

Brief on County Support Team (CST) Project

Strengthening the Capacity of Local Administration



Most of Liberia's infrastructure and basic social services are located in Monrovia and other urban centers, underscoring the disparity in living standards and service delivery between urban and rural areas. President Sirleaf, recognizing that sustainable peace will largely depend upon the ability to address such gross inequities, has committed to decentralizing recovery and development and emphasizes the role of the counties in the process of national recovery, placing the interests of the people at the centre of national development planning.

Joint UN response

The UN in Liberia is committed to supporting the Government's decentralization and recovery efforts. It has therefore established **County Support Teams (CSTs)** in each county, headed by a Facilitator, aimed at ensuring a coherent and consolidated UN approach to addressing county challenges, supporting Government, in particular the Superintendent's office, and building capacity of government institutions so that they can increasingly take over responsibility for security, reconstruction and development.

In support of the CST process, a **joint UN project "Strengthening Capacity of Local Administration"**, was created in September 2006 to build capacity of local administration in assessing, planning, coordinating and raising resources for, and delivering essential services in support of the consolidation of civil authority and recovery. The project focuses on 3 areas: 1) Restoring functionality of county administrative offices/transportation, 2) Developing capacity of county officials and 3) Strengthening data and information management in the counties.

The project is guided by a Joint Steering Committee (JSC), co-chaired by the Minister of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the UN DSRSG/RC. Government/UN working groups have been set-up, supported by a technical team. The project works through UNMIL Civil Affairs in all 15 counties.

The CST project is supported by SIDA, UNDP and UN Action 2 (for human rights), amounting to US\$ 3.9m during 2006-2008. SIDA's support during this period amounts to US\$2.8 m, UNDP/BCPR's to US\$ 1.1m, and UN Action 2 to US\$ 50,000. The project also manages funds (US\$ 580,000) for the rehabilitation of the new MIA premises, assisted by UNOPS, which is jointly supported by the Community-based Recovery and Development (CBRD) and the Liberia Decentralization and Local Development (LDLD) programmes.

To take stock on achievements, challenges and way forward, Government and UN field staff meets regularly. The last CST retreat took place in Saniquellie, Nimba on 25 April.

1. Restoring functionality of administrative buildings/transportation

County Administrative buildings: The importance of a functional office in each county from which development efforts are coordinated cannot be overemphasized in terms of recovery, decentralization as well as peace consolidation. Therefore the project, complementing USAID's efforts and assisted by UNOPS, rehabilitated one and constructed 5 county administrative buildings in the most remote areas¹. Only one building (in Maryland) remains to be rehabilitated (by USAID) in 2009. **Furniture:** The project provided basic furniture to 7 county administrative buildings².



Generators/solar panels: To ensure functioning administrative structures, the project installed 10 generators (30KV)³ for which the local administration constructed the generator houses. To save fuel costs, ensure sustainability and promote environmental awareness, the project, assisted by UNOPS, supplied 5 buildings with solar panels⁴, which supplied electricity for the running of the buildings as well as the water pumps. As a result, in 14 of 15 counties, local government officials work from a functioning county administrative building (structure, electricity, furniture).

Transportation: To be able to reach the communities they serve, the project provided in 2006 one pick-up to each county administration (15) for development purposes and in 2007, 26 motorcycles were provided to District Commissioners.



¹ Rehabilitated building in Montserrado and constructed in Margibi, River Gee, River Cess, Gbarpolu and Grand Kru.

² In Montserrado, Margibi, River Gee, River Cess, Gbarpolu, Grand Kru and Grand Bassa.

³ In Bong, Nimba, Grand Geddeh, Margibi, River Cess, River Gee, Gbarpolu, Montserrado, Maryland and Grand Kru.

⁴ In Montserrado, Margibi, River Gee, River Cess, Gbarpolu, and Grand Kru.

To monitor county activities, the Ministry of Internal Affairs received 2 jeeps by the project in 2007.

Ministry of Internal Affairs:

For the Ministry of Internal Affairs to be able to effectively support the counties, it required functional offices in Monrovia. Therefore, the project, together with two UNDP projects⁵, assisted by UNOPS, supported the rehabilitation of the Ministry's premises in 2008.



2. Developing capacity of county officials

The project works with Government⁶ and partners to enhance the performance of local government officials. So far, it has supported training that broadens local government officials' understanding of their changing responsibilities and skills that would assist in making local government responsive, transparent and accountable. These include (i) Civic Education training (ii) Skills-based training covering participatory planning, computer literacy and leadership/governance, (iii) training to advance the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the counties.

Civic Education training: During March-October 07, over 1,200 local government officials⁷ in all 15 counties participated in county-based **civic education training** to gain awareness of their civic responsibilities. The training, coordinated by the Liberian Institute of Public Administration was based on the National Civic Education Master Plan⁸. The modules, prepared jointly by the Government, UN, NGOs and donors, were endorsed by the National Steering Committee on Civic Education. Simultaneously, a **local government training needs assessment** was undertaken to guide further skills-based training, calling for training to build capacity to manage vision, projects, people, office and money.

Skills-based training: To strengthen the capacity of county officials in **participatory planning**, the project supported the Government with the preparation of County Development Agendas (CDAs) for all 15 counties, aimed at guiding county decision-making and feeding into the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). To launch the CDA process, led by the County Development Committee (CDCs), the project supported an inception workshop in 2007 equipping local government officials⁹ with the

⁵ Liberia Local Development and Decentralization (LDLD) project and Community-based Recovery and Development (CBRD).

⁶ Liberia Institute of Public Administration (LIPA) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA).

⁷ Included Superintendents, Mayors, Commissioners, Chiefs and Line Ministry Representatives.

⁸ Covered area: leadership/national identity, transparency and accountability, human rights/rights of the child, gender and governance, peace-building and reconciliation, environmental protection and conservation, civics and Government and MDGs)

⁹ bringing together assistant superintendents for development, project planners, planning officers as well as the CST facilitators

requisite tools for the CDA preparation.

Through a participatory approach, consultations were conducted for all administrative districts¹⁰, identifying priority needs, objectives and projects in district action plans. These plans were consolidated into county action plans during 15 county consolidation workshops, producing 15 draft CDAs. A mobile Government/UN team provided support/guidance to the local administration during the preparation. To link the county priorities with the draft PRS' sectoral strategies, the Government¹¹ organized in the beginning of 2008 3 regional consultations, supported by the CST project, EU and the WB.

The project has supported edit, layout and printing of the CDAs, which were launched by the President in September 2008 during the visit of a number of Development Ministers to Liberia. All 15 CDAs are available on: www.emansion.gov.lr. The CDAs and the PRS provide a new context and opportunity for local administration to take charge and engage with its people towards reconstruction, growth and development.



To kick-start **computer literacy training** for local officials throughout the country, the project supported in 2008 country-wide 4-days computer training benefiting 213 county officials, delivered by Liberian Institute of Public Administration, the Ministry of Internal

Affairs and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

To build capacity in key competencies requires as local leader, the project supported in 2008 a **leadership and governance training for local officials**¹², led by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and supported by UN-HABITAT.

Advancing Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): The project supports UN entities training and awareness raising efforts aimed at advancing the MDGs in the counties. In 2007, 193 county officials¹³, UN and NGO staff, benefited from **Gender Analysis, Mainstreaming and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse** training, prepared by the UN Gender Theme Group to enhance skills/knowledge on the process of integrating gender in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of county activities.

In 2008, the project, in collaboration with UN Action 2, has

¹⁰ Includes paramount, clan and section chiefs as well as District Development Committees (DDCs), women and youth groups.

¹¹ Ministries of Planning and Economic Affairs, Internal Affairs and Finance.

¹² Included superintendents and assistant superintendents.

¹³ Included superintendents, development superintendents, gender coordinators, ministry staff, traditional leaders.

supported joint UN (UNDP, UNMIL Human Rights and Protection, UNHCR) county-based **human rights training** in 4 counties.

In the same vein, the project supported the celebration of: the **World AIDS Day** (2006) in all counties, the **Fight the Hunger Walk** (2007) in 6 counties and the **Day of the African Child** (2007) in 5 counties.

3 Strengthening County Information and Data Management Capacity

Availability of reliable information is essential for managing the development process and for holding the leaders accountable to ensure good governance. The CST project supports local administration in this regard through the following initiatives:

County Information Packs (CIPs): The project supported the compilation of available county-specific data, which was absorbed in the CDAs.

County reporting system: In 2006/07, the CSTs set-up monthly meetings and a reporting system (County Assessment in Action Report- CAAR) to coordinate, share information, report on progress and build consensus in the counties. These monthly meetings were transformed into Government-led **County Development Committees (CDCs)** during the CDA preparation and were supported by the CSTs, contributing to strengthened Government-led county coordination and information-sharing. To track the PRS/CDA deliverables, the Government is currently setting-up its own M&E system expected to be function by end 2008.

Computer equipment:

During the computer literacy training (April-June 2008) all 15 counties were provided with



a standardized package of IT equipment by the project– the **“E-county-in-a-box”** –, composed of 2 lap-tops, 2 UPS, 1 printer, 1 scanner, 1 photocopy machine as well as tuners and memory sticks.

Information Management Offices (IMOs): Together with UNHCR and NRC, the project supports the setting up of **Information Management Offices (IMOs)**, embedding human resources and equipment into the administrative offices and supporting the flow of information into and within the counties. So far IMOs have been set-up in 9 counties. The IMOs played an important role during the CDA preparation and will provide direct support to the implementation of the PRS M&E framework at the county level.

Internet access through VSAT: The project is establishing a VSAT system, connecting the counties with Monrovia via internet, primary to facilitate the M&E process of the CDAs/PRS.

