



Leadership and Change in Post-Conflict States: A Case Study of Liberia

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Acknowledgments

'Capacity *is* Development' is a call to systematically review, capture and discuss key capacity development lessons of the past and to look on to the future. Through distilling key policy and investment choices made over time to motivate forward planning on capacity development, this research paper helped define the content framework of the 'Capacity *is* Development' Global Event. This paper was written by Bruno Mukendi. Special mention is made of contributions by Margo Steiner, Heather Baser, Jamshed Kazi, Bill Tod and Alessandra Casazza.

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Introduction

For over a decade, a growing number of states have been unable to perform the primary functions of governance and provide basic human needs for their people. Known as failed states, these countries typically suffer from violence, economic breakdown, political paralysis, arbitrariness and corruption. Severe deprivation, abject poverty and distrust among citizens and between them and political authorities are commonplace (Chomsky 2006, Rothberg 2002). These conditions are amplified in post-conflict environments where normal development processes are overwhelmed by the need to bring the country back on track after violent conflicts. Meeting all these challenges during post-war reconstruction in ways that reconnect the state with citizens, rebuild trust and legitimacy has become a core priority in development management for national leaders and international institutions.

This paper represents an effort to understand how leadership can facilitate change in post-conflict environments. It focuses on two questions: (1) How leaders manage citizen expectations while ensuring trust and legitimacy; and (2) What allows leaders to transform societies in the aftermath of crises? We contend that leaders can manage expectations by effectively mobilizing and engaging their constituencies in the governance process through inclusive and participatory processes to achieve desired collective outcomes. This task also entails, according to Spain (2007), consistently communicating with key stakeholders to understand their spoken and unspoken expectations, while realistically shaping their perceptions into four areas. These areas are: (a) the leadership's visions and character, (b) the benefits of the long-term change process, (c) the short-term success, and (d) specific stakeholder responsibilities required to achieve both short- and long-term outcomes. We shall also argue that change leaders transform societies through context-sensitive visions that are aligned with their constituencies' real needs and which promote active civic engagement and teamwork to achieve collective goals. The discussion focuses on some of the main capacity elements that have been executed to spearhead the momentum for change in Liberia.

The essay draws on documentary analysis and our own insights and experiences on Liberia. I have lived in the country for almost two years, and left under a mandatory evacuation of the UN international staff when the first civil war broke in 1989. I went back to Liberia after nineteen years for a short assignment. The analysis will be elaborated through the four sections below.



I. A Cursory Look at Leadership and Expectations Management in Post-Conflict Societies

In post-conflict societies, managing expectations in a changing environment remains a complex endeavor. In one hand, the needs are enormous and urgent; on the other, because of limited resources and weak institutions, it is hard to achieve immediate results on the pressing needs. Leaders must monitor public perceptions and at the same time engage in constructive dialogue with different stakeholders to foster a shared understanding of the priorities and of difficulties. Apart from direct dialogue or conversations with a diverse group of people, polling data and cooperation with an independent media can play a critical role in informing as well as helping in the formation and articulation of public opinion.

It is, however, the given post-conflict environment and circumstances that will dictate specific ways in which power has to be exercised and therefore, specific leadership attributes that must be applied. For example, in rebuilding societies in which exclusion and marginalization of large sections of the populace are cited among the root causes of conflicts such as in the case of Liberia, Rwanda and Sudan, the ability to bring about reconciliation, facilitate an atmosphere of respect of differences, develop a culture of impartiality, openness, inclusion, fairness, compromise and concessions, provide security and economic opportunities to all citizens without distinction, must be displayed early on so as to rapidly foster the needed political capital and legitimacy and restore the broken social trust. A vision of reconciliation and the abandonment of practices and policies that have undermined and discredited the authority of the state in the eyes of its people must be consistently enhanced.

Studies on post-war peace building have shown that positive state-reconstruction processes involve reciprocal relations between a state and society. A successful state is one that delivers services based on the constructive engagement of social and political groups. This necessarily requires the existence of inclusive and transparent political processes and mechanisms to negotiate state-society relations ((World Bank and UNDP 2005). This view is also advanced by democratic governance reform advocates who insist on inclusive and participatory processes as well as on the restoration of a public sphere (Kaltenborn 2008, Communication Initiative and al 2007, Cheema 2005).

Building on the experience of Iraq, Spain (2007, 74-80) suggests that successful leaders manage expectations while leading complex change by seeking out and building effective two-way communication bridges to their stakeholders, striving to understand their stakeholders' spoken and unspoken expectations, and realistically shaping their perceptions. Since expectations evolve and vary, based on stakeholders and context, which entails a feedback and adaptive capability, no one-size-fit-all model can be advocated. While insightful, this framework does not, however, explain how factors such as rule of law, responsiveness, accountability and transparency of a government- critical elements in post-conflict peace-building - shape the



quality and quantity of communication as well as state-stakeholders dynamics. Leading an organization to constructive change certainly begins by setting a strategic direction, but to be effective, leaders must also create responsive, accountable and transparent institutions (Toole and Bennis, 2009, pp.54-61). Spain's framework is therefore used here as a thought organizing device.

II. The Development Challenge in Liberia

The origins of conflict in Liberia originate with the exclusion and marginalization of the majority of the indigenous population from the institutions of political governance. An over-concentration of power and a closed political system limited the space for civil society governance. Limited political space exacerbated ethnic and class animosities (Liberia: PRS, 2008, 14). All of this resulted eventually in the 1980 military coup that promised to bring stabilization to the country. Yet even the subsequent overthrow of the Doe regime by the forces of Charles Taylor failed to stem the tide of violence and civil unrest, primarily because none of the institutional reforms that would have led to a more inclusive society had emerged.

To domestic and international observers, it was clear that the continuing pattern of exclusionary politics would bring no peace to the country. In June 2003 a peace accord was brokered in Accra. This led to the formation of a transitional government and the establishment of national elections. Following the November 2005 election, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was sworn in as president of Liberia in January of 2006.

Liberia's 14 year-civil conflict had severe consequences on the economy and society. More than 270,000 people had died over the previous two decades. In turn, roads, bridges, water and sanitation facilities were destroyed. Nearly every family incurred losses. Many suffered from psychological stress and trauma. Household incomes were eroded as the economy collapsed. Almost all governmental institutions ceased to exist as key personnel fled the country or were killed (Liberia-NHDR 2006, 1-2).

The challenges for the newly elected President Sirleaf and her Administration were enormous. They needed to live up to people's expectations by providing peace and security, creating jobs, uniting the country, fighting corruption and building responsive and accountable institutions (Sirleaf 2006).

It is against this background we should understand and examine some of the salient capacities that have been designed and implemented to promote and sustain change in Liberia. It would be, however, presumptuous to anticipate tested achievements after three years of governing, and in an environment where the basic security is still under the control of the United Nations Mission in Liberia. Our intention is rather to uncover those processes and institutional mechanisms that underlie a renewal momentum.



III. How Can Leadership Help Manage Change and Expectations in Liberia?

1. Creating an Alternative Change Strategy

Like many countries emerging from violent civil war, Liberia faced an urgent challenge of consolidating the fragile peace while simultaneously addressing deep and extreme poverty. Peace could not have been sustained without perceived improvements in people's daily lives. Recognizing these critical links, the Sirleaf Administration, with the assistance of the donor community in Liberia, and in collaboration with civil society members, formulated an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy - iPRS (July 2006- June 2008), which was upgraded to a full fledged Poverty Reduction Strategy – PRS (2008-2011) as roadmaps for reconstruction planning and resource mobilization. The strategy offers a comprehensive response to the reconstruction agenda, focusing on enhancing national security, revitalizing the economy, rebuilding infrastructure and delivering basic services, all this while strengthening governance and the rule of law (Liberia, iPRS 2006,xii-xv; PRS 2008, 43-44). The reconstruction vision can be seen as fundamentally a development challenge, addressing micro-level needs (health, education, etc.) within a macro-national strategy driven by the need to reinforce peace and national capacities for self-reliant and self-governing transformations (Sultan 2004, 12).

In addition, six priority cross-cutting themes were incorporated in the strategy, including gender equity, peace-building, environment, HIV/AIDS, children and youth and monitoring and evaluation.

An effective reconstruction vision must be construed as fundamentally a development challenge, addressing micro-level needs within a macro-national strategy driven by the need to reinforce peace and national capacities for self-reliant and self-governing transformations.

Leading differently and breaking from the past required a participatory, responsive and transparent reconstruction vision. Hence, the process involved extensive stakeholder participation, through public consultations, stakeholder consultative committees and participatory poverty assessments. Working groups including the government, members of civil society, private sector, academia, the Liberian Diaspora and donor community were formed at different stages of the vision formulation process (PRS, 24-25). They helped, among others, to infuse a conflict-sensitive and prevention approach by ensuring that historical, social and political economy causes of conflict such as inequity, de-participation, powerlessness, injustice and human rights abuse, were fully taken into account. Likewise, they made certain that policies gave highest priorities to meeting basic human needs, physical security and civil liberties, pro-poor and inclusive economic growth, all of which constitutes the cornerstones of sustainable peace (Fukuda Sakiko and Erin McCandless 2009, 194).



Most observers would argue that the aforementioned demand-side accountability tools are not unique to Liberia, even though the scope and depth of their uses may vary from one country to another (Mukendi 2007, 33; Green 2006). Like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Mozambique, to name only a few countries, organized a series of consultations with stakeholders across the country. Grass-roots organizations, NGOs, the private sector and public sector agencies were invited to discuss and present ideas in various consultation and validation workshops.¹ In contrast, review studies and professional gatherings on poverty reduction strategies have raised issues with donor-funded participatory efforts and consultation processes, which they view as driven or controlled by external consultants. Consequently, they question the meaningfulness and extent of popular participation which they rather find tokenistic (Green 2006; OECD , DFID and World Bank, 2006; McGee and al, 2000) .

The available data on Liberia does not permit us to delve into the give-and-take that took place during the consultation processes so as to get some sense about the power relations among stakeholders. However, one important step and probably unique in the case of Liberia is that each local government (County) was given the opportunity to elaborate its own mini PRS within the general guidelines of the national reconstruction objectives. Each of the 15 Counties was encouraged to draft its own “County Development Agenda”(CDA). The CDA put forward concrete actions to be taken by each county under the four pillars of the PRS at the local level. The consultative process started at the district level and moved up to counties, and there to the national level (McIntoch, 2008). The County exercise allowed citizens to express their views on what they want Liberia and their respective counties to become by the year 2025. Each CDA examines in depth the county’s development potentials, constraints and challenges, then lists key priorities and specific actions or projects to be undertaken (consolidated from district findings and recommendations). The aggregate data revealed a shared concern for peace, unity and development with variations on specific priorities, given local realities (Liberia: MPEA, 2009, 8).

In this way, the CDA, a concrete local expression of the PRS, symbolizes an important tool through which peace-building can be integrated into local poverty alleviation efforts; the CDA itself being an exercise in peace-building. One example is land disputes - which generally resort into clashes - are identified in almost all CDAs as a major threat to peace. In turn, the government has made land reforms a top priority. In fact, the challenge of stimulating meaningful local engagement in development planning and programming was felt earlier on and embraced with the creation of District Development Committees (DDC). Mou (2006, 21) reports that by mi-2006 the speed at which international assistance was dispensed in Liberia tended to shape programmatic support, rather than reconstruction objectives. In this context,

¹ The information on countries’ PRSP is available on World Bank’s PovertyNet. It can also be accessed through individual country website. Liberia is the only country where local governments have visioning documents (local development plans) concurrently formulated with the PRS.



the concept of DDC was adopted to provide the basis for local and community members in equally determining priority areas of support, and in participating fully at the levels of the project cycle. It also formed an organized framework for aid coordination to ensure project harmonization and alignment with reconstruction priorities in an ever-growing multi-donor context. Mou (11-16) observes, however, that this approach could not be sustained, owing to management weaknesses at the local tiers of government, which made it difficult for communities to steer the process without support from international donors. Both the DDCs and County Development Agendas represent potential milestones in the process of laying out the features of the up-coming decentralization policy.

2. Fighting Corruption

One of the crucial elements of the rebuilding agenda is the ability to secure good governance, notably through an effective anticorruption capacity (PRS, 14, 21. Sawyer 2005). Indeed, Sirleaf won elections on the platform of fighting corruption. Large scale thefts, fraud and outcry mismanagement precipitated the collapse of the Liberian state and also threatened durable peace under the National Transitional Government of Liberia in 2003 (Timothy Andrew Sayle and al, 2009, 30, Sawyer 2005). The key to corruption control was her endorsement of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP), an anticorruption initiative agreed earlier between the transitional government and the international community. Its key features are the provision of expatriate experts with co-signing authority and management contract and authoritative oversight mechanisms (UNDP and al, 2008, 17). The GEMAP targets revenue collection, expenditure control, government procurement practices and granting of concessions.

Although criticized as a new form of neo-colonialism (Reno 2008; Sawyer 2007), the implementation of the GEMAP gave way to new expenditure control mechanisms, competitive bidding for contracts, regulation and monitoring of resource flows associated with natural resources such as timber and diamonds, once a key source of wealth for corrupt officials and militias. Liberia has abided by international standards on natural resources, including the adherence to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and the participation in the Kimberly process for certifying diamonds. These measures are intended to ensure transparency and to make certain that wealth and power from the illegal sale of natural resources are not gained disproportionately by a few elite (Andrew, 48; Clark 2008, 27). A Liberia EITI was subsequently established as a dedicated body responsible to lead and coordinate the implementation of the EITI. Its first report, published early in 2009, contains the dollar amounts of all payments made by companies operating in Liberia (mining, oil and logging) to government, and revenues that the government received from the companies, thereby providing a useful tool for Liberians to review, question, and comments on reported revenues (Sirleaf 2008).



The GEMAP calls for a holistic approach to corruption that engages the government at multiple fronts and is driven by a coherent anti-corruption strategy. Accordingly, a national anti-corruption strategy paper (NACSP) was drafted through consultations with key stakeholders, including government ministries and agencies, state-owned enterprises and public corporations, the private sector, civil society, and international organizations. The NACSP was subsequently approved by the government in 2006 (The Analyst- Monrovia, August 29, 2006, 1-3). Following the NACSP, the Anti Corruption Act passed by the Legislature established the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) in September 2008. Progress has been made with the appointment of Commissioners and key staff as well as a budgetary appropriation for its operations in the 2009-2010. Key enabling legislation, i.e. the public service Code of Conduct and a Crime Bill are under consideration by the Legislature. (IMF Liberia 2009). While the adoption of key regulatory frameworks is pending, measures are now in place enabling the LACC to exercise its core functions of education, prevention and enforcement. The investigations of the first four corruption cases are now underway.

Other complementary measures have been carried out, as well: an external auditor, revised civil service mandates, wage reforms to improve personnel motivation and capacity building to infuse meritocracy and culture of transparency and excellence. Likewise, the President has invited all officials to lead by example. Setting the tone shortly after assuming power, she sacked the entire staff of the Finance Ministry upon allegations of corruption, ordered ministers of the transitional government not to leave the country and vowed to declare her assets as well as those of her Cabinet members. Some 17,000 government workers were reportedly dismissed (Jahr 2006 ; Clark, 26).

Civil society and an independent and free media, are also playing a catalytic role in exposing corruption cases and sensitizing the public on its destructive consequences. Watchdog and grass-root associations maintain web-sites and hold meetings on corruption. At times, they have put the government in a defensive posture on corruption allegations involving government officials (McConnel 2008). These grass-root groups together with the media, have succeeded in keeping corruption in the limelight, making it one of the central problems in the country. This increase in the reportage of corruption seems, however, to have produced unintended consequences in some circles when they contend that corruption is on an upward swing in Liberia (Sirleaf 2008). As Simons (2008, 3) rightly noted “corruption may appear more salient in countries with free press than when public discussion of it is muzzled”. Leadership is rather demonstrated by promoting a vibrant media environment and defending the growth of a free press (see Section 5 on Engaging Major Stakeholders).

The aforementioned corruption control mechanisms constitute specific tools advocated and used by progressive leaders to stamp out corruption in public life. In Liberia, their applications have led to a number of positive outcomes, even if total causal relationships cannot be asserted. Liberia ranked 138th over 180 countries in 2008, as compared to 150th over 179



countries in 2007, on Transparency International's corruption perception index. According to the World Bank Institute's Worldwide Governance Indicators, Liberia was ranked 185th out of 206 countries on control of corruption in 2005. In 2006 Liberia moved up 39 places in the rankings to 145th place, and in 2007 it moved up an additional 32 places to 113th in the world. In other words, between 2005 -2007, Liberia moved up 72 places in the world rankings. This constitutes, the Bank argues, the largest improvement by far over the last two years by any country in the world (World Bank Institute, 2008).

On the other hand, public revenues have substantially increased from US\$ 60 million in 2005/2006 to \$280 million in 2007/2008, an approximate indication that taxes and other fees are being paid by citizens and corporations and that public money is not siphoned away. Between 2006 and December 2007, the Government saved nearly US \$4 million by purging from civil service payroll a total of 12,300 ghost names. Similarly, Liberia has regained confidence in the international community. Liberia had a debt cancellation of more than \$670 million for the first time in over 20 years, bringing the country to good status standing with its major creditors. In 2007 the country attracted foreign investments worth US \$97million (UNDP and al, 2008, 25).

Overall, in recognition of the positive steps made by the Liberian government in improving governance and dialogue, the US government has qualified this country for the Threshold status under the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), which is conditional on verifiable progress in governance (Liberia, MPEA, 14). This external incentive to invest in good governance adds to the pressures from domestic reform advocates, including watchdog organizations, to extirpate the cancer of corruption.

Despite positive interim results, numerous challenges exist in the way to sustainable efforts in curbing corruption. The judiciary is in need of a comprehensive overhaul to build capacities to prosecute alleged cases of corruption (Sirleaf 2008, 8; PRS, 89-90). The LACC is yet to prove that it is up to the task and the government will be challenged to maintain its independence and ensure a smooth flow of adequate resources to enable this body to properly carry out its mission. Moreover, while a collaboration capacity has been stimulated through consultative frameworks and various reform-driven commissions, communication within and among public agencies and with the public ought to be consolidated to uphold the sharing of information and the engagement of citizens in corruption control.

Key Anticorruption Drivers in Liberia

1. Top leadership unshaken commitment to stamp out corruption.
2. Implementation of the GEMAP.
3. Procurement Reforms.
4. Adherence to the EITI.
5. Re-negotiations of concession contracts.
6. Cash management committee.
7. Civil society involvement.
8. Civil service and wage reforms.



Additionally, the early endorsement of the GEMAP could be seen as a strategic leadership move to the extent that, despite the change of government, Liberia still needed to build the confidence of the international community so as to facilitate access to key financial and human resources while assembling and strengthening a new leadership team for the country. It helped the Government achieve some tangible successes which bolstered the performance capacity of the regime. Civil society too exercised leadership under the GMAP corruption control framework, notably through better organizing and mounting anti-corruption campaigns. Although the GEMAP has increased donor confidence in Liberia's capacity for good governance (Clark, 30), some development practitioners and specialists express concern for lack of effective national capacity building efforts in its interventions (UNDP and al, 2008, 18; Reno 2008; Sawyer 2007, 18). Understandably, the Liberian case constitutes a special post-conflict situation, the outcry incompetence of the Liberian transitional government having given rise to the donor-controlled GEMAP model. Nonetheless, a new government has now come to power and national capacities are being reconstituted. The GEMAP must adjust its approach and implement a responsible exit strategy.

3. Building Faith in the Benefits of the Long-Term Process

Post-conflict situations pose particular challenges and hardships which may cause some people to loose focus, get discouraged, stay divided along ethnic lines or succumb to exploitative manipulations from war mongers. Uncertainties on resource availability add to the equation. With the cost of the PRS estimated at US\$1.61 billion, of which US \$510 million in local contributions, the government may not be able to generate that much capital, in light of the present world recession (PRS, 134). Under these conditions, one of the practical capacity elements cited by Sirleaf in order to demonstrate leadership is the "consistency of being in touch with those you lead, reaching out to them and being responsive to their needs" (Sirleaf 2007). The task of leadership is to give hope to people, to continuously reassure stakeholders about the new direction taken, while keeping expectations at realistic levels.

Thus, the President of Liberia has taken the lead in holding town meetings throughout the country, making weekly radio messages and using every public opportunity to listen to constituencies and give them hope. In almost every speech, she emphasizes her pro-poor policies, the interim results and the challenges ahead in her government's attempts to consolidate peace, heal the wounds of war, stabilize the economy and curb corruption. She encourages Liberians to work harder and together, and rise above self-interest. Oftentimes, she praises them for their patience as they struggle to make ends met. Our best days lie ahead, she insists (Sirleaf 2009b, 2008). Such motivational appeals, by framing the message as a narrative of a new Liberian story, have the potential to produce positive effects on behaviors.² In other

² Andrew and al (2009, 48) asserts that thus far, Liberia has emerged from its war with tolerant population whose cultural minorities have been protected. No extreme violence was also noted this year with the publication of the



words, listening to others, communicating one's vision and motivating stakeholders to take positive action are important tools for exercising leadership.

Though important, a single charismatic leader's dialogues with the public can hardly forge sustainable trust in the leadership team or usher in long-lasting transformational changes unless they cascade down to all levels of the society, notably through a coherent communication strategy.³ Research has shown that information flow and sharing is not only a fundamental requirement to enable citizens' participation in the shaping of public policy, but it also relates directly to the accountability of officials (Kaltenborn-Stachau, Section 17).

Within this context, the Liberian experience has yet to fortify an institutional communication strategy to keep the information in the public domain both at the national and local levels. First and foremost, the Parliament is traditionally known as the citizens' voice, but Kaltenborn-Stachau (Section 77) found that the Liberian parliament,⁴ lacks effective channels for citizen-lawmaker dialogue; has no structures to facilitate representative-constituency communications, and has no reporting on legislation progress. This predicament, she claims, impedes opinion formation and educated public debate, and hinders public influence on legislative process and law-making.

At the Cabinet level, most ministerial agencies have installed websites where information on their activities is posted, but this communication channel is limited to a few segments of the urban elites and the Diaspora (Kaltenborn-Stachau, Section 79). Further, a Monitoring and Evaluation framework was instituted for the tracking of the performance on deliverables and reporting of the progress achieved on each pillar of the PRS. This framework focuses on outcome and impact information and its dissemination to the public (PRS, 147-153). Although the government has made good strides in meeting some PRS deliverables, a study revealed that this information was poorly communicated to the public so that they know the country was making progress. Forty percent of the interviewed public institutions did not have any feedback mechanisms to establish whether the information disseminated was actually received by the

first draft of the National Reconciliation and Truth Commission, which implicated the President in the war crimes. Although the sources of extremely violent behaviors are difficult to identify, it can be inferred that a consistent reference by the President to shared values underpinning social cohesion, could have been playing a role in fostering the same. The study also states that there is an agreement about the legitimacy of the state, and the general mood of citizenry support liberal and democratic values (p36).

³ Communicating is not enough to initiate change. It is also important to empower others to take on leadership and cooperate with them. Decentralization initiatives are intended to create a network of change agents at the base level. It remains to be seen whether local governments will enjoy all the support they need to transform their communities.

⁴ According to a legislative needs assessment conducted by UNDP-Liberia in 2006,, half of the members of the House of Representatives lack college degrees and a third of the Senate faces similar conditions. John Johnson and Robert Nakamura, "Liberia Legislative Needs Assessment," United Nations Development Programme (Liberia), February 2006: 13 . Most of the legislators are former politicians and ex-war leaders.



public (Liberia Media Center 2009). They either lacked the capacity to do it, or simply were not willing to change their habitual ways of operating.

Top level implementation monitoring is carried out by the Planning Ministry, through periodic consultative meetings, which are held with local governments and grass-roots associations to discuss and capture their views on progress as well constraints in the implementation of the PRS pillar strategies and County Development Agendas. These consultative tours have recently covered most of the Counties, but look more as awareness raising and rapid performance appraisal campaigns than an integral part of a comprehensive communication strategy (Liberia, Planning Ministry 2009). The extent to which the received information is fed back in decision-making is unclear.

On the other hand, the media sector in Liberia, despite serious human and financial resource constraints (Kaltenborn-Stachau, Section 85) , is showing progress in distributing information in the public sphere. A study found that between January and April 2009, the media sector combined, produced 1535 articles on development related issues and poverty and the PRS process. Assessing the reports across the PRS pillars, the study noted that infrastructure and basic services recorded the highest number of stories of PRS and development stories totaling 671, followed by economic revitalization with 370. Good governance and rule of law got 391, while peace and national security came last with 102 PRS stories. Information sharing in rural areas on the PRS through community radio stations was low. (Liberia Media Center 2009, 1).

All in all, the sharing of information within and between ministries and public agencies and the public needs strengthening. The flow of information is hampered by severe logistical and infrastructural deficiencies like lack of vehicles, telephones and impassable roads. Also, a culture of secrecy, purported by the belief that information is power, and as such, cannot be shared with others, plays a part in information retention. This attitude constrains the ability by citizens to access to key policy documents and data to document and monitor government activities. How can urban and rural dwellers support government land reforms if they don't know what the government's position is? In this respect, one of the solutions being considered is a Public Information Act which is currently debated and vetted by the legislature. It is expected that it will compel public agencies to provide information to the public. In turn, citizens will have the right to request that information, thereby allowing them to know what the government is doing so that they can plan their own engagement strategy. In the end, one needs more than laws to change engraved behavioral patterns and habits. Continuing education and communication should become an integral part of a collective leadership change strategy.



4. Delivering Short-Term Results

Political legitimacy, argues, Rothstein, does not merely depend on the political system's input's side, i.e. on whether or not citizens democratically determine the policy; or the process' side, i.e. inclusiveness, participation and responsiveness, but also on the output's side, i.e. on the ability to deliver specific results (Rothstein 2007). Political legitimacy and political capital are needed for a government to sustain support for hard reform processes. Leaders can improve their credibility and gain more time if they can demonstrate quick progress on some issues.

The near-strategy of the Liberian government is to “achieve quick and visible progress that reaches significant number of the people, to gain momentum, consolidate support, and establish the foundation for sustained economic development “(Sirleaf 2006). With a country completely devastated, there is a pretty high threshold of what a government has to do to call a success. The balancing of competing needs and priorities within the context of the strategic vision becomes an enduring test of leadership.

In light of this dilemma, two approaches can be discerned in the government action, which ultimately had a somewhat positive impact on the acute human resource and socioeconomic and political crisis that existed after the war. These are: (a) the mobilization of the Diaspora as well as (b) the international community to support security reforms and socioeconomic development projects (McIntoch 2008).

We will first look into the Diaspora as an effort to enhance capacities before proceeding to security reforms and socioeconomic development initiatives. Our goal is not to excavate the issues which would otherwise demand a totally separate investigation, but to highlight any major achievements (or lack of), with a view to consolidating the performance capacity of the state to deliver peace and development, thereby enhancing its legitimacy and trust in the eyes of citizens.

A. The Diaspora as a Capacity Enhancement Strategy for Reconstruction

How to leverage the expertise and knowledge of the Diaspora has received an increased attention in the development and post-conflict reconstruction literature (see for example articles in the book edited by Kuznetsov 2006). From Somalia to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, members of the Diaspora are highly visible in state institutions, occupying top leadership positions in the cabinet, parliament, political parties, state enterprises and civil service. The Diaspora networks have been instrumental in contributing to peace-building and reconciliation, socioeconomic development and entrepreneurship, playing an increasingly significant part of life in the home country (Sheikh et al 2009; Kuznetsov 2006). In light of the Diaspora's potentials to add to societal transformations, the question then becomes how can



its productive members be effectively utilized to accompany, promote and sustain development efforts in the receiving country.

In the case of Liberia, the Diaspora constitutes 12 percent of its population. Sawyer (2005, 78) asserts that Liberia's Diaspora has an important influence on both lives and views in the home country. Along the same line, Taylor (Ashford 71) argues that the Liberian Diaspora is an important source of investment funding, expertise and an important confidence building measure. The Diaspora's remittances accounts for 26% of Liberia's annual GDP of 574.5 million and a growth rate of 7,9 % translate into an inward capital flow of about \$149 million per annum (Ashford 2009, 71) The Liberian Diaspora, especially in the United States has deployed its specialized expertise and mobilized funds in support of peace-building and reconstruction initiatives, and was fully involved in the 2005 national elections (Ashford, 69-78).

Shortly after assuming power, the first challenge that confronted President Sirleaf was to find capable and experienced professionals to fill leadership positions in government and public agencies, including the Cabinet. Most local experts had fled the country and low public sector remunerations complicated their potential return. Henceforth, Sirleaf used her personal connectivity and negotiated with international partners (initially UNDP and the Open Society Institute) to support a program of the repatriation of Liberian professionals. The Liberia Emergency Capacity Building Program (LECBP) was formed in 2006 to acquire specialized expertise that would help promote reform initiatives and strengthen institutional capacity building and effectiveness. The program beneficiaries receive salary supplements. Likewise, the global UNDP approach to reversing the brain drain in developing countries, the Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN), was context-adjusted and tapped in to bring home Liberian expatriate nationals and back capable local professionals to undertake some specific short-term assignments (McIntosh, 2008, UNDP and al, 2008).

A total of 77 professionals with special skills, 98% of them from the Diaspora were recruited in the projects by mid 2008. They were deployed into various capacities ranging from Cabinet ministers, their principal deputies and assistants, heads of public agencies, consultants to ministries, university professors, medical

The mobilization of the Diaspora can be a cost-effective option for dealing with human capacity constraints in developing countries.

doctors, economists, engineers and management specialists. Of a high international calibre, but paid less than their market value, they aided to spearhead the momentum for change and the revitalization of key institutions. Although we cannot attribute all the recorded improvements to them, they have been credited for a significant number of important peace-building and reconstruction milestones. These include: identification of short-term reconstruction priorities and agenda, contributions to the iPRS and PRS, support for effective implementation of the GEMAP, implementation of the IMF Staff Monitored Program (SMP)



which set the stage for debt forgiveness, redefined regulatory frameworks to promote trade and private sector development, a comprehensive framework for addressing national human capacity constraints and civil service reform strategies. Equally, they have contributed to reforms of health and higher education systems (McIntoch 2008; UNDP and al, 33-40).

If the LECBP and TOKTEN projects were designed to build public sector institutional and human capacities, a mid-term evaluation in 2008 discovered that operational and administrative tasks took precedence over training and other capacity building programs (mentoring, coaching, etc), making the projects more of capacity mobilization and utilization than proper capacity development initiatives. It also appeared that project designs made no provisions for training resources (UNDP and al 2008). Capacity strengthening without resources stands out as a missed opportunity for the country, falling short of the investments needed to realize some of the institutional revitalization goals.

The goal of the SES is to buttress the executive management of government institutions through the injection of top notch professionals capable of spearheading and managing change in the public sector; reforming the administrative systems and procedures and advancing the overall reform and development agenda through strategic placement of SES personnel in line ministries, department and agencies.

At their completion, these two projects are expected to feed into a broader and long-term capacity development initiative called the Senior Executive Service (SES). The Liberian Diaspora is one of the main targets of this program. Modeled after the experiences of countries like Kenya, Tanzania and Sierra Leone, the SES develops a cadre of top professionals who are properly trained, and adequately compensated to take ownership of the reform process and to drive it forward (Liberia, CSA, 4).

In addition to an attractive remuneration, the package includes the monetization of fixed benefits, such as housing and transportation and a repatriation grant (CSA, 4). The SES is expected to recruit 100 high profile and competent senior executives by 2010. In December 2008, 71 professionals were inducted in the Service. The SES has filled top level positions in institutions such as Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice and the Governance Reform Commission (Liberia: MPEA 2009, 8).

It is not, however, clear that proper incentives will be always in place to keep specialized skills in the country. For one, the SES is wholly funded by international partners, including UNDP, Open Society Institute, World Bank, USAID, and other bilateral donors. Its three-year budget amounts to US\$9,660,000, of which US7.5million were mobilized (2008), leaving a funding gap of US\$2.16 million (Liberia-Civil Service Agency 2008, 86). In this way, its continuing viability will depend on the government's ability to mobilize both international and domestic resources. Besides, the state will have to contain pressures from some internal groups which insist that



peace dividends primarily benefit those who have remained in the home country during the civil unrest. Finally, while most members of the Diaspora who are integrated in the governing structures typically tend to share political views that are supportive of the government in place, it is not evident that those who would profess diverging positions, or challenge in good faith emerging policy orientations, would continue to enjoy the support of political leaders. If such a possibility materializes, it can create tensions, complicates cooperation and resorts into disruptions in service delivery.⁵

B. Security Sector Reform

Enhancing national security stands out as the first strategic pillar in the post-war reconstruction agenda. Understandably, Liberia's state army, police and intelligence services unleashed civil war, ruined its economy, plundered its resources, reduced its population and destroyed its infrastructure, leading to the collapse of the state (Stearns and Gompert 2007, 1; Sawyer 2007). Three core security dimensions are briefly examined hereafter, namely: disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation of former combatants (DDRR); return of internally displaced persons and repatriation of refugees.

The DDRR program was launched after the Accra Peace Agreement during the transitional government. The reforms include a complete restructuring of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the national police force. The AFL program is financed by the US government, who has contracted a private company (Dyncorp) to recruit, train and restructure the AFL. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is the lead donor and responsible for police training. In 2006, the Government of Liberia initiated a process aimed at formulating a national security strategy (Sawyer 2007, 13).

A 2009 Report by the International Crisis Group depicts an uneven progress picture of the security sector reform. More than 100,000 Liberian ex-combatants have been disarmed and demobilized, with efforts now focused on specific skill training and community-based reintegration. An elite armed force of nearly 2,000 soldiers has been trained by the US; 3661 police officers, including 344 women, have completed training with the UNMIL (International Crisis Group 2009, i-9).

⁵ This possibility cannot be discounted. A similar situation has happened in March 2007 although we could not confirm whether the involved national official was member of the Diaspora or not. The Managing Director of the Liberia National Port Authority (NPA) declared publicly that his GEMAP counterpart Comptroller lacks basic competence for his assignment. Within days, he was reassigned and appointed Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Public Works. The GEMAP Comptroller was also transferred with the same assignment to the Forestry Development. The reasons for these transfers were not made public. What is implied is that the alleged incompetence was transferred from one sector to another, with the possibility of frustrations from the initiating party (the Managing Director). From Togba-Nah Tipoteh in Gienanth and al, op.cit. p.75)



The DDR programs were successful in destroying tones of weapons, disbanding armed groups and ensuring income as well as the potential for productive futures for demobilized soldiers (Sayle and al 2009, 33). According to Crisis Group, the army reform, particularly the vetting process has been a provisional success (p.9). But the quality of the armed force re-training program is judged by some experts as questionable, mainly because it is implemented by a private security company and lacks civic education and human rights elements. (Gienanth 7). Police reforms are considered as poor since the police are still viewed to be corrupt and ineffective. This has to do also with lack of equipment and dismal community relations. Vigilantism and disrespect of the police are reportedly growing in the capital city of Monrovia, resulting into violence and criminal activities, particularly armed robbery and theft (ICG, 7).

This predicament raises questions about the effectiveness of the DDRR program, which is discussed elsewhere (i.e. Jaye 2009; ICG 2009). Suffice here to say that the resurgence of crime and violence is often associated with the failure to sufficiently integrate former combatants into civil society (Edloe 2007). Indeed, according to a recently released report by Dr. Lynn Lawry of the US Department of Defense Health Affairs, symptoms of major depressive disorder (40% of the surveyed population), post-traumatic stress disorder (44%), and traumatic brain injuries are high among former Liberian combatants. The report revealed that both male and female former combatants who experienced sexual violence had worse mental health outcomes than noncombatants and other former combatants who did not experience exposure to sexual violence. 32% of male combatants were survivors of sexual violence, a statistic challenging the traditional belief that only women and girls are victims of sexual violence (42% of female former combatants experienced sexual violence). Of those former combatants who experienced sexual violence, 74% of female former combatants experienced symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and 52% experienced major depressive disorder. Among male, 81% of male former combatants experienced symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and 64% experienced major depressive disorder. Additionally, former combatants have higher rates of head trauma than non-combatants as well as a higher reported use of drugs and alcohol. The study concludes that in spite of the widespread mental health issues among Liberian ex-combatants, there are few services or policies in place to adequately deal with them(Lawry, 2009).

While the emphasis is given to physical security, the reintegration of former combatants into civil society remains a social and human issue. It cannot be pursued without full consideration to the broader human, economic and psychological needs. Healing the wounds of war in ways that deeply reconcile the society with itself would also necessitate tapping in traditional institutions and values (clan chiefs, herbalists, community solidarity, etc.) and proven conflict resolution mechanisms. Rwanda seems to have reactivated with success a number of cultural traditions that are aiding in bringing people together, dealing with community conflicts and promoting a sense of shared responsibility at the local level. The cultural traditions of mutual assistance (Ubudehe), communal resolution of conflicts (Gacaca), support to the needy and



contribution to the achievement of common goal (Umusanzu) are upheld in the organization and management of local governments and communities under the decentralization policy (Musoni, 2004).⁶

Besides, the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) was reportedly completed in December 2006, with 326,990 former IDPs (out of 400,000) assisted to return to their homes (Sirleaf, 2008, 4). A program of organized voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees concluded in June 2007, with over 160,000 returnees. Small scale operations are now focusing on repatriating refugees, mainly from Ghana. These returns are allegedly responsible for tensions among ethnic groups over land ownership, occasionally sparking a new round of fighting to recover claimed lands or properties.

In sum, the Liberian SSR has so far produced mixed results, which make peace fragile. Essentially, the SSR program is being criticized as having a narrow focus on training and equipping of armed and police force, with little attention or resources being devoted to the other components of the security system;⁷ and for not being linked to other governance reforms executed by the government. The role of the civil authority and legislative oversight over all security services as mandated by the Liberian constitution is unclear in the implementation of reforms (ICG, 9; Jaye 2009; Gienanth 7).

The SSR fails to connect with the larger vision of society Liberia wants to construct, as well. Sawyer rhetorically asks "What would happen if we (Liberians) don't have enough money to pay the elite force "that is being trained by Americans to fight wars? (emphasis mine). If the army is not development-oriented, then what will the soldiers be doing if there is no war? Sawyer also raises the issue of plunder and predation which is characteristic of the Liberian military culture, and wonders how this culture will change with new guns and shining boots! (Sawyer 2007, 13) The larger point Sawyer is making here that is still valid is that the role of the new army in the Liberian society must have been spelled out before any training exercise was undertaken; its responsibility should have been to work with the rest of the population to better the society, rather than simply limiting its sphere of action to wars. The same question can be mentioned with the profile of the new police force being trained by the UN. Unfortunately, the security sector strategy was adopted in 2008 two years after a significant number of activities were initiated.

⁶ A Truth and Reconciliation Commission was inaugurated in February 2006, but has not been yet able to effectively address and heal the wounds created by the civil war and reconstruct the necessary social capital for collective rebuilding of the country.

⁷ The security sector reform is an essential part of a comprehensive post-conflict peace-building process. It involves at its core, the transformation of the country's military and police forces- but also entails a comprehensive review and restructuring of intelligence services, the penitentiary, the judiciary, immigration services and other agencies charged in some way with preserving and promoting the safety and security of the state and its citizenry.



All these inadequacies lead to another critique equally voiced by the International Crisis Group which views the SSR, at least up to recently, as being external-driven, with little inputs from the Liberian government (ICG, 9), most of the decisions being made by external consultants and others like DynCorp and UNMIL (Jay 2009, 4).

C. Economic and Human Development

It is widely recognized that peace can be promoted and sustained when a government delivers in facilitating inclusive and equitable economic growth and in producing social services to meet the needs of its citizens, in addition to accountable governance and security outputs (UNDP-UNECA, 2008, 7). The Sirleaf Administration inherited a broken economy, damaged infrastructures and a poor state of basic social services. It has been noted that Liberia's GDP collapsed by over 85 percent between 1980 and 2005. From a pre-coup national budget of US\$600 million, the government inherited a budget of less than US\$100 million in 2006. The decline affected all economic sectors with production in mining, coffee and oil palm production collapsing almost completely. The average GDP per capita fell from over US\$ 1,000 in 1980 to less than US\$150 in 2005 forcing the average working family in the public sector, for example to survive on a salary of US\$20 per month, when it was paid (Richard Tolbert in Giernanth. 85-86) This situation led to a high level of unemployment, which, according to some estimates, affect the majority of Liberians, especially the youth (iPRS x). As a result, the proportion of people living on less than US\$1 a day increased dramatically in the later years of the civil war, rising from 55.1 % in 1997 to 76.2% in 2001. (pp.11). A 2007 survey found that 64 percent of the Liberian population lives below the poverty line (PRS).

As the crisis intensified, basic infrastructures were destroyed: roads, electricity grids, water and sanitation system; 95 % of health facilities were partially or wholly destroyed; and schools were badly damaged leaving over half of school children out of the classroom for over a decade.

Through its 150 day transitional program, the iPRS and now the PRS, the government, with strong international support, has launched a series of mutually reinforcing policies aimed at building the foundations for an inclusive economy that focuses on job creation, restoring basic infrastructures and social services and rehabilitating state institutions. As stated earlier, the economic policies encompass, inter alia, tightening fiscal management of the public treasury, strengthening revenue collection and improving the governance of the country's natural resources while the task of rebuilding the stock of human capital concentrates on investments in economic and social infrastructures and improving access to health, education as well as institution building.

Some notable improvements have been noted, as a result. Real GDP growth soared from a low of -31.3 percent in 2003 to 9.5 percent in 2007, and was projected to increase at 9,6 percent in 2008, due largely to resumption of logging and continued growth in the service sector. Real



GDP per capita (constant 1992 US\$) also increased from 117.7 to \$1126.4 between 2004 and 2007 and is projected at 138.6 in 2009 (UNDP and ECA, 4-5). Government revenues skyrocketed from US 80 million in 2004 to an estimated US\$ 135 millions in 2006-2007, which increased to US\$ 200 million in 2007-2008, representing a growth rate of 47,7 percent over the period 2006-07. Poverty-focused expenditures account for 20 percent of the 2006-2007 budget, with health (8,7 %), education (8,6 %) and infrastructure sectors, accounting for the biggest outlays of the budget. Primary education has been made compulsory (UNDP, ECA,12).

Consequently, major road lines and bridges have been rehabilitated or developed, thereby reopening communication with various parts of the country. The electricity grids have been restored in strategic areas of Monrovia, facilitating business reopening and communication with the rest of world. Schools and health facilities have been repaired and reopened, and new establishments being created. Several key health and education indicators have begun to improve since the end of hostilities, although they remain poor.

For example, the infant mortality rate fell from 117 during 1999-2000 to 72 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2007, while under-five mortality fell from 194 to 111 deaths per 1000 births during the same period. These declines are attributed primarily to the end of the conflict, the restoration of basic services in some areas and increased immunization (PRS, 30). Basic education indicators show marked improvements, too. The net enrolment ratio in primary education jumped from 34.7 percent in 2001/02 to 37.3 percent in 2007, with a significant increase for girls (14.5% in 2002 to 37% in 2007 against 20.3% in 2002 to 37.5% in 2007 for boys. Gross enrolment rate in primary education has almost doubled , with a record level registered by girls, from 35.5 % in 2002 to 84.5% in 2007 (48.5% in 2002 to 88% in 2007 for boys). The literacy rate of 15 -24 years old skyrocketed from 34,77 percent in 2001/02 to 72.4 percent in 2007/ (UNDP and ECA, 2008, 17).

Along with these economic and social reforms, the Liberian government has undertaken a comprehensive review of its capacities at both national and local level in a bid to strengthen the foundations of the state. A national human development report, published in 2006 with the assistance of UNDP helped to bring attention on the capacity challenges (institutional, organizational and human) and issues confronting post-conflict Liberia (NHDR 2006). Subsequently, various capacity assessment exercises have been conducted, with the assistance of foreign consultants, culminating in the formulation of a 10 year national development capacity development strategy and action plan (the draft was presented to stakeholders in December 2008 for review) (MPEA , 11). It appears, however, that many technical reports are produced every single year, and this contrasts with the state capacity to digest such information, bringing us to one of the least researched questions regarding the intellectual consumption orientation of development.



In the short and medium terms, capacity building initiatives concentrate on civil service reforms, including salary reforms to motivate, retain and attract competent staff, restructuring and rightsizing, public expenditure and revenue collection reforms, creation of an enabling environment for private sector development, gender and youth sensitive development, decentralization and service delivery improvement (CSA 2008, NHRD 2006). As indicated earlier, the LCBP, the TOKTEN and the Senior Executive Service program are all efforts to effectively respond to the challenges of human and institutional capacity strengthening to accelerate change and development in Liberia.

If we take a broader view of the underlying short-term actions, including dialogue in strategy formulation, DRR, resettlement of IDPs and arrangements for returning refugees, anticorruption program, macroeconomic stability, social sector and infrastructure rehabilitation together with institutional revitalization, we can safely suggest that substantial progress has been made that could generate some level of trust and confidence in the post-war order, even though much more remains to be done. But these actions and their outcomes do not necessarily guarantee their sustainability, which is contingent upon many factors. Among them would be the exact role which Liberians at all levels play in the reconstruction process: whether they are passive or distant observers or actual initiators and drafters of strategy papers and implementers of projects; and whether they are the ones putting pressures on the system to change and deliver results. This raises the question of substantive local participation and ownership in the actual implementation of the reconstruction agenda, in addition to the inclusive and participatory process manifested in the PRS formulation. The critics leveled against the security sector reforms bring into fresh light these concerns. The International Crisis Group already warned that current Army reforms may run into trouble after the departure of the US contractor. The Report states :

“The achievements to date in the demobilization of the ex-AFL and the recruitment, vetting and training of the new force have largely been due to individual goodwill and hard work and in spite rather than because of the structures in place. But they could evaporate if insufficient attention is paid to training and mentoring the officer corps and the army institution as a whole” (ICG 2009, 9).

Management of the army SSR process has been far from perfect but the efforts of individuals in key coordinating roles and the ability of the U.S. to take on extra responsibilities have in large part kept the program on course. Of greater concern is what will happen when all responsibility is handed over to the Liberian government. The Ministry of Defense has already displayed weakness in dealing with the expectations of the fledgling army (ICG 2009, 15).

The fragility of the foregoing programs is compounded by their heavy dependence on external finance (see next section), implying that they can wither away in the absence of such support.



5. Engaging Major Stakeholders

Post-conflict peace-building requires a wide range of internal and external actors that must work in a concerted way to effectively meet the pressing needs and build a durable peace. In this process, the task of getting each actor to be engaged and to do its part in ways that facilitate the transition from war to peace and sustainable development is essential. Besides the government, three such major stakeholders include civil society, the media and the international community.

There is a general consensus among scholars and development practitioners on the centrality of a vibrant civil society in enhancing and consolidating peace, democracy and development. It is particularly crucial in post-conflict societies that must build institutions that are responsive and accountable to people, advocate for effective government and hold the government and international actors accountable.

In Liberia, civil society has evolved over time and is presently composed of an amalgamation of voluntary and autonomous associations and NGOs, most of them pro-democracy, human rights and transparency groups, religious, professional, labor unions, gender, advocacy, youth and student groups and media organizations (CENTAL, 2008, Toure 2002). CSOs have played roles in a number of ways, including facilitation of the peace agreement, advocacy for good governance and delivery of basic social services in war-torn communities where viable local government was either inexistent or considerably weakened (Pajibo 2007, Mou 2006; NDI 2004 ; Toure 2002).

To affirm civic society's role, the Liberian government provides legal and regulatory protection. The Planning Ministry is mandated to monitor and evaluate the activities of NGOs and enhance the cooperation between the government and NGOs. In this respect, the government has attracted a number of civil society members to work in leadership positions in various departments.

Strengthening State-Civil Society Relations

1. Provide legal and regulatory frameworks.
2. Develop partnership arrangements.
3. Establish entry points for dialogue.

CSOs were also involved in the formulation of the two roadmaps for change and in virtually all major policy initiatives (reconciliation, transitional justice, decentralization, etc.). They were instrumental in the establishment a truth and reconciliation commission, keeping the public updated on its proceedings, documenting experiences, and exposing deficiencies in the process, such as inadequate procedures for taking statements, lack of initiatives to protect witnesses testifying about rape and similar crimes, and low level of citizen representation in the process



(PRS, 13; Weah 2007; Pajibo 2007). Moreover, watchdog groups are active in exposing acts of malfeasance, through websites, newspapers and public conferences.

Despite this inclusion, civil society still faces a myriad of challenges and issues that hinder its ability to deliver results and to effectively advance its positions in the public sphere. Studies pointed out that Liberian civil society organizations experience difficulties in accessing to key public policy documents and lack appropriate expertise and experience to formulate and advocate their positions persuasively, including the necessary entry points in strategy implementation. The competition with the government and international donors over available human resources has put the CSOs at disadvantage (Nah 2008; Kaltenborn-Stachau). The most fundamental weakness of CSOs which makes them vulnerable to cooptation and corruption remains their financial dependence (Nah 2008). According to Nah, nearly 95% of Liberian CSOs funding are from external sources. The lack of predictability in external funding undermines the sustainability of projects, and as such, the trust of CSOs in the eyes of the population. Foremost, the reliance on donor funds compromises civil society's independence in making decisions and ensuring that right programs are pursued for beneficiaries (Nah, p. 3-4). Faced with limited resources, most activities are ad hoc and not strategically aimed at influencing public policy. The competition among members over scarce donor funds foster adversarial relationships, rather than cooperation and sharing of information. This in turn, impedes CSOs' ability to form broader coalitions to engage policy makers on issues of common interest (Nah 1-19). The dependency on donor funds compounds with internal accountability, transparency, management and organizational weaknesses to lower expectations on the sustainability of most civic sector interventions (Nah 2008). To break this dependency syndrome would entail, among others, subcontracting with CSOs as well as internal resource mobilization efforts, through consultancy to other CSOs and expansion of corporate membership. The government can also assist well-managed CSOs in securing bank loans for investments in income-generating activities.

In Liberia, the civic space is firmly established and articulated, and any attempt to discount its voice, is more likely to be seriously challenged.

Besides civil society, the new Administration has pledged to promote a vibrant media environment and to defend the growth of a free press. Signs of collaboration have been recently observed. One example is the Liberia Media Center (2008), a non governmental organization, that has released two publications on "the Implementation on the PRS: A Journalist's Guide on Reporting Liberia's PRS", and a ground-breaking "Media Monitoring Report and Assessment of Information Flow on the PRS process". The Manual and the Report were formally launched by the Information Ministry. They seek to close the knowledge gaps in the implementation of the PRS.

It should not be inferred from this illustration that the relations between the state and the media are always cordial. The government sometimes criticizes the media for sensationalist



reporting and judges it as lacking in constructive engagement and not working as a partner in the reconstruction of the country (Kaltenborn- Stachau, Section 88). Several factors contribute to the poor engagement between the state and the media. First among them is a lack of professionalism and training within the media. In addition, equipment and infrastructure to support public communications continue to marginalize the role of the media.

In politically sensitive post-conflict conditions as in Liberia, there may be need to monitor and ensure the media quality. The broadcast of hate-speeches in Rwanda and in the Balkans instigated widespread violence, demonstrating the media's powerful role. Notwithstanding this exceptional situation, there are real dangers to peace and democracy consolidation when a state overacts to legitimate criticisms of its behaviors and policies by the media. The state could engage constructively the media by sharing with it the information about its activities and challenges, including information on controversial issues, showing by that it is transparent. Well-trained spokespeople within public agencies can likewise form the necessary bridges. But for them to be credible, they must be knowledgeable and have access to key policy information. The media associations could also help to ensure compliance with professional code of conduct by journalists (Kaltenborn- Stachau 2007).

Finally, the role of international actors needs clarification after the immediate post-war stabilization. Boyce(2007) concludes his research on resource mobilization for post-conflict recovery and reconstruction by recommending that "more effective aid for the reconstruction of war-torn societies requires the reconstruction of aid itself". This proposition is upheld by his review of major obstacles for successful post-war reconstruction, which according to the study, are not only located within the war-torn societies, but also deeply rooted in the policies and priorities of the international community and donor agencies.

This is not to underestimate the constructive role played by international actors, without which even minimal peace could not have been possible. Indeed, donor support to Liberia has increased sharply since the cessation of hostilities. Resource flows were estimated at \$460 during the period 2004-2005, excluding the cost of the UNMIL (estimated at US\$750 million a year (UNDP and ECA 2008, 13, The total official development assistance is estimated at \$ 283.4 million for the fiscal years 2007/08 to 2009/10 included (UNDP and ECA 2008, 13). As discussed in this study, the PRS is substantially funded through external donors. Liberia qualified for a debt relief under the Enhanced HIPC Initiative, following a track record of performance under the IMF's Staff Monitored Program (UNDP and ECA, 42). Partnership is perceived as a matter of policy to foster close collaboration with donors across the board in all matters in all sectors. As a result, donor meetings and resource mobilization round tables are periodically held (i.e in Washington 2007 and Germany 2008 on the PRS), where the government exchanges views with donors on policies, results and constraints, and requests assistance from them.



Although donor contributions advance the peace process, a number of issues can be raised that affect the long-term viability of donor assistance to Liberia. Currently, donor funds to Liberia are spent almost entirely outside the government's budget due to concerns about transparency and accountability under the GEMAP (UNDP and ECA, 13). This situation, as rightly suggested by Boyce, results into a dual public sector with an internal public sector that is funded and managed by the government and an external public sector that is funded and managed by donors. If aid's goal during the post-conflict stabilization period is to build state capacities, how can this be done when donor agencies refuse to route resources through the government? In the prevailing conditions, argues Boyce (p.45) short-run efficiency requirements crowd out or neglect longer-term tasks of building the capacities needed for an effective and legitimate state. Continuing to bypass the government may send a mistakable signal to the population that the Sirleaf Administration is incompetent and corrupt too. This could have unintended negative effects in domestic resource mobilization insofar as the willingness to pay taxes hinges on the perception that the government will deliver services in return.

In addition, the GEMAP-driven reforms call for the rightsizing of the civil service. What then would rightsizing mean in the context of serious unemployment which the International Crisis Group views as one of the major threats to peace and stability in Liberia? Another issue relates to the predictability of donor funds. For example, some Army's training activities under the security sector reform were not accomplished on time, in part due to delays in the release of funds by the US government. As a result, DynCorp staff could not execute their action plans, but were paid in the meantime (ICG, 13). Delays in aid disbursement typically lead to waste of resources, through unnecessary extensions of contracts. Big salary differentials between national employees and those on the international agencies' payrolls is in added problem that can create disincentives in task execution. The International Crisis Group cites a case in which an UNMIL driver earns some \$600 per month while a lieutenant who has passed basic army training and has a university degree makes only \$200 per month (ICG, p14). Such policies can only fuel frustrations and disengagement on the part of those concerned.

Conclusions, Implications and Lessons

Leadership is central to the transition from fragility to state building and development in post-conflict societies. Not only that leaders bear the responsibility to set a new direction for their people, they must align and motivate them to make change happen, manage the day-to-day process of reconstructing collapsed economies and restoring social cohesion, while creating the enabling environment to ensure state reconnection with society.

We have argued that managing expectations while leading complex change involves a participatory and inclusive change vision, a system of two-way communication mechanisms that reinforce leader-stakeholder relationships, securing of short-term payoffs while not losing sight with long-term priorities to build stakeholders' trust, and finally engaging major



stakeholders in the reconstruction process. Since expectations don't stand still, there must be ways to consistently monitor their evolution ('i.e. public polling, surveys, dialogue forum), and manage the process of change in those expectations, accordingly. This process is not of course mechanistic; it necessitates political adaptations, bargains and trade-offs which are all essential to advance any reconstruction agenda. This, in turn requires particular leadership attributes that must be exercised given specific contextual variables.

In ever changing and complex post-conflict environments, not only that leadership must be adaptive and flexible, expectation management itself, as seen in the case of Liberia, remains a long-term process. Leadership can only influence those expectations within the context of consistent short-term actions and successes, in the light of a long-term reconstruction agenda. This is simply because people are more likely to withdraw their support to leadership in the absence of some measurable improvements in their conditions. It is, therefore, crucial for leaders to know what are the expectations of success in the short-term from stakeholders' perspectives, and to mobilize and prioritize resources to achieve them in the first place. The preparation of the County Development Agendas, alongside the PRS was an attempt to permeate local realities and problems from the viewpoints of local residents.

In order to sustain citizens' hope and faith in the change process in ways that reconnect the state with the citizenry, leaders need to combine a variety of tools, including regular dialogues and consultations, listening to key constituencies to capture on a consistent basis their views and perspectives on issues and allow them to influence and shape policy decisions, collaborating with key stakeholders including the media and civil society organizations, and empowering people to act through facilitation of access to information, or capacitating institutions (decentralized and participatory structures and processes). This is the objective pursued with the passing of a Public Information Act as well as the launching of decentralization in Liberia. However, the communication flow with the public is still very weak despite efforts being deployed by the top governmental leadership.

The distrust, ethnic divisions and the sense of hopelessness that often comes with the feeling of reliance on external sources for one's livelihood, all of which are amplified in post-conflict contexts, can be mitigated through systemic dialogue and communication strategies, with coordinated messages, dispensed by credible messengers and intended not only to inform on government's activities and results, and secure citizens' views, but to equally forge a unity of purpose, can-do spirit and cultivate a sense of individual and collective responsibility and reliance in the face of monumental reconstruction needs and challenges. In this regard, the donor community can assist in positively impacting systemic impediments to genuine reforms by investing in enhancing communication and participatory development capacities. This would involve, inter alia, encouraging governments to disclose information on their activities, supporting the emergence of truly decentralized institutions and participating in the professionalization of the media and civil society organizations.



Lessons

1. The management of transition from war to sustainable peace requires that leadership creates a context-sensitive and strategic vision that simultaneously accommodates short and long-term priorities. This entails the ability not only to articulate that vision, but also to be visibly committed to it, to obtain popular buy-in and to engage domestic and international actors in its implementation.
2. The preparation of local development plans (County Development Agendas) alongside the PRS, constitutes an important tool through which peace-building can be integrated into local poverty alleviation efforts, the CDA itself being an exercise in peace-building.
3. President Sirleaf's understanding of the relevance of systemic reforms that are transparent, participatory and responsive to the needs of Liberians, and her personal engagement to drive and support them, has given a significant strength to the reconstruction program. Her sustained commitment to change has led to a successful implementation of the GEMAP. One caveat has been that this political will does not find equal expression at all levels of societal leadership, thereby slowing down the pace of change.
4. The uncertainties and complexity that pervade the post-conflict context requires that change leaders maintain two-way communication with key stakeholders to ensure understanding of priorities, changing perceptions and difficulties. This entails regularly consulting with key constituencies and listening to them to gain access to their insights and perspectives. It also means providing critical information on progress and interim difficulties, and challenging citizens to be part of creating solutions.
5. Change leaders must continuously remind people about the opportunities that circumstances create and how they can capitalize on them to transform their conditions. This involves the ability to appeal to their best angels and to motivate them while remaining focused on goals.
6. Qualified professionals from the Diaspora, when well utilized, can become a cost-effective way of reducing the high costs associated with the conventional technical assistance. This entails sustained political commitment as well as a capacitating institutional framework for mobilizing and organizing the Diaspora's contribution.
7. Political legitimacy and political capital are needed for a government to sustain support for hard reform processes. Leaders can improve their credibility and gain more time if they can demonstrate quick progress on some issues.
8. A good leader under promises and over delivers. This requires the ability to proactively monitor public moods and perceptions, reassess the situation and sincerely communicate what is possible within a long-term agenda.



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