2009 the sum of USD 1,000,000 as a catalytic boost to initiate the Platform for Dialogue and Peace in Liberia (P4DP). Despite initial positive signals from several donors, mobilizing additional funding from these sources by the programme became particularly difficult. While donors’ decisions for this lack of support were not made public, this could be attributed to the consequences of the global financial crisis and what seems to be higher donor preference for more tangible and visible infrastructural projects as opposed to initiatives aiming at the less tangible work of transforming attitudes and behaviors of Liberians.

1. *Human Resources:*

National Staff: The Project recruited a total of 14 staff in the areas of programme and operations. Programme staff includes: Programme Coordinator, Research Operation Manager, Audio-Visual Coordinator and three Research Support Monitoring Officers. Operations staff includes: Administrative/Operations Officer, Administrative Assistant, two Drivers, two Office Assistants and two Local Facilitators.

In addition to the programme staff, five (5) of the eight (8) civil society institutions employed field teams comprising lead researchers, audio-visual persons, facilitators, note-takers and drivers. The field teams were regularly supported by the JPU’s office staff, local facilitators and senior executives of the CSOs. On the whole, the total staff that contributed to the programme activities was:

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| **Institution** | **Category** | **Total** |
| UNOPS/JPU  | Operations | **9** |
| Programme | **5** |
| Collaborating CSOs | Operations | **11** |
| Programme | **22** |
| Local Facilitators | Operations | **16** |
| **Total** |  | **63** |

International Staff: the project was supported by a Programme Coordinator based in Geneva who provides overall support and backstopping to the project.

#  Implementation and Monitoring Arrangements

Implementation mechanisms

The implementation mechanisms employed by the project included the division of the country into four regions (see table below) as a means of ensuring geographic coverage, with research and facilitation teams from different Civil Society Organizations implementing the field level work assigned to each region and responsible to implement a specific component of the project.

For proper responsibility sharing, the regions were distributed amongst collaborating CSOs based on their previous experience in the areas under their responsibility. The assigned areas of responsibility are shown in the following table:

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| **CSO** | **Counties** | **Region** |
| IPC | Montserrado, Bomi, Margibi, River Cess and Grand Bassa | Central Region  |
| PBRC | Lofa, Grand Cape Mount, Bong and Gbarpolu | North-West |
| LDI | River Gee, Sinoe, Grand Gedeh, Maryland and Grand Kru  | South-East |
| WANEP and IRCL | Nimba | Nimba |

The other three partners were in charge of Gender Mainstreaming (WONGOSOL), Audio-Visual training and support (FIND) and training on participatory approaches to Peacebuilding (KAICT).

An overall framework agreement was signed between UNOPS and the 8 CSOs establishing the main parameters of the collaboration and creating a Steering Committee that included the heads of all organizations to discuss strategies and address problems. After that, a specific Memorandum of Agreement was signed with each one of the eight partners establishing their responsibilities and the resources allocated for their activities.

Regular field support visits were carried out by JPU staff. CSOs also submitted monthly project reports to identify potential substantive issues and also track progress made in terms of the achievement of project deliverables. Regular meetings of the Steering Committee were also held were strategies were assessed and problems identified and acted upon.

These mechanisms put in place have help in ensuring effective implementation of the project and the delivery of desired results.

Procurement Procedures

As a UNOPS implemented project, P4DP fully complied with all corporate regulations and rules and procurement principles of UNOPS. The only big procurement element of the project was the purchase of a vehicle that was done through a competitive process approved by the Director SWOC in Geneva.

Monitoring System

A monitoring framework with its corresponding schedule was developed to ensure effective monitoring of the project field activities so as to achieve its desired results. Monitoring of project activities at field level by the JPU Liberia programme team has been regular and supportive. It focused on tracking progress, gaps, challenges and lessons learned as well as providing technical on the job support to field teams in the areas of conducting effective community mobilization, facilitation, interview, coordination and proper use of AV tools and equipment among others.

For consistent monitoring of the project, three Research Support and Monitoring Officers and a Research and Operations Manager, were employed. Together with CSOs field teams they developed plans and conducted monitoring and evaluation visits throughout the country. The visits were also used to provide mentoring and coaching in proper handling of audio-visual tools and equipment, adequate collection of field data as well as to reflect on community entry procedures, facilitation and group dynamics both amongst team members and between teams of other collaborating CSOs.

Reports from monitoring visits were shared with executives of collaborating CSOs and meetings arranged where the Programme staff and the CSOs discussed the noted discrepancies of field teams and found the way forward to successful project completion. A key lesson learned was that it is difficult to change the behavior of field teams of CSOs to adapt to P4DP principles while respecting their autonomy as independent organizations. A total of twelve monitoring visits were conducted during the consultation phase.

P4DP also decided that gender mainstreaming and audio-visual training were integral components of the methodology being applied and needed serious attention during project implementation. To ensure that these aspects were appropriately carried out, two CSOs with specializations in the domains were tasked to perform these functions. WONGOSOL and FIND provided technical support and monitoring roles to the field teams for systematic mainstreaming of gender and effective capturing of audio-visual data and documentation, respectively.

Monitoring and support from Geneva was provided through regular contact by the Program Coordinator supported by the JPU Director based upon the objectives defined in the project document and its corresponding logical framework analysis. This was complemented with visits by Geneva based staff in key moments of the project implementation.

The project also follows the regular reporting and follow up system designed by Interpeace. Currently this consists of monthly reports and regular joint programme reviews, in which the project team updates the JPU on financial, substantive and contextual issues, and receives feedback from them on possible strategies to solve problems, address current issues, etc.

Assessments and evaluations

No assessments, evaluations or studies were undertaken during the period under review.

# Results

Summary of Programme progress

The set-up phase was completed successfully. The full project team was recruited, CSOs signed framework and collaboration agreements, training was provided on PAR research, facilitation, gender mainstreaming, Audio Visual techniques as well as operational planning to both the CSOs and a group at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In addition, a group from the programme team visited the Interpeace/IRDP team in Rwanda[[1]](#footnote-1) and the whole team (JPU and partners) was operational by end of July.

The initial field consultations and the implementation of the Nimba recommendations were planned to finish by end of 2009. There was however a slight delay that did not allow for proper finalization of that phase. Deployment of field teams by our implementing partners was slightly delayed. While the field research advanced steadily, with continuous support and monitoring from the JPU office in Monrovia, it did so at a slower pace than expected due to unforeseen complications, such as inaccessibility of certain areas, break-down of vehicles, etc. These delays required extending the field consultations with the corresponding contracts with the CSOs until March 31st.

In spite of these delays, a great part (around 80%) of the local consultations was already implemented at the end of 2009.

Key outputs

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| **Output** | **Progress** | **Percentage Implemented** |
| #1: 8 CSOs Capacity developed in Participatory Action Research and facilitation of action oriented dialogue processes | Senior executives and research team members of the CSOs underwent four (4) distinct workshops intended to upgrade their capacities in Participatory Action Research methodologies; gender equality and mainstreaming; audio-visual data capture and documentation techniques as well as operational planning and strategy designing. These workshops were followed up by on-site supervision and supports provided by technical staffs of the JPU in order to enable the field teams to effectively perform their functions. | 90 % |
| #2: Core group in Ministry of Internal Affairs trained and experienced in participatory action research and facilitation of action-oriented dialogue processes | Members of the core group at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) along with local officials in the counties were engaged with the PAR methodology using various forums. The training workshops covered the core group members while authorities of the various political sub-divisions were engaged and encouraged to participate in the activities of the project to raise awareness of the importance of enhancing inclusiveness by inviting marginalized and vulnerable groups that had hitherto been excluded. The paradigm shift has created new dynamism in the discussions at local level with these groups voicing strong reservations about any exclusionary practice directed against them. MIA authorities have been provided feedback through reports that are being sent down to county authorities with the view of encouraging inclusion at all levels for broad-based discussion and participation. | 50 % |
| #3: A report on key challenges for consolidation of peace in Liberia that reflects the perceptions of different sectors of Liberian society and state on these issues | Following the grassroots and local consultations in the fourteen counties as to their perspectives regarding issues and actors of conflict that can undermine the peace process, a preliminary report mapping the key themes of conflict has now been prepared. However, as described above, the local consultations were not finished on 31 December 2009 due especially to the difficult conditions of the roads during the rainy season. The number of communities visited by the CSOs at the time of this report is: IRCL - 27, WANEP - 19, PBRC - 59, IPC - 83, LDI - 32. | 80% |
| #4: 3 recommendations from Nimba Reconciliation Project implemented: - a public awareness campaign; - a network of Peace Committees; and,- a County-wide youth programme***.*** | The IRCL liaised with the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS) and the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY) as well as other stakeholders to effectively mobilize the youth for deliberating and producing a County-wide Youth Programme as well as inter-Ethnic Reconciliation Awareness Campaign strategy that may be used to promote harmony in the county. Both the Youth Programme and the Awareness Campaign were well advanced at the time of the report but were not finalized.WANEP similarly mobilized and organized five out of six district-level Peace Committees (DPCs) which were also trained in mediation, early warning and early response to assist their own districts in forestalling emergent conflicts before their escalation to full-blown crisis with violent aftermaths. The established DPCs have thirteen members each and are now implementing their responsibilities with due diligence and on voluntary basis due to concern for social cohesion and total peace in their districts. | 80 % |

Key partnerships and collaborations

P4DP is a project implemented by the JPU in collaboration with UNMIL and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) of Liberia. Ad-hoc coordination has been carried out during the process between the three institutions to ensure full coordination and information flow at central level. In order to facilitate easier entry of the field teams to the local communities the MIA has provided introductory letters to the local MIA officials. Local UNMIL offices were regularly informed and consulted to determine priorities and areas of interest.

In reference to the MIA, a core group of the Ministry’s staff was trained by the project and is now utilizing the skills and experience to conduct participatory research and hold consultations at community level. For example, the MIA team has conducted a socio-economic research in Gbarpolu County using experience and skills gained from the project training to gather an understanding of social and economic conditions of the local people.

In order to strengthen national capacities for sustained dialogue, P4DP is implemented through eight Liberian civil society organizations, who have assumed direct responsibility in the project’s implementation at two levels:

* At the strategic level, the eight organizations and the JPU Liberia team form a Steering Committee collectively responsible for monitoring the strategy’s implementation and reviewing it periodically. The Steering Committee met regularly to review progress, assess advancement and provide guidance to the JPU Liberia Team and the organizations implementing specific components.
* At the operational level, each of these eight organizations are responsible for carrying out a specific component of the general operational plan, as per well defined terms of reference established in a Memorandum of Agreement.

The institutional responsibilities assigned to each organization are:

* Liberia Democratic Institute (LDI) is responsible for the implementation of field research activities in the South-East of Liberia.
* West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) - Liberia Chapter – is responsible for the implementation of District Peace Committees in Nimba County.
* Initiative for Positive Change (IPC) is responsible for implementation of field research activities in the Central Region of Liberia.
* Peace Building Resource Centre (PBRC) is responsible for implementation of field research activities in the North-West of Liberia.
* Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation (KAICT) is responsible, in coordination with JPU and with the support of Interpeace learning resources, for the design of a training module on participatory peacebuilding.
* Foundation for International Dignity (FIND) is responsible, in coordination with and with the support of JPU A/V resources, for supporting the A/V component (training and monitoring) to be integrated into the five local research teams.
* Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL) is responsible for implementing the gender sensitization component (training and monitoring) in coordination with the five research teams.
* Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL) is responsible for the implementation of the Youth Programme and Awareness Campaign in Nimba County.

These implementation arrangements respond to the goal of contributing to the development of national capacities for conflict management and prevention, and in consonance with the Peacebuilding Fund guidelines, to promote dialogue between Government and CSOs and strengthening the role of CSO’s in country’s recovery and political transformation processes as an essential aspect of building a democratic and accountable governance system. This is achieved: firstly by relying on a 100% Liberian team for implementation; secondly, by closely coordinating with MIA, particularly at the local level, and contributing to the development of its peacebuilding capacity; and thirdly, by establishing a collaborative arrangement that allows the transfer of the approach, its methods, tools, etc. into civil society. By building peacebuilding capacity in several institutions in state and civil society, opportunities for further use of the approach multiply. This strategy also goes in line with the recommendation from the TRC Conflict Mapping Project to “establish and train a network of local civil society and non-governmental organizations to implement the National Conversation”.

The arrangement in which eight different local institutions are responsible for the implementation of specific components of the project intends to transfer these skills and therefore strengthen the role these organizations can play in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in society. Stronger CSOs with adequate skills are an important asset to complement governmental capacities. At the same time, the project benefits from the demonstrated experience of some of these CSOs and their knowledge of the Liberian physical, social and political landscape.

Constraints/Challenges in Programme Implementation

Due to the complex negotiation to define the framework and the details of the collaboration with the CSOs it took some time to sign the contractual arrangements with them. Moreover, the training of CSO staffs had to be arranged in a mutually consensual manner to account to other events in their institutional agendas. In summary, the autonomy of each CSO had to be respected and this caused frequent delay and some disagreements throughout the programme. To address these problems, the JPU employed a vigorous information and knowledge sharing strategy whereby electronic mail, hand delivered letters and regular updating of CSOs on pending events were proactively disseminated to the CSOs. Another effective means used was the frequent hosting of collective and individual consultations with the CSO executives and field teams to assess critical issues, share observations on field activities and jointly decide on the way forward.

There was another hurdle with the heavy rains that made the roads in the country almost impassable. This challenge was especially critical in areas with roads that had not been maintained from the war years to present. Regardless of the use of 4-wheeled drive vehicles, research teams often had to abandon their vehicles and in some instances trek over long distances to arrive timely to consultations under their responsibility. What was true of the field researchers was the same with the JPU research and support officers. Amongst the key lessons from some of these challenges is that unless governance systems can be remarkably improved to address issues of basic services and infrastructures, peacebuilding interventions will also continue to be hampered. Such concerns must be highlighted as they are also expressed at consultations as critical priorities, though they may not fit within the usual conflictive category.

Other highlights and cross-cutting issues

Although the field research has not been completely finalized, it already shows some important initial findings that we can report.

# Synopsis of key findings:

At the time of the report the research teams had consulted with around 8,500 local people across 14 of the 15 counties in Liberia (the 15th County which is Nimba was completed in previous research). The research was conducted in 45 districts and 174 communities in the counties of Lofa, Gbarpolu, Bomi, Cape Mount, Montserrado, Margibi, Bong, Grand Bassa, River Cess, Sinoe, Grand Gedeh, Maryland, Grand Kru and River Gee.

The research and consultations conducted identified several critical conflictive and divisive issues impacting the consolidation of lasting peace in war-torn Liberia. The issues are summarized into 3 thematic groups: Politics, Justice, and Socio-Economic. Some of the issues are cross-cutting and/or overlapping and are presented as identified by the research and consultations. The issues presented in this report are basically the issues presented by local as their perspectives of issues undermining peace in Liberia and with potential to elapse the country into another conflict.

**Political issues**

1. **Poor Local Governence: Lack of participation, Accountability and Transparency**

Local people around the country have expressed general concern about their lack of participation in local governance and decision making processes. Citizens perceive that local development funds provided by the state and other development partners need to be used to improve their lives but are instead utilized for state authorities own gains and purposes. The concerns focus basically on:

1. Lack of participation in local governance and decision making processes regarding the identification of county development projects and priorities.
2. Lack of accountability and transparency in the use of development funds (i.e. County and social development funds) and management of the county resources
3. **Marginalization and Exclusion**

Political marginalization and exclusion of youth, women and those with disabilities remain a source of conflict and confrontation between local government officials on one hand and disabled persons, women and youth on the other hand. Disabled persons and youth are very vocal about this and expressed it openly to draw needed attention. In many parts of the coutry, tension is building between the youth and the local government officials over persistent exclusion of youth in decision making processes.

On the other hand some minority ethnic groups expressed concern over their lack of participation in county administrative structures which is leading to tension and breeding the space for conflict. For example the Mandingos indicate their lack of representation in the Bong and Lofa counties administrative structures.

1. **Local Leadership Crisis**

Local Leadership crisis is a critical factor undermining the peacebuilding efforts at county level. This problem is deepening and becoming a very divisive issue and is impeding participation in local government decision making processes and development initiatives. For instance, in Lofa, citizens report of a split in leadership especially in Zorzor with the executive appointees on one hand and the Lofa House caucus and Paramount Chief of Zorzor District on the other hand.

1. **Benefits for the deactivited AFL Soldiers**

The issue of benefits to the deactivated AFL Soldiers remains a critical concern for many people including the affected soldiers around the country and a source of conflict if not addressed appropriately. Particularly, local people spoke of the former AFL soldiers affected by the restructuring exercise as a potential source conflict in the country. They said that members of the former AFL are highly trained on the use of firearms and thus disbanding them without a comprehensive re-training programme to prepare them for their new life away from the military life is a recipe for chaos since they can be easily manipulated. Very strong concerns came from citizens of Grand Gedeh and also Monrovia.

**Justice Issues**

1. **Weak Justice System**

Citizens strongly highlighted concerns and dissatisfaction about the justice system and described it as “weak” and basically ineffective to protect the rights of citizens particularly the poor. Thus the weak criminal justice system encourages corruption, violence, impunity, and is failing to curb financial misconduct and corruption by local and top government officials. Local people have indicated that adjudication of cases is slow, mired by corruption and thus undermines the rule of law in the country. Citizens concerns are expressed as:

1. The lack of courts or functioning courts in many parts of the country undermines the rule of law in Liberia and encourages alleged perpetrators of crimes to continue their behavior; as a consequence impunity, jungle justice, and violence become the order of the day.
2. Most importantly, to maintain law and order, and ensure instant justice, citizens in most parts of the South-East Liberia are calling for the for the re-institution of a traditional practice, the “Trial by Ordeal” or “Sassywood”, which is forbidden by national laws and persecuted by Government.
3. Corruption in the justice system often denies the poor from getting justice as compared to the rich. “No money no justice”. This is considered a major source of conflict in Liberia and makes dishonest people to indulge in corrupt practices.
4. The lack of strong criminal justice system makes it difficult to fight against corruption in the country.
5. There is limited or no Police presence in many parts of the countryside.

**Socio-Economic**

1. **Land and Property Conflicts**

Land and property disputes around the country remain perhaps the most critical factor in the consoldation of peace in Liberia and a real challenge to the peace process. There are many disputes over land ownership, boundaries between and among individuals, families, communities, districts and counties and as well as ethnic groups. The disputes and confusion have become complicated, problematic and sources of confrontation and also seriously impacting co-existence in a negative way. The issue of land and property conflict is cross-cutting and widespread in all counties across the country. The local people indicated that land and property conflicts menifest themselves many folds as below:

1. **Boundary disputes**: Deliberate disregard of traditional land boundaries and the subsequent encroachment of one community or group on the other side of the boundary. For example, the long-standing demarcation dispute between Voinjama and Quadu-Gbondi districts in Lofa County is breeding serious tension between the Lormas and the Mandingoes.
2. **Farm land:**  Another dimension of the conflict over land relates to the invasion and subsequent occupation of farmlands of neighboring communities by another. In May 2008, unresolved long standing conflict between Rock Town and Wochoken erupted into violent fight over a piece of farmland in Harper District, Maryland County. As a result of the conflict, two persons were killed and seven persons were convicted and sentenced to jail. Also in Margibi, fourteen persons were murdered over a farmland dispute in June 2008.
3. **Multiple Sales / Ownership:** According to participants, this is a situation where a parcel of land is sold to more than one buyer or more than one family claim ownership over a parcel of land in the community. This is prevalent in most urban centers across the country.
4. **Traditional Land Holding (Inheritance):** Tribal community sees land as a gift from God to their ancestors to be preserved and handed down to their descendants (SDI, 2007). Accordingly, the sense of communal ownership has always taken precedence over private or individual property rights are communal land that belongs to community. Land is usually past on generation to generation. As time elapsed, participants say it has become extremely difficult for the community to establish single ownership.
5. **Ethnicity and Identity**

The extent to which one identifies with a particular ethnic group(s) is becoming stronger and stronger and often leads to blind loyalty in situations of conflict. Essentially, the problem of ethnicity can be linked to the question of competing loyalties between and among the various tribes in Liberia. This ethnic royalty usually takes the trend of competition for scarce economic resources and political power and issues of marginalization and exclusion.

One clear example comes from land conflicts. Disputes over land often degenerate and take on an ethnic dimension with the various tribes providing support only to their kinsmen in the dispute irrespective of the merit of the dispute. For example, the research highlighted sectional land disputes between Geeblee (Bassas) and Marloeh (Kpelles) sections in Grand Bassa County, as a dispute taking a worrying ethnic dimension.

Another example is appointment to public office at the local level. When these appointments are conducted only on ethnic lines, therefore concentrating economic and political power in the hands of one ethnic group, other excluded ethnic groups protest and resist the policies of the dominant group. Recruitment by some Concession Companies has sometimes fallen in the same problem. For example, in Barclayville, Grand Kru County, participants said that all the key local government posts are occupied by a single section of the Grebo ethnic group. Mandingoes also protested that they are often regarded as aliens and strangers by other ethnic groups.

1. **Religious differences**

Muslim people complain that preference is being given to Christians which they describe as divisive and discriminatory. According to Muslim citizens this problem is shown for example in the way official holidays are based on Christian celebrations and not on Muslim ones as well as in the difficulties Muslim people face to secure spaces to bury and pay their last respect to their dead.

On the other side, there is mounting tension over the alleged refusal of the Mandingoes to marry their daughters to other ethnic groups because they perceive other tribes as religiously unclean. This position by the Mandingoes is to a greater extent contributing to raising tension between the Mandingoes and other groups especially so when they marry the daughters of other tribes.

1. **Unemployment**

Unemployment remains one of the most important problems Liberia is facing. The unemployment rate is extremely high and youth is most affected. The lack of sufficient capacity of the Liberian economy to create employment opportunities for its citizens is having a damming effect on every corner of the country. The lack of employment opportunities especially for the youth is resulting in some youth engaging in anti-social behavior such as mob violence and taking law into their hands.

The case in communities surrounding plantations is especially significant, as they could provide much needed jobs to these areas. However communities complained of the lack of job opportunities with companies managing these plantations who prefer to hire people from Monrovia and neighboring countries. The youth were vocal about this problem especially in the Guthridge plantation, Sinoe Rubber Plantation and Cavala Rubber Plantation.

1. **Violence and Abuse**

Violence and abuse is still widespread in the country and is one of those conflictive issues that participants identified as a threat capable of eating the fabric of the society if not checked. Local people indicated that these problems are manifested in the communities in the forms of gender-based violence, rape, mob justice, killings including ritualistic killings and child rights abuse.

The issue of **women’s rights abuse** was an important issue flagged up during the various dialogue sessions. Different forms of gender-based violence were reported. For instance, the women of Margibi County reported an increase in sexual assault perpetrated against women with the culprits going with impunity.

**Ritualistic killing** was also identified as very worrisome. According to county officials, Maryland has recently witnessed violent protests from the youth as a result of persistent murders carried out by unknown men for ritualistic purposes. The situation has infuriated the youth who strongly protest ritualistic killings, including the gruesome murder of a young motorcyclist who was killed and body parts extracted. The citizens indicated that violence of this nature in their communities dates as far back as the era of President William V. S. Tubman in the 1940s. Since then, there have been scores of killings for ritual purposes.

Lack of training on **Child Rights** issues on the part of parents and community members leads to violations of the rights of children and misunderstanding between child rights activists and community members on ensuring the fulfillment of the rights of children. Local people indicated that the promoting and protection of children’s rights has diminished their control and power over their children and thus may lead to a generation that is lawless and have no respect for older people. Child rights activists indicated that the lack of respect and fulfillment of the rights of children will equally lead to a society that is violent with no respect for rights and therefore impede community development.

# Future Work Plan

The project plans to finalize all field work by 31 March 2010. At the end of that period the project will organize a one-week workshop to share the findings from the different counties among the participants and deepen the analysis in preparation to the final report. During April and May 2010, the project will work on the systematization of the data and the preparation of the final report and video documentary. Integration and analysis of the information gathered requires sufficient time to ensure a good quality document. Sharing the results and recommendations emerging from the consultation process with other stakeholders, such as major government commissions, key government ministries, the Peacebuilding Office, civil society organizations, and other UN Agencies, will be done in May and June.

In parallel, the project is also finalizing the development of a course on participatory approaches to peacebuilding with the Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation at the University of Liberia. The intention is to establish a regular training program on operational strategies for peacebuilding work in Liberia, open to Government institutions and civil society, as a sustained contribution to strengthening local peacebuilding capacity.

As was mentioned above, this will require a no-cost extension till the end of June 2010 (three extra months). This extra time will also be used to mobilize funding for the next phase of the programme, which takes the dialogue at the national level, seeking to reform government policies as a way to facilitate resolution of some of the abovementioned issues.

# Performance Indicators (optional)[[2]](#footnote-2)

# Abbreviations and Acronyms

List the main abbreviations and acronyms that are used in the report

# Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFL Armed Forces of Liberia

AV Audio Visual

CSOs Civil Society Organizations

FIND Foundation for International Dignity

IPC Initiative for Positive Change

IRCL Inter-Religious Council of Liberia

KAICT Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation

LDI Liberia Democratic Institute

P4DP Platform for Dialogue and Peace in Liberia

PBF Peace Building Fund

PBO Peace Building Office

PBRC Peace Building Resource Center

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UNMIL United Nations Mission in Liberia

UNOPS United Nations Office for Project Services

WANEP West Africa Network for Peacebuilding

WONGOSOL Women NGO Secretariat

1. Interpeace engagement in Rwanda dates from 2002. A new institution has been created (IRDP) that is very mature in dealing with dialogue processes at the national and local levels. Participants learned from this experience and sought ways to apply it to Liberia. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. E.g. for the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund and the MDG-F. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)