



Employment Opportunities and Working Conditions of Rural and Peri Urban Youth in Liberia



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Prepared for ILO and UNDP by

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The opinions expressed in this report are those of the study team and not necessarily shared by the International Labour Organization, UNDP or the individuals who have shared their experiences and observations in numerous interviews and work sessions. The study team expresses its sincere appreciation for the enthusiasm and commitment on the part of the UN country team and UNMIL who have freely and generously contributed to the planning and implementation of this report and whose insights have been invaluable.

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ACRONYMS

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
ALP	Accelerated Learning Programme
AU	African Union
CAFF	Children Associated with the Fighting Forces
CAP	Children Assistance Program
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CBR	Community Based Recovery Programme
CCF	Christian Children Fund
COHDA	Community Human Development Agency
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DDC	District Development Council
DDRR	Disarmament Demobilization Rehabilitation and Reintegration
DOPC	Decoris Oil Palm Company
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
EC	European Commission
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GOL	Government of Liberia
GRC	Governance Reform Commission
IDP	Internally Displaced People
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JIU	Joint Implementation Unit
LCIP	Liberia Community Infrastructure Program
LD	Liberian Dollar
LEAP/LEAP	Liberia Employment Action Plan/Liberia Employment Action Programme
LED-EEI	Liberia Entrepreneur Development and Enterprise Empowerment Initiative
LEEP	Liberia Emergency Employment Program
LIBSUCO	Liberia Sugar Company
LOIC	Liberia Opportunity Industrialization Center
LPMC	Liberia Produce Marketing Corporation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PBRC	Peace-Building Resource Center
RPAL	Rubber Planters Association of Liberia
SARA	South-Eastern Relief Agency
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children Education Fund
UNMIL	United Nations Missions in Liberia
USAID	United States Aid for International Development
USD	United States Dollars
WAFF	Women Associated with the Fighting Forces

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Young people are crucial actors in Liberia's transition from war to peace; creating an enabling environment for youth is at the core of the recovery challenges. This study was commissioned by United Nations Development Programme-Liberia (UNDP) and the International Labour Office-Liberia (ILO). The aim of the study is to explore the employment opportunities that are currently available to the youth of Liberia and to recommend specific areas of intervention that can improve employment prospects in the short and long term. Particular attention is paid to the young people's own experiences and perceptions regarding employment opportunities. The present report provides specific recommendations on possible interventions and priority areas that can improve access to youth employment.

Methodology

After briefing sessions in Monrovia with Government ministries, international and national NGOs, the team visited 6 districts in Maryland, Lofa and Nimba counties. The districts were selected according to a number of factors including their vicinity to international borders, level of economic recovery, potential for entrepreneurship and economic activities as cross-border trading areas. The civil war affected the three counties differently in terms of forced recruitment, population displacement and destruction of infrastructure, and the current post-conflict reconstruction challenges are equally diverse. However, on the issues of economic activities and employment opportunities both differences and similarities exist. To minimize repetition, the particularities of each region are treated in depth in the corresponding case study, whereas characteristics shared by the three regions - such as the pre-dominance of subsistence farming, the importance of cross-border trade, and the potential of expanding the provision of traditional apprenticeships - only are dealt with once even if it applies to all three cases. Extensive consultations were held at the grassroots level, including qualitative interviews with individuals and focus groups. The team undertaking this study aimed at gaining an insight into the way young people experience and perceives employment opportunities, the challenges and constraints they face and the dreams and aspirations they have.

Major Findings

Investing in and specifically targeting youth are necessary steps in consolidating peace and stability. This should come out as the main message of the report. The general findings can be summarized as follows:

- *Education is highly valued by youth and pursued when financially possible, but does not automatically lead to employment. Vocational and business skills training should become part of high school curricula.*
- *Students lack focus and concrete ideas when it comes to thinking about their future. Job counselling and career advice services need to be instituted.*
- *The provision of business and management skills is at least as important as technical training.*
- *A savings and investment culture needs to be promoted.*
- *Presently, the skills training available to youth, provided mainly by donors and NGOs, is not based on actual market demands. Labour market assessments are required that can respond to the needs of a fast-changing and dynamic economy.*

- *In the absence of formal skills training institutions, most young people rely on traditional skills training through apprenticeships for technical education. This system of skills training provisions needs to be supported and expanded.*
- *Youth demonstrate great creativity and perseverance in managing their daily life and generating income to sustain themselves. They need to be viewed and portrayed as a positive force, rather than a threat to Liberia's stability.*

The issue of youth employment should be addressed through a holistic approach. The team suggests a series of recommendations that span from the individual to the national level. Programs that target youth and employment should draw on what most Liberians describe as typical characteristics of youth: their entrepreneurial drive, curiosity and creativity. Furthermore, increased participation of young people in policies and programmes that concern their future must be encouraged. For the time being, this is only wishful thinking. The UNDP and ILO could play a major role in repositioning Liberian youth at the centre of the stage.

Recommendations:

At the individual level.

- Things are changing at a fast pace in post-conflict Liberia, and counselling sessions for young people in the form of information brigades at high schools or learning cycles in the communities could support youngsters in making informed decisions about their future.
- In order to increase young people's interest in agricultural activities the sector must be developed such that it is able to generate income beyond the mere subsistence level. This would require small level mechanization – for example through cooperatives acquiring a tractor or a mill - and training of young people in middle level modern farming techniques for cash-crop production.
- Male and female youth follow traditional gender patterns when choosing skills. Advocacy and incentives are needed to encourage youth to follow non-traditional career paths, for example by encouraging young women to train in technical trades. At the same time, the Ministry of Labour and ILO must make an effort to ensure the protection of women in the workplace, including the promotion of childcare facilities.

At the community level.

- Pending the establishment of vocational training institutions, traditional skills training in the form of apprenticeships provided by micro-enterprises is the way forward. Existing apprenticeship schemes should be identified and supported, and additional small enterprises encouraged and assisted in taking on apprentices.
- It is important to take advantage of the knowledge and qualifications of the older generation within each community. Traditional trades and crafts should be re-vitalized and passed on to the younger generations, and where appropriate, 'forgotten' trades and crafts should be re-introduced. Through small incentives and support, 'master trainers' should be supported who carry on accessible, low-cost training for youth within their communities.
- Projects implemented at the community level by donors and NGOs should include a cross-generational focus and secure that young people are included among the project beneficiaries.
- UNDP/ILO should evaluate the possibilities for the increased involvement of the private sector in youth employment issues, which has so far remained fairly excluded

At the national level.

- For the Government of Liberia and international donors, reinforcing the policy on free primary education and substantially reducing or supplementing the high cost of secondary

education in both public and private institutions will be important investments in the human resource development of youth.

- Develop and enact the National Youth Policy and a budget mechanism to allow operationalisation of youth-targeted programmes.
- Public work schemes and infrastructure rehabilitation projects are promising sectors for employing young people. It is of paramount importance to create a strong skills training component related to employment within these sectors.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

“The youth employment challenge is larger than just creating jobs; it concerns the fundamental and challenging problem of how to establish functioning economies, to promote and redistribute growth and to generate government revenue.” (UNDP, 2006a)

Liberia’s youth is severely affected by the country’s 14-years civil war. During the war children and young people constituted the largest group of recruited fighters; now these ex-combatants are part of an entire generation that has never experienced peace in their lifetime. Young people have missed out on essential years in education and training resulting in literacy rates estimated at 42% among youth and a serious shortage of technical and entrepreneurial skills.¹ Moreover, the ability of the Liberian post-war economy to absorb unemployed youth is still limited. Thus job creation, especially for young people who lack basic education and skills, poses a major challenge within the ongoing reconstruction efforts.

This study is commissioned by United Nations Development Programme-Liberia (UNDP) and the International Labour Office -Liberia (ILO). The UNDP-Liberia’s Early Recovery Cluster has income generation, job creation and skills development for youth as one of its three focus areas. This study will inform UNDP’s planning and implementing of strategic interventions through a community driven development approach within this area. The study will also inform ILO country programming in Liberia and help formulating a concrete action plan as part of Key Initiative 2 under LEEP/LEAP on skills training (see National Employment Strategy for Decent Work below). In addition, for the ILO, this study is part of a wider concern to provide information and undertake analyses of the status of rural youth employment in Africa. The crucial importance of rural youth employment is widely recognized, and was highlighted in the recommendations from the AU Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation held in September 2004 and the 10th African Regional meeting held in December 2003.² The ILO has planned country studies in Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Ethiopia and Liberia, and the main objective is to inform the development of interventions for youth in the rural economy.

The aim of this study is to explore the employment opportunities that are currently available to the youth of Liberia, and to recommend specific areas of intervention that can improve employment prospects in short and longer term. Particular attention is paid to the young people’s own experiences and perceptions regarding employment opportunities. According of the Terms of Reference (See Annex I), the goals of the study are:

1. To provide a preliminary assessment of rural employment opportunities for young people.
2. To understand the structure of rural youth employment in terms of employment classification, education/skills level, access to finance and access to market.
3. To gain an insight into experiences, perceptions, needs and aspirations of young people, reasons for choosing to train for and perform particular jobs, experiences with and perceptions of job creation initiatives and possibly, suggestions for impact-effective programmes.
4. To identify the information gaps regarding rural youth employment and to propose how they can be addressed.
5. To investigate trends and tendencies in migration, including rural-urban migration.

¹ Estimates by UNICEF program officers interviewed by the team.

² See recommendations at:

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/rgmeet/10afrm/dg-rep2.pdf>

http://www.iss.co.za/AF/RegOrg/unity_to_union/pdfs/au/ouagasep04/decl.pdf

6. To recommend rural youth employment interventions

Considering the particular context of the Liberian labour market and the recent history of conflict and migration, it was decided that the present study should broaden its scope to include an analysis of youth employment patterns in urban areas as well.

1.1 Methodology

After briefing sessions in Monrovia with Government ministries, international and national NGOs, the team visited 6 districts in Maryland, Lofa and Nimba counties. The districts were selected according to the following characteristics: proximity to international borders, level of economic recovery, potential for entrepreneurship and economic activities as cross-border trading areas. In the districts, extensive consultations were held at the grassroots level, including qualitative interviews with individuals and focus groups. The team undertaking this study was aiming to produce an insight into the way young people experience and perceives employment opportunities, the challenges and constraints they face and the dreams and aspirations they have.

Map of Liberia's counties and districts³



Source: *Humanitarian Information Centre, Liberia*

The study focuses on economic activities in the rural–urban interface. The main concern has been to explore to what extent the urban is – or can be - connected to the rural areas and vice versa. For the purpose of this study, we have typified county capitals as urban settings. Academic studies

³ Map found at:
http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/Liberia/mapcentre/reference/country_pdf/LIB001Counties_County%20Capitals_Districts_20040319.pdf

have concluded that the fortunes of rural and urban spheres are inextricably linked and that compartmentalization into rural and urban should be replaced by a view of the rural-urban interface as a dynamic and changing sphere (Baker, ed., 1997; Baker and Pedersen, Eds., 1992: 11–12). In spatial terms, the rural and the urban are linked through flows of goods, people, services and information (UNCHS, 1999).

During the field work in the districts, the study team met with local authorities, United Nations agencies operating in the area and international and local non-governmental organizations (List in Annex II). In the three counties 60 semi-structured interviews with young people including students, trainees and ex-combatants were undertaken (Questionnaire in Annex III). Furthermore, the team carried out in depth focus groups at high schools in Ganta, Harper, Voinjama and surrounding rural villages (10 in total). The purpose of this exercise was to identify employment opportunities within the communities and to ascertain their potential for endogenous growth. Finally, the field-work included a visit to Guinea to identify patterns of economic interaction and cross-border trade.

The focus group discussions and the qualitative interviews were centred on the following issues:

- Local perceptions of strategic economic activities with the potential of sustaining development in the long term. Strengths and weaknesses of local production systems.
- Discussion on youth economic livelihoods. Participation in agricultural activities. Young people's attitudes regarding agricultural activities and the formation of cooperatives.
- Education and training. Service providers, needs of the community.
- Micro-Credit providers.
- Cross border relations and activities.
- Relationship between elders, local leaders and youngsters.

Of paramount importance in the present study are the views of young people, their experiences, views and modes of thinking. Thus the study is a *qualitative* attempt to shed light on youth (un)employment and livelihood strategies in line with the Youth Employment Network (YEN) principles.⁴ The YEN recognizes that policies and initiatives often express a commitment to engage youth groups as partners in the process of development but often fail to do so in practice. The YEN seeks to change this by considering young people as partners ensuring that young people play an active role. The YEN acknowledges that youth is not only a target group for which employment must be found since it seeks to incorporate the aspirations and views of young people.

1.2 Thinking Youth

While youth constitute an important share of populations in developing countries, governments and aid agencies have generally been slow to fashion responses to their specific needs. This appears to be rapidly changing. Agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), are among a number of institutions that have recently released publications about youth, and youth facing conflict situations in particular, and the means to support their livelihoods (World Bank, 2006; USAID, 2005; UNDP, 2006a; UNOWA, 2005; UN-Habitat, 2004; UNICEF, 2002a). Several academic publications on the subject have also been published (e.g. Lowicki and Pillsbury, 2000; Newman, 2005).

⁴ The Youth Employment Network (YEN) is a consortium of the ILO, the World Bank and the UN established to address the global challenge of youth unemployment under the auspices of the Millennium Declaration. YEN emerged from a high-level policy network that set forth five principles, or global priority policy areas: employability, employment creation, equity, entrepreneurship and environmental sustainability (See UN General Assembly, Promoting Youth Employment, A/57/165 (2003)).

Youth is a problematic and ambivalent category. Most definitions are based on age to provide some degree of objectivity. The present report adheres to the UN General Assembly definition of youth as individuals aged between 15 and 24 whereas the Liberian definition youth is between 15 and 35 years of age.⁵ Meanings of youth vary across space and time, and they can be different for men and women. In general terms youth refers the transitional years between childhood and adulthood, which are usually marked by certain rites of passage or other defining events such as gaining employment and/or establishing a family.

In the Liberian context, for many young people the attainment of adulthood-status has been disrupted or delayed by the war. This may account for Liberia's extended concept of youth. The 15-35 years group is highly heterogeneous in terms of life situation, responsibilities and needs. Many of the older youth have grown up in the context of conflict; they have few pre-existing productive skills to be utilized in a post-conflict labor market, and yet they are faced with the responsibility of supporting aging parents or raising their own children. The younger segments of the youth group may not have such responsibilities and can prioritize education. Considering this heterogeneity it becomes difficult to design a policy that specifically targets the needs of all youth.⁶

1.3 Structure of the Report

The first part of the report (Part I) consists of two chapters. Chapter 2 describes the institutional framework in which youth employment issues have been addressed in Liberia, including a set of specific recommendations. Chapter 3 presents general themes common to the case studies and pertaining to Liberia as a whole. It proposes a set of country-wide interventions to boost young people's employment prospects, with specific recommendations relevant to each of the themes discussed. The second part of the report (Part II) presents the county case studies (Maryland, Lofa, Nimba) in the chapters 4, 5 and 6, including a set of specific recommendations that are relevant to each particular county. Finally, the Conclusion in Chapter 7 contains the general findings and recommendations.

⁵ National Youth Policy for Liberia, 2005.

⁶ For a discussion of this issue see UNDP, 2006a - and World Bank, 2006.

PART I: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND GENERAL THEMES

2. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Employment creation and skills training, targeting young people in particular, are amongst the most significant challenges Liberia is facing today. Creating economic opportunities is a prerequisite for sustained economic and social development of the Liberian nation. The inclusion of young people in the labour market is also central for restoring peace and security in the country.

In view of the urgency pertaining to these issues, the Government of Liberia has expressed the commitment to institute immediate short-term and medium-term measures to boost employment in the country through the Liberia Emergency Employment Programme (LEEP), while planning ahead for sustainable job creation under the Liberian Employment Action Plan (LEAP). At the same time, the need to institute tangible measures to improve the opportunities of young people, including the area of employment, was clearly spelled out in the National Youth Policy developed in December 2005. Both the LEEP, the LEAP and the concerns regarding Liberia's youth are firmly anchored within the nationally-owned interim Poverty Reduction Strategy (iPRSP), which is to guide Liberia's reconstruction and development efforts in the next years. The iPRSP provides general policy directions during the preparation of a full PRS, which will then provide the longer-term economic development framework covering the period 2008-2011.

Increasing access to productive employment was also identified as a priority within the framework of the UNDAF (currently being drafted) and the UN Early Recovery Cluster (see below). The objective is to ensure that assistance channelled through the UN and other partners, including international and national NGOs and donors, takes a coordinated and systematic approach towards employment creation and promotion of private sector growth.

2.1 The iPRSP

Following the Country's (first) free and fair elections in 2005 and the establishment of the current Government under president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Liberia has entered a new development phase. Gradually moving out of its post-conflict emergency and relief status, Liberia has embarked upon a programme of recovery and sustained economic development under the framework of a nationally-owned interim Poverty Reduction Strategy (iPRSP).

In broad terms, the iPRSP aims to create the conditions for pro-poor economic growth, macro-economic stability, good governance, national security and the reconstruction of the country's war-damaged infrastructure.⁷ Amongst these themes employment creation has been identified as a priority area of intervention.⁸

The challenges facing Liberia's youth receive only limited attention within the iPRSP. It is widely held that the ability of unemployed youth to access the labour market is central to Liberia's recovery. Yet, the situation of youth seems to be tackled by the iPRSP only from the perspective of enhancing national security:

“The swelling of the illiterate youth population, and limited economic opportunities (...) make the youth situation a highly volatile security issue” (iPRSP 2006:26)

⁷ iPRSP, 2006.

⁸ Interview Laurence Clark, Special Advisor of the President, Monrovia.

Only limited attention is paid to youth employment as a source of personal empowerment and self-esteem, as well as a means of livelihood. Moreover, the iPRSP's tendency to equalize ex-combatants and the general youth population is misleading and contributes to an impression of Liberia's young people that is shockingly negative and uncompromising in character. It also demonstrates that young people, many of whom are educated, socially active, engaged and ambitious, have not been involved in the drafting of the document:

*"(...) addressing the needs of youth by ensuring that **ex-combatants** have access to opportunities for training, empowerment, and reintegration, as well as ensuring that juvenile and young offenders have access to rehabilitation through the correction system"* (Ibid, our emphasis.)

*"(...)the prevailing social and political order before and during the war subjected youth to marginalization and various forms of exploitation and created a **highly militarized** youth population"* (Ibid: 27, our emphasis)

A central component of the youth challenge in Liberia involves providing a more accurate understanding of youth. In addition to being characterized as threats, youngsters in Liberia are also depicted as passive victims of the 14 year old conflict. However, growing evidence from other conflict prone settings shows that war-affected youth are remarkably resilient actors, capable of improving their livelihood (Boyden and de Berry 2004, Nordstrom 2005). When the iPRSP draft is up for final revision there is an opportunity to address these issues and to contribute to positioning youth as a *primary* social and economic resource for lasting peace in Liberia.

2.2 The National Employment Strategy for Decent Work

On July 15, 2006, the President launched a national strategy for employment that responds in an integrated and systematic manner to the chronic unemployment problem that confronts Liberia today. The three-year "Employment Strategy for Decent Work", developed by the Ministry of Labour, provides for immediate job creation, while at the same time laying the foundation for a long-term and sustainable employment action plan. It is thus developed in two parts: the first, the Liberian Emergency Employment Programme (LEEP), aims to coordinate interventions to address the employment crisis in the short-term, while the second, the Liberian Employment Action Plan (LEAP), operates in the medium- to long-term.

The role of the LEEP/LEAP is to ensure a coordinated, strategic response to the national employment crisis through implementing projects and programmes along 6 key initiatives. The LEEP/LEAP is firmly anchored within the iPRSP and is the guiding framework through which the Government of Liberia and the international community plan their interventions in the area of employment. The key initiatives are as follows: (i) Boosting employment in public works investments, (ii) skills training, (iii) facilitating the graduation of the informal economy and boosting the small and medium enterprise sector and cooperatives, (iv) labour statistics and labour market information and analysis, (v) promoting social dialogue and strengthening labour administration, and (vi) agriculture.

Regarding the issue of youth and employment, the LEEP proposes the development of measures that specifically target young women and men. The areas of support highlighted in the document are the provision of labour market information, job counselling, and the provision of skills that are in demand.

Implementation of the LEEP job creation programmes is carried out by a wide selection of partners including the ILO, the World Bank, UNDP, UNMIL RRR and others. The ILO is planning a comprehensive intervention that combines massive job creation with the urgent need for repairing war-damaged infrastructure, including road rehabilitation and waste management.

Several labour-intensive road rehabilitation projects are under way under Key Initiative 1, chaired by the Ministry of Public Works with the assistance of UNMIL RRR, the World Bank, the EC, UNDP, UNHCR, ILO and the Swiss Development Agency, aims to create 30,329 jobs over the next six months.⁹ Young people are expected to benefit from this, but no defined targets or quotas for recruitment of young people exist.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports is actively engaged in realising the target of skills training under Key Initiative 2. So far 800 youths have been trained in the four rehabilitated vocational training institutions (all located in Monrovia) and graduates successfully allocated to construction jobs. The Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with Ministry of Youth and Sports and Ministry of Commerce will establish a Centre Songhai-Liberia in Bensonville to promote Youth Agro Business. The aim is to train young men and women in sustainable agricultural production and agro-business and to make the Liberian agriculture competitive, productive and efficient. The plan is to establish Centre Songhai-Liberia in at least three regions by March 2007.¹⁰ This model for stimulating rural growth follows successful initiatives that took place in Benin and Zambia (MOA 2006b).

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, which chairs Key Initiative 3 (*Facilitating the Transition of the Informal Economy and Boosting the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Sectors*), has already formulated a work plan to promote SME development with a particular emphasis on business skills training and support given to vulnerable groups. Amongst the proposed initiatives are the Liberian Entrepreneurial Development and Enterprise Empowerment Initiative (LED-EEI), and the Otto Essein “Practical Laboratories” funded by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Both projects aim to develop young entrepreneurs and leaders, for example by attaching selected University student to already established businesses.

For an overview of initiatives undertaken by the Liberian government in partnership with international partners see Annex 5.

2.3 The UN Cluster Approach

Due to the limited capacity of the relevant Government ministries, ILO, UNDP and UNMIL have pledged their support in the planning and implementation of the National Public Works Programme, as well as in the rehabilitation of infrastructure, within the framework of the UN Early Recovery Cluster. The idea of the UN Cluster approach is to support the country’s transition from humanitarian relief to development and in particular to ensure continuity and predictability in the humanitarian response while the country’s reconstruction effort develops from an externally-led intervention into a nationally-owned process. In other words, the cluster-approach aims to ensure a collaborative response of the international community in the medium term, that is, while externally-led relief work is phased out and development assistance within the framework of the PRSP implemented.

Within the Early Recovery Cluster, the following sub-clusters are currently functioning: a.) basic rehabilitation of infrastructure, b.) income generation, job creation and skills development focussing on youth, and c.) support for the early rule of law activities. The UNDP takes the lead in planning and implementing strategic interventions in these three areas through a community driven development approach. This study, along with a mapping exercise that seeks to establish the employment generated by UN agencies and other international actors, takes place within the framework of sub-cluster b. of the Early Recovery Cluster.

⁹ LEEP Steering Committee Meeting, Monrovia 27/11/06.

¹⁰ Interview James Logan, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Monrovia.

2.4 Towards the Operationalisation of the National Youth Policy.

The National Youth Policy, formulated in December 2005, is the point of reference for all interventions and policy measures concerning Youth in Liberia. The document identifies youth unemployment and poverty as the country's most pressing issues that exacerbate many other social and economic problems. The youth policy pinpoints three primary challenges: lack of employment opportunities, inadequate education and training opportunities, and lack of adequate health care and reproductive health services. The Policy aims to provide an overall framework to guide and direct the Government's efforts to institute a comprehensive and sustainable program for youth development in Liberia.¹¹ The issues addressed in the policy document encompass a wide range of concerns affecting young people in Liberia today, including the state of the country's economy and employment opportunities. Key action points that have been identified in the policy document towards tackling youth unemployment include the institution of entrepreneurial training projects for youth, micro-credit and micro-finance provisions, vocational and technical training provisions, a National Youth Service Corp scheme, apprenticeship programs and vacation jobs.

However, the policy has yet to be adopted by the Liberian legislature and its goals are arguably too broad to lead to focused interventions. Several Liberian youth groups and government representatives advocate the formulation of a policy that specifically deals with the issue of youth employment and which presents clear and concrete targets and indicators.¹²

Although the issue of youth and employment has received increasing attention and is addressed in all major policy documents concerning Liberia, including the iPRSP, the LEEP/LEAP, UN Common Country Assessment, the National Human Development Report etc, there is a concern among Liberian young activist and development workers that treating youth as a cross-cutting issue has failed in practice to correct the imbalances and vulnerabilities young people are faced with.¹³ The following actions are suggested by the team to ensure that programmes and policies implemented directly benefits young people.

We recommend:

1. It seems that "youth" as a cross-cutting issue has failed to correct the imbalances and vulnerabilities young people are facing. We recommend to institute quotas or affirmative action programmes as part of National Public Work Schemes and other job creation initiatives to ensure that young people are guaranteed beneficiaries of planned programmes. Singling out youth as a target group could in the short term increase the impact and effectiveness of development efforts in the country.
2. In order to operationalise the National Youth Policy, the team strongly supports the establishment of a trust fund for youth. The availability of separate funds earmarked specifically for youth programmes could ensure a policy approach with specific targets, verifiable outputs and concrete results.
3. Besides the trust fund, there is a case for the creation of a governmental special task force for youth. Its main purpose would be to bring together all the relevant ministries and encourage the development of coherent across-the-board policies for youth, including policies on education, gender equality, skills, and employment.

¹¹ National Youth Policy for Liberia, 2005.

¹² This is specially the view of the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY).

¹³ Interviews in Pleebo, Ganta and Monrovia.

4. An integrated youth approach requires that representatives of all major stakeholders, including the Government and its partners, as well as private businesses, cooperate and work towards common goals in a specific Youth Network. The ILO/UNDP or Government ministries may wish to facilitate such a youth network.
5. Establish a National Youth Employment Action Plan that incorporates best practice examples.¹⁴ This would bring Liberia up-to-date with various advocacies such as that of the YEN (Youth Employment Network), ILO, and the recent Youth Employment Summit held in Nairobi, Kenya, and the African Development Forum (ADF-V) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
6. In operationalising the Liberian National Youth Policy, it will be helpful to draw upon the guides that the ILO has produced on developing National Action Plans on Youth Employment.¹⁵

¹⁴ This was done with success in Sierra Leone. See Sierra Leone National Youth Policy, 2006.

¹⁵ Available at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/yett/nap.htm>

3. GENERAL THEMES

Doing the impossible with the available¹⁶

Young people in Liberia face many barriers and obstacles to engage in productive employment and establish sustainable livelihoods, and yet the majority of them demonstrate remarkable ingenuity and creativity in their everyday survival (see Box 1). This chapter will discuss some themes that are of major importance to the economic integration and social inclusion of Liberia's youth, including the difficulties involved in accessing adequate education and skills training, the lack of credit facilities and war-damaged infrastructure. Further to that, the chapter elaborates on important sources of employment for young people, such as agriculture and the informal sector, and aspects of employment and gender. Finally, cross-border activities are discussed as an area for potential economic growth. Each of the presented themes is followed by a set of findings and recommendations pointing towards possible interventions.

Box 1

What prevents young people from entering the labour market?

At the personal level:

- lack of education and skills due to
 - insufficient financial resources
 - overbooked or no schools in the vicinity
 - teenage pregnancy
 - social norms that prevent girls from acquiring education
- no possibilities for childcare for young mothers
- social norms that prevent women from engaging in productive employment
- few role models and limited guidance from parents and peers

At the institutional level:

- scarcity of educational and vocational training institutions, especially in rural areas
- costs of enrolling in further studies
- skills training providers fail to target young people in their income-generating activities
- skills training confined to a limited number of trades
- skills provided do not match market demands

At the national level:

- national policies fail to target and benefit young people directly through e.g. quota systems
- issues pertaining to young people are mainly presented as security concerns
- restricted participation of young people in decision-making and policy formulation
- limited employment opportunities

3.1 Formal Education

In coping with the legacy of 14 years of civil conflict, the major challenge facing Liberia's youth today is the lack of education and training. Children constituted as much as 37% of some faction's

¹⁶ Motto written on a taxi, Monrovia.

armies and many others graduated into adulthood through the years of war (ILO/UNICEF, 2005). This generation has hardly received any education as schools were operational only sporadically during the conflict years. In 2003 almost 60% of young girls and 40% of boys have had no formal schooling, and with a primary school net enrolment rate of 46%, more than half of Liberia's children of school-going age are still out of school (ILO/UNICEF, 2005).

Due to the destruction of basic infrastructure and social services, amongst them schools and vocational training centres, many young people are prevented from catching up on their missed years in education and training even as the country's security situation has stabilized. UNICEF estimates that over 75% of the country's physical educational infrastructure was damaged during the conflict (UNICEF/GOL, 2005). In order to build a foundation for youth employment, the rehabilitation of the country's educational facilities must be a priority measures.

In order to enable children and young people to compensate for their lost years in education, the Ministry of Education, with support from UNICEF and other partners, is implementing the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP). It is estimated that about 500,000 young people have never enrolled in school or attended regular classes during the civil crisis. These children are now older than regular primary school age (which is 9-12 years) and they are given the opportunity to complete 6 years of primary education within 3 years. Further to that UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Education in promoting girls education, training teachers and encouraging them to return to rural areas.

Our discussions with youngsters highlighted their strong interest in education and the major problem they face in financing it. School fees and tuition still prevents many children/youth from enrolling in school although Liberia's Education Law ordeals that primary education is free. This provision was later extended to cover junior high and high schools, but many public schools still continue to charge fees for secondary education averaging 20 US per semester.

Reflecting Liberia's centralised institutional setup, there are a limited number of institutions for higher education outside the capital. Students who are interested in further studies at University level are required to move to Monrovia or to Bong County to enrol at Cuttington University. The decentralisation of the University of Liberia and the establishment of other institution for higher learning outside of Monrovia is a matter of urgency to absorb the high number of capable and dedicated students interested in pursuing their education beyond 12th grade.¹⁷

We recommend:

1. Supporting the MOE in a thorough review process of costs and quality of education in Liberia. Improving access to education is the most important investment in Liberia's future.
2. Capitalise on the strong desire of young people to enrol in and continue their education and establish institutions for higher learning outside of Monrovia. This will contribute to the development of the country as a whole, and curb rural-urban migration.
3. Enable young people to combine formal education with productive employment or skills training. For this purpose, evening schools and part-time courses should be further expanded.

¹⁷ However, this process seems to be obstructed and delayed by strong rivalry and mistrust between national institutions (such as Government ministries and the University of Liberia) and regional and local representatives, as to who is to take the lead in the rehabilitation efforts. Based on interviews with different Government officials.

3.2 Skills Training

Most institutions providing vocational or technical training in Liberia have been damaged during the war. Presently, most skills training is either provided by externally-funded NGOs who operate within the framework of the DDRR or through individual apprenticeships in micro-enterprises (see below).

The Liberian economy, with an unemployment rate estimated at 85%, has only limited capacity to absorb unemployed youth (UNDP, 2006c). Productive sectors such as mining and cash-crops plantations, which employed thousands of Liberians in the past, have either collapsed or are struggling to recover from the effects of the war. Therefore an immediate challenge to vocational training (including that funded under the current disarmament and reintegration exercise for ex-combatants) is to link the provision of skills training with actual employment opportunities. It is not enough to provide youngsters with labour market skills if they are not able to utilize them - a situation which can lead to frustrations among youth.

The disjunction between skills training and actual employment has been identified as a major concern by a number of stakeholders, including the UNICEF 2004 Labour Market and Training Needs Assessment and the 2006 Impact Evaluation of the Reintegration Component of DDRR Programme for Demobilised Children in Liberia.¹⁸ The team undertaking this study found that only few of the skills training providers operating in Liberia today are undertaking market assessments. Even the extensive skills training provision within the framework of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programme, which is to provide vocational training, agriculture training and apprenticeships to over 100,000 demobilized ex-combatants, lacks a serious mechanism whereby implementing partners are required to identify local labour market demands and needs before designing their skills training curricula.

3.2.1 Public and private institutions providing vocational or technical training

The rehabilitation of institutions for the provision of technical and vocational skills designed to prepare skilled workers for industry, agriculture, commerce and so on, has been one of the Government of Liberia's priority areas. This rehabilitation process offers a unique opportunity to design a new structure of vocational training. One innovative structure could be to promote the combination of an apprenticeship scheme and institutional learning. This has been practiced by the Liberian Swedish Vocational Training Centre (LSVTC) at Yekepa, Nimba County, which is sending students for 9 months internships to workshops in surrounding cities and Monrovia. Attaching students to workshops in rural areas could counteract the attraction of urban centres and contribute to the development of remote areas of the country.

The new vocational skills' training structure should be relevant and adjusted to local labour market demands. Before training curricula are designed and implemented, concrete possibilities for income-generation must be assessed. Studies have shown that the diversification of market skills is important to improve young people's chances of establishing sustainable livelihoods (UNICEF/ILO, 2005). This entails for example combining driving with auto mechanics or accounting with tailoring, pastry or soap making. Clearly, acquiring multiple skills enhances the possibility of employment for young people, and in general, generic skills (such as agricultural, business, basic building and IT skills) are at least as important as specific trades.

The experience of NGOs working in the area of income-generating activities suggests that youth is a target group which poses particular challenges.¹⁹ In consequence many NGOs chose to focus their activities on participants with already established businesses or older people with experience

¹⁸ UNICEF, 2006 (available as a draft).

¹⁹ Interviews with INGO workers Monrovia, Harper and Voinjama.

and knowledge. However this situation could be turned into an advantage. Through involving *both* adults and young people in the projects, the older people could function as an important resource of leadership and guidance in the process of supporting income-generating activities.

We recommend:

1. To support the rehabilitation of technical and vocational training institutions, the National Council for Vocational Education and Technical Training, which is the body responsible for coordinating, monitoring and evaluating vocational training providers in the country, need to become operational again.
2. The new structure of vocational training could promote the combination of an apprenticeship scheme and institutional learning through sending students for internships to workshops in rural areas, thus attaching students to more remote areas of the country.
3. Vocational skills' training must be relevant and adjusted to local labour market demands. Concrete possibilities for income-generation must be assessed before training curricula are designed and implemented.
4. Diversification of market skills is important and skills training curricula could benefit from combining generic skills with specific trades.
5. For projects targeting young people the involvement of both adults and young people is recommended, since older people are an important resource of leadership and guidance in the process. It should be made clear that targeting young people requires more support and follow-up than working with individuals that have previously acquired training and/or who own established businesses.

3.2.2 The provision of education and skills within the DDR framework

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) is a process with the specific objective of facilitating the transition of combatants to civilian life. DDR exercises have grown over the years in scale and complexity. In Liberia the successful reintegration of ex-combatants is seen as a necessary condition for sustainable development and stability (iPRSP, 2006). Reintegration in the Liberian context focuses on equipping ex-combatants with formal education or productive vocational skills (UNDP/JIU 2006).

In most of the areas visited by the team, the only skills and vocational training available to youth was the one offered within the reintegration assistance provided to ex-combatants. The DDR program has covered a wide range of skills but there has been no standard curriculum or quality control. Each implementing partner developed its own training system, without guidance or oversight from the UN or the Liberian government with respect to the contents and quality of the training. In this way the program runs the risk, as pointed out by other authors, of creating a glut of entrepreneurs, artisans, carpenters and mechanics with no markets for their skills (Baaré, 2006).

Among the ex-combatants there has been an eagerness to acquire formal education. Data from the DDR program show that over 55% of the beneficiaries have little or no education, and the majority of them (28%) were in elementary school before joining the fighting forces. Over 38.000 individuals, representing 38% of the overall reintegration caseload, have chosen formal education over and above vocational training. This is the single largest formal education component of any DDR program in history.²⁰

²⁰ Interviews with UNDP/JIU officers, Monrovia.

We recommend:

1. Since the DDR skills training options are often the only ones available, the remaining reintegration program should broaden their participant category to include a percentage of community members and war affected youth.
2. Targeted interventions like the DDR should be linked to - and if possible phased into - community-based interventions that contribute to reconciliation. Former combatants are offered services and opportunities that are denied to other segments of the younger populations. This is creating an economy of entitlements in which participation in war is (perceived to be) rewarded.

3.2.3 Traditional skills training - apprenticeships

Liberia – like the rest of West Africa - has a tradition of providing skills training through apprenticeships (World Bank, 2006). This involves the owner of a micro-enterprise production unit who takes on one or several young persons, usually from within the extended family, to train on the job for an extended period. In many cases the training is not only centred on technical aspects of the trade, but encompasses introduction to religious and cultural traditions and duties. Due to the conflict, the traditional apprenticeship system collapsed and young people received little training and guidance from community elders. However, the traditional system is experiencing a revival and is now proving that it has the capacity to absorb unemployed young people, particularly in the rural areas. The strength of the system lies in its combination of practical skills training with exposure to the labour market. In many cases, the master proceeds to take on the apprentice on a permanent basis, especially after a working relationship that extends over several years.

We recommend:

1. While awaiting full rehabilitation and establishment of skills training institutions, the already existing structures for the transmission of vocational skills such as apprenticeships should be supported. The support could be in the form of tools, material and food in exchange for a commitment on the part of the business-owner to take on a certain number of individuals as apprentices. Both already existing and potential apprenticeship providers should be identified and supported.
2. To enhance the quality of traditional apprenticeships there is a need to upgrade traditional technologies, to update the knowledge of the instructors and, in the longer term, to establish standards for quality control, and a formal certification system.
3. Ensuring that traditional apprenticeships not only favour young men and screen out female applicants and applicants from very poor households in order to make it an immediate and tangible measure towards expanding skills training for all youth.
4. To support traditional apprenticeships in geographically remote communities where it might be the only option for skills seeking youth.

3.3 Access to Cash and Credit

Locally-owned saving and lending institutions are not uncommon in Liberia. However, the obligatory membership through purchase of shares requires cash in advance which few young

people looking to establish their own businesses have. Weekly *susu* clubs are more widespread. The *susu* club is a private arrangement between several persons who commit themselves to paying a certain amount of money on a regular basis. The collected money is handed over to the participants in turn, and this process continues until everybody has received payment.

The re-appearance, and possibly growth, of small private credit unions in Liberia is an encouraging indicator of a more positive micro-investment climate and increased confidence among the people. While community-based credit institutions are more likely to be sustainable, and promote the training and capacity building of local actors who are themselves engaged in the management of the credit union, high interest rates (usually around 25%) can deter many potential customers, particularly the more vulnerable ones with little capital or collateral. In addition to that, locally-owned institutions tend to be reluctant to engage higher risk groups such as youngsters and/or ex-combatants.

Externally-led and externally-funded micro credit institutions sometimes have the option to involve vulnerable and high-risk groups because they have adequate resources and hence are able to charge lower interest rates. UNDP for instance is implementing a micro credit scheme, whereby communities are trained in the management of locally-owned credit unions. Although a small amount of “seed money” is provided to kick-start the projects, the aim is that through the continuous growth of the credit union, outside support will no longer be needed. In contrast to small loans provided by international actors, the focus of the UNDP project is to encourage self-reliance, local ownership and management of the credit unions.²¹

Not all people are entrepreneurial and able to repay loans. However, enabling young people to save could go a long way towards inculcating a savings and investment culture. For example, one could introduce saving activities as part of the public works programmes whereby contractors withhold a proportion of the salary as savings.²² If combined with cash management and small business development training, the knowledge and insights imparted during the programme could have lasting effects, thus making it a worthwhile exercise particularly with regard to temporary employment opportunities.

We recommend:

1. To encourage and support the establishment of micro credit programmes for young people, especially in urban to semi-urban areas where economic activities are currently picking up. Potential beneficiaries could be petty traders, motorcycle riders and telephone shop owners among others.
2. To facilitate access to savings and deposit services. For example, through including saving activities as part of the public works programmes. Enabling young people to save could go a long way towards inculcating a savings and investment culture necessary for adequate cash management and small business development.

3.4 Infrastructure

A major constraint to sustainable economic activity is the condition of Liberia’s road network. In the first place, impassable roads inhibit the development of market activities and trading routes. Improving road networks through public works programmes, as currently implemented under the LEEP Key Initiative 1, will increase market access and trade activities. Making the roads passable for small vehicles will also generate an altogether new sector in car sales, mechanics and gas

²¹ Interview UNDP micro-credit officer, Monrovia.

²² This has been tried in conflict areas of Uganda, where beneficiaries even voted to increase the savings percentage until rotational savings and credit unions developed as a result. See Nagarajan, G., 2005.

stations. Thus, improving the condition of Liberia's roads offers the prospect of massive job creation in a number of different sectors, and is the basis for the development of a dynamic and competitive economy that integrates and benefits the entire country.

We recommend:

1. Institute, where possible, concrete targets concerning the recruitment of young people in the design of major infrastructure rehabilitation works, such as the ongoing National Public Works Programme led by the Ministry of Public Works under Key Initiative 1.
2. "Job creation" should be a major component of UNDP's Community Based Recovery Programme. We understand that UNDP is already promoting the use of local labour in the implementation of projects selected by the District Development Committees (DDCs). However, employment generation for young people should be a major focus of the programme. For example, DDCs should be encouraged to select small-scale infrastructure works such as the rehabilitation of buildings, painting works and the (re)construction of recreational facilities and engage young people in the design, management and implementation of these projects. This could create major opportunities for capacity-building and training for young people.

3.5 Economic Activities

3.5.1 The informal economy: Small businesses and petty trade

Many youths are finding their way in the informal economy where they start their own business as carpenters, shoemakers, kiosk operators and the like, or engage in petty trade selling used clothes, cold water or fire coal. The formal economy is limited to 120.000, who make up 22% of the employed (UNCT 2006:10) A majority of the employed, about 420.000, are estimated to be active in the informal economy, in low productivity work, in petty trading and production (UNCT 2006). Informal livelihoods among young people are prominent in all of the visited urban areas in Foya, Ganta, Harper and Voinjama. Engagement in the informal economy like trade in goods and services generates income and help to survive on a day-to-day basis, but the problem is that it does rarely offer any viable route out of poverty. Moreover, the opportunities available to young people in the informal sector often place them in hazardous and exploitative situations.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise the informal sector as a major source of employment and income for young people. Individuals who have to negotiate their daily livelihoods as petty traders are very much defined by what they are doing, perhaps more so than formally employed office workers. The informal economy often provides these people with a social safety. It is important, therefore, to engage these already existing structures and find ways of supporting the petty traders and shopkeepers in their activities. The graduation of the informal economy can be a long-term goal, but for the present circumstances concerted efforts could aim towards enhancing protection of workers in the informal sector and finding ways of supporting the social development of youngsters engaged in this sector.

There is great scope for small enterprises' development in Liberia. Small businesses create more jobs than corresponding large enterprises, and since the market is still limited they may have a greater chance of succeeding. Moreover, our interviews showed that young people are attracted to the idea of establishing their own businesses over and above working for somebody else. Young people should have the opportunity to acquire basic business skills for example through optional courses within formal education or compulsory courses integrated within vocational and technical training. At completion of vocational training courses, graduates should have adequate access to

micro-credit, marketing, transport and storage facilities to enable them to establish their own businesses.

Youth entrepreneurs, however, need to tailor their economic activities to post-conflict market realities. A series of workshops could be instrumental in inspiring young entrepreneurs to add value to their services and trades. The “value added approach” could entail identifying what products and services people are paying for and then suggesting what added value the young entrepreneur could offer. This is not only limited to the informal sector, but could eventually be expanded to encompass adding value to agricultural products through developing post-harvest industries and services.

UNICEF plans to implement Business Development Services to assist children and young people who have completed skills training in establishing themselves in the labour market.²³ The programme draws on UNICEF’s existing implementing partners for the identification of economic opportunities in the local areas. This entails assisting young people in gaining access to micro-credit schemes, and advocating the recruitment of trained young people in ongoing infrastructure rehabilitation projects. In the absence of an institutionalised network of job centres, young people often miss out on vital employment opportunities because of limited information. We commend the UNICEF initiative in drawing on existing structures for the provision of these services, and hope that this and similar programmes are continued and expanded.

Moreover, training petty traders in accountancy and marketing is only worthwhile if they can actually apply it – which seems not to be the case for many of these young people.²⁴ Individuals engaged in the informal economy often lack basic literacy and numeric skills, which makes the provision of business skills training very problematic.

We recommend:

1. We recognise the Government’s effort in attracting large-scale foreign investment, but there is a need to focus attention and support the structures that are already in place. Informal and semi-formal livelihood opportunities for young people are often neglected as possible starting points for economic development support. We suggest that the informal sector is seen as a necessary entry point for the provision of capital and business skills training with the view of upgrading the informal sector in the longer term.
2. The informal economy more often than not ignores labour standards. Nevertheless it is the only means of income generation for many youth. A ‘strategic fit’ for the ILO could be to work towards the protection of youth involved in the informal economy.
3. People engaged in the informal sector should have access to education and skills training opportunities. We recommend the establishment of institutions that offer evening classes designed for working people interested in catching up on their education or acquiring new skills. Prior to the war, Liberia had an adult literacy programme called the National Adult Literacy Programme of Liberia, which was housed at the Ministry of Education. This programme should be reactivated and its services extended throughout Liberia.

²³ Interviews UNICEF project officer, Monrovia.

²⁴ Point further expanded upon in the case studies.

3.5.2 Agriculture and rural non-farm economies

Agriculture remains the bedrock of the Liberian economy with almost 70% of total employment in subsistence farming. Three challenges in particular constrain the rapid development and expansion of Liberia's agricultural sector. Firstly, as before mentioned, the rehabilitation of the country's road network. Securing easy access to markets would reduce transactional costs and have critical impact on the productivity level of the agricultural sector, and hence allow the agrobusiness to flourish. Secondly, Liberians need to diversify their diet and increase the consumption of locally available fruits and vegetables. School-feeding programmes are powerful interventions towards changing people's habits. Finally, there is an urgent need to make agricultural activities more attractive to young people, both in terms of providing employment and reviving the economy, but also to curb and possibly reverse rural-urban migration trends.

Contrary to previous studies (e.g. see Richards, et al 2005), the team found no evidence that older people exploiting young people's labour is the reason for the Liberian youth's reluctance to engage in agriculture. Rather, it seems that young people's lack of motivation to engage in independent farming activities is due to a perception of agriculture as back-breaking labour that fails to yield visible returns.²⁵ Young people steer away from farming activities partly because of the country's almost exclusive focus on subsistence farming with no or very little tradition in commercial farming or agrobusiness. For example, there is no dynamic smallholder sector in which farm households manage an integrated and diversified cash crop- food crop production system as it is common in Guinea. By establishing a link between agriculture and wealth, and demonstrating the opportunities for entrepreneurial activities within the farming sector, young people may be more inclined to view agricultural production as an attractive employment option. The effective operations of the Liberian Produce Marketing Corporation (LPMC), represented through contracted agencies who buy the produce from local farmers, and programmes that train young people in farming activities and provide necessary tools are additional interventions that are needed in order to enhance young people's interest in the agricultural sector.²⁶

A major component of revitalising the agricultural sector must be the creation of opportunities for value-addition through post-harvest processing. The rehabilitation of previously functioning processing plants is urgently needed. For example the sugar processing plant LIBSUCO in Maryland, which provided employment for 1300 people, the rubber processing plant in Cavalla, Maryland, the Buchanan flour mill which turned Cassava into flour; the Lofa rice mill and packing facilities, edible oil production by West Africa Agricultural Company in Cape Mt. County; the Bridgeway Corporation in Monrovia larger scale juice production and package plant, and the Liberian Timber and Plywood Company in Sinoe County among others.

In relation hereto it is essential to start training people in manufacturing and industrial trades. Confining skills training to carpentry, masonry, tailoring and other such trades will not contribute towards Liberia's economic growth in the long-term. What is needed for the upgrading of the Liberian economy is a workforce that is trained in simple manufacturing in order to take value-adding processes forward. A major source of youth employment could lie in rehabilitating the industries mentioned above and training young people in the day to day operations. Young people are especially attracted to new industries and would welcome the opportunity of employment in altogether new and modern sectors.

However, empirical evidence shows that the development of rural non-farm economies depends on initial investment and productivity growth within agriculture (Haggblade et al., 2002) Through increased agricultural production and the development of local and regional market outlets, demand for secondary and tertiary sector products such as manufacturing tools and post-harvest

²⁵ Interviews with youngsters in Lofa, Nimba and Maryland.

²⁶ Interviews with LPMC, Monrovia.

processing emerges. Increased productivity raises per capita income, releases family members to engage in non-farming activities and thus promotes the diversification of the rural economy.

The production of agricultural surpluses itself depends on the availability of new agricultural technologies and modern farm inputs, the distribution of which should therefore be a priority intervention. The Ministry of Agricultural intends to make basic equipment available to farmers that could ease their labour, thereby making farming activities on the whole more attractive. An initial productivity shock in some tradable commodity such as food grains or cash crops is the basis upon which the development and diversification of the rural economy can take place.

In the longer term, the creation of post-harvest industries and services is of great importance. Processing of agricultural products for the national or international markets is potentially profitable business.

We recommend:

1. Interventions to revitalise the agricultural sector have to take account of the different contexts and circumstances in the counties. The particular history of the war, especially in terms of the movement of populations, has an important role to play in constituting people's approach towards their land. For example in Lofa, where almost the entire population had been uprooted as a consequence of the war, most returnees are induced with a sense of homecoming and an increased willingness to rebuild their existence, particularly through agricultural production. It is important that outside interventions take account of and capitalise on that positive inclination amongst the people, especially the youth, towards agriculture.
2. Encourage low level mechanization of farming tools and promote the distribution of modern farm inputs to establish the conditions for increased agricultural productivity. The production of agricultural surplus and the development of local and regional markets will contribute to the diversification of the rural economy, which will in turn promote the growth of high-return non-farm activities such as mechanic milling, transportation services, manufacturing and the like.
3. Agricultural support projects implemented by local and international organizations should be encouraged to include young people among the project beneficiaries. Any attempt to make farming more attractive to young people relies on their active engagement and participation. Only if young people themselves have unmediated access to land, seeds, tools and technical training – resources that are often provided to older members in the community only – will they be able to take their own initiative in further developing the agricultural sector in the area.

3.6 Gender

While male youth attract attention – though a lot of the time negative - female youth generally do not. The alarming trend towards the institutional invisibility of women is especially pronounced in rural Liberia. Yet gender biased patterns are not only the result of men exercising power over and dominating women. Gender is also about the way social structures and authority give men power over other men resulting in marginalization, discrimination and subordination. Liberian male youth are frequently at the subordinated end of such unequal relationship – a situation that can be a source of conflict.²⁷

²⁷ Interviews with youngsters in Lofa, Maryland and Nimba.

Broadening the options of legitimate skills for training also constitute a major challenge with regards to gender. When beneficiaries are encouraged to choose their preferred skill for training, the selection tends to be very traditional and gender-based, and typically limited to a number of ‘classic’ trades such as carpentry and masonry for men - and hairdressing, bakery or pastry for women. Training must not reinforce traditional gender roles that impose restraints on livelihood opportunities. Confronting this challenge requires a long-term investment which includes awareness raising, the promotion of role models, job counselling programmes as well as well-designed and reasonable affirmative action programmes.

An important factor preventing young women from taking up skills training opportunities is the lack of childcare facilities. The lack of childcare facilities as a major constraint on women’s engagement in productive employment has to be acknowledged by the Government of Liberia and the international community alike, and needs to be integrated in all policies and programmes implemented in the country.

We recommend:

1. Future training providers should consider offering childcare facilities to enable young women to take part in the activities. We recommend that the lack of childcare facilities as a major constraint on women’s engagement in productive employment be acknowledged and integrated in policy making.
2. To proactively encourage beneficiaries to re-consider very traditional and gender-based skills training choices. This requires a long-term investment which includes awareness raising, the promotion of role models, job counselling programmes as well as well-designed and reasonable affirmative action programmes.

3.7 Mobility

Liberia is rapidly urbanizing with an annual urban population growth rate of 4.5 percent. Significant urbanization trends have emerged as the result of the war so that presently, urban centres host approximately 50 percent of the 3 million national population and generate a substantial share of the gross domestic product (UN-Habitat, 2004). Urban centres must therefore be seen as gateways to economic growth and development.

Many youths have been forced to migrate to Monrovia and other urban centres due to the collapse of the rural economies as a result of the civil conflict. They are reluctant to return to rural areas due to the absence of employment opportunities. Unfortunately, their frustration is increased with the realization that in urban settings their opportunities and livelihood options are also limited. The war dramatically changed the character and desires of the young population. The general assumption is that urban youth, including ex-combatants, will return to the rural setting once investment and reconstruction efforts stimulate rural development. An official interviewed by the team supports this view: “Agricultural is the only way forward, everything grows here, they will go back”. However, international experiences suggest that few urban youth return to live in rural communities (Sommers, 2003). Young ex-combatants for instance may fear retaliations against them on return to their communities of origin. Moreover, the experience of war may have changed young people’s visions and aspirations, making them unable or unwilling to reintegrate in the patterns or rural life. On the other hand, have young people in urban areas might be useful for some households, because they contribute to the village/household’s financial and social support network. In other words, it can not be assumed that rural youth who ended up in the urban areas due to the war will return – at least not without particular incentives. In acknowledging this a revision of the basic *assumptions* behind current economic efforts of reconstruction, including the increased focus on youth and agriculture, is of paramount importance.

We recommend:

1. More research is needed to understand the mobility patterns of Liberia's young people. Being the most mobile section of the population, young people are most likely to switch sectors to take advantages of new employment and education opportunities.
2. Interventions that aim towards engaging young people in agricultural production have to take account of the attitudes of young people in the different counties. In Lofa, which has a long history of agriculture, young people appear more inclined to return to farming activities than in some areas of Nimba where the rural setting is different and young people show more interest in the service sector.

3.8 Cross- Border Markets and Employment

Language and ethnic groups transcend national borders, and local institutions such as the secret societies comprise border communities in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast. Social and economic cross-border integration has existed among the neighbouring countries for centuries and remains robust to this day. It is crucial for the development of the rural areas in Liberia to acknowledge and draw upon these cross-bordering community structures and social relations. Common to the three case studies presented in the present report is that they are marked by extensive cross border trade and social activities.

Much of the inter-state trade in the Mano-River Union is accounted for by the informal sector. While formal commercial exchanges between the three countries amounts to just 5% of their total exports, informal sector flows are much more significant and on the increase. Informal economic activities span across all economic sectors and cover both domestic retailing and cross-border trading activities. Women play a very dominant role in informal commercial operations not just as retailers at the domestic level but also in the cross-border interactions that have been booming since the war ended (See box 2). Yet not all of the women have managed to establish sustainable livelihoods. A majority of them remain at the level of subsistence in a market characterized by intense competition.²⁸

Box 2

Cross-border petty trading

Grace, 21 year old, lives in Ganta, Nimba County. As a petty trader, she makes frequent trips across the Guinean border to buy commodities for re-sale in Liberia. The Ballah market in Guinea is located a few kilometres from the Liberian border. Carrying her little baby-boy on her back, Grace arrives at the market early in the morning to purchase slippers. She chose to trade in slippers because the light weight enables her to carry her baby at the same time. Grace makes 0.50 USD profit per item sold. However, her entrepreneurial activity faces a series of obstacles: a total number of six roadblocks between the market area and the actual border expose her to the harassment of corrupt officials who shamelessly collect money from the traders passing through. The profit left to her in the end is reduced to a minimum.

In the absence of any formal employment opportunities, and due to her lack of education and training, the informal economy is Grace's only livelihood option.

In order to boost employment and local development in border regions a shift in the governance paradigm is needed. In line with other authors we advocate the decentralisation of government functions and the strengthening of local self-governing institutional arrangements. "Taking Liberia out of Monrovia" not only means establishing relevant line ministries in county capitals,

²⁸ Interviews with Liberian female traders, Guinea.

but requires the Government and its partners to take account of the multiple social and economic networks that exist amongst the people and that span across border areas.

In line with other authors, we suggest that a shift in the governance paradigm from overcentralization to decentralization will open up entrepreneurial space of all types (Richards, 2005; Sawyer, 2005). The chairman of the Governance and Reform Commission Mr Amos Sawyer explains:

“Enterprising young people will find it profitable to return to local townships and counties where laws are made and opportunities created rather than remain in Monrovia trying to find patrons.”

Finally, the question of connecting localities is not only about development. It is to a high degree also connected to the issue of security. Local institutions are critical to the integration of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia, because they already draw on and re-constitute regional identities and linkages. Following the end of the war, trans-boundary institutions provided important conflict resolution mechanisms between different ethnic groups. For example in Lofa, transborder clan leaders and diasporic members played a central role in the reconciliation between Lomas and Mandingos (Sawyer, 2005).

Creating regional security arrangements depends on strengthening the already established cross-border networks of peaceful and economically sound activities. It is widely held that an appropriate arrangement for physical security for Liberia has to be basin-wide in scope and not constructed to cover only Liberia. The creation of well-functioning markets will be the basis for an effective early warning and response system in case of any threat to peace and security in the region

The team identified three hubs of economic activity with a high potential for economic growth and employment creation:

Box 3

In Lofa:	Voinjama - Macenta
In Maryland:	Pleebo/Harper - Tabou
In Nimba:	Ganta – Nzerekore / Djekei

We recommend:

1. Support the newly established Governance and Reform Commission in finding new mechanisms to promote trade and facilitate the movement of goods and people across borders. Young people will benefit disproportionately from enhanced regional economic activities that transcend borders because they are the most mobile sector of the population.
2. Develop a strategy to be presented at the upcoming Liberia donor conference and to the newly created UN Peacebuilding Commission focusing on youth employment in the informal sector along cross border areas. Such a strategy could have major impacts in terms of security, development and could also be a source of empowerment for women. Tapping into the fund established by the UN Peacebuilding Commission targeting countries coming out of conflict could be a major opportunity for Liberia.²⁹
3. Young women form the backbone of informal cross-border trade. Special attention should be given to the training needs of this important yet invisible group. The areas of support

²⁹ For information on the UN Peacebuilding Commission consult: <http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding>

should ideally include training them in core competencies such as literacy, numeracy and accounting, as well as legal aspects, rights and obligations related to border-trade.

PART II: CASE STUDIES

Maryland, Lofa and Nimba counties have been chosen as specific case study areas for the exploration of employment opportunities currently available to youth.³⁰ The three counties were selected due to their vicinity to international borders, their level of economic recovery, their potential for entrepreneurship and economic activities as cross-border trading areas.

The civil war affected the three counties differently in terms of young people's forced recruitment to join the warring factions; population displacement and destruction of infrastructure, and the current post-conflict reconstruction challenges are equally diverse. However, on the issues of economic activities and employment opportunities both differences and similarities exist. The particularities of each county are treated in depth, where as the characteristics shared by the three counties like the pre-dominance of subsistence farming, the importance of cross-border trade, and the prevalence of traditional apprenticeships – general themes which have been dealt with in Chapter 3 - are only touched upon briefly to avoid repetition.

4. MARYLAND

4.1 Introduction

Maryland county, and the South Eastern region of Liberia in general, remain amongst the most isolated parts of Liberia. The remoteness of the region, and in particular the limited presence of the international community as compared to other parts of the country, contribute to a feeling of marginalization and disadvantage among Marylanders. The scarcity of basic service provision and the dilapidated state of the road network have led many Marylanders in the recent past to leave their homes and migrate to other cities or countries. Successive censuses have revealed that the total number of people residing in Maryland county, and the South East of Liberia in general, is diminishing at a fast pace (DRC, 2006). For Maryland county alone more than 3200 families have left from 2004 to 2005 representing a decline of 18.6% (DRC, 2006). This trend aggravates the situation, because the families that can afford to move are often the ones who possess the means to invest in the county's development.

In particular, the county would have to find ways of responding to a growing dissatisfaction amongst the people, particularly the youth, which stems from the lack of education and employment opportunities available. Maryland used to be Liberia's exemplary region in terms of education and skills training provision. Today it suffers similarly to, if not worse than, other counties from the destruction of its infrastructure as a result of the war, and the constrained capacity of the Government authorities to rehabilitate educational institutions.

In terms of livelihoods, food crop production (cassava, rice and vegetables), rubber tapping and informal palm oil and sugarcane production are the most important. In the past cattle was raised on the vast grassland areas along the coastline near Harper. Most of these were lost during the war, but communities are slowly starting to rehabilitate their livestock holdings. Prior to the war, agricultural processing industries existed in the county for rubber, sugarcane, oil and logging. These have also been destroyed during the war and their rehabilitation would offer an important source for job creation and economic growth in the region.

Closely related to the rehabilitation of large-scale production and trade in rubber, palm oil and timber is the reconstruction and expansion of the port in Harper. Due to limited infrastructure, space and loading capacity only one vessel can stop at the time. Currently, the port serves mainly for the shipping of private goods, rubber and NGO/UNMIL material. The port serves Maryland,

³⁰ A previous study address similar issues in all 15 counties, see ILO/UNICEF, 2005.

Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru and River Gee and could form the basis for the revitalisation of the market in South-East, for example by increasing access to commodities from Monrovia (provided that the road network improves at the same time). Rehabilitating the port is particularly crucial for facilitating the growth of an export market for organised industrial goods such as rubber, timber and palm oil, and perhaps more so than for small tradable goods like local agricultural produce.

Box 4

Maryland: Economic Activities

Percentage of households³¹ engaged in: food crop production 26%, rubber tapping 18%, palm oil producers 15%, cash crop production 9%, petty traders 7%, contract labourers 4%, ocean fishing 3%, skilled labour 1%

Percentage of households with access to land 70%, of these 83% have personal plot or community land without deed

Percentage of households cultivating main food crops: Cassava 78%, rice 74%, vegetables 63%

Percentage of households cultivating main cash crops: Plantain 50%, rubber 39%, sugar cane 33%

Percentage of households with access to credit: 3% *susu* club, 2% cooperatives

Source: CFSNS 2006

4.2 Formal Education

Education and vocational training are crucial in order to adequately prepare youths for entering and participating actively in the labour market. Presently, the county lacks both vocational and technical training institutions and institutions for higher education. According to the County Education Office, a total of 151 schools were operational during the 2005/06 academic year, 42 of these in Harper, 40 in Pleebo, 34 in Karluway and 35 in Barrobo (UN HCS 2006). Of the teachers 40% are volunteers, while 77% are not trained (*ibid*). For most youths graduating from high school there are no facilities for further studies, they face difficulties in finding a job or engaging in entrepreneurial activities. Currently young people who wish to enter higher education need to travel to Monrovia and raise the necessary funds for accommodation plus tuition fees, something which only a privileged few have the opportunity to do.

The only institution for higher learning that provided technical skills in the past was the W.V.S. Tubman College in Harper. It has been closed since 1990 when it was badly damaged as a result of the civil war. Prior hereto it provided skills in science and technology (electronics, architecture and civil engineering). The rehabilitation of the Tubman College is a major concern for the local government. In August 2006, a UNDP/UN Habitat mission undertook a rapid assessment of the rehabilitation costs, which were estimated at more than 3.5 Million US Dollar, and UNDP is currently locating the funds.

The Maryland University College of Business and Professional Studies is a new institution established through private funds that is about to start its operations in the region. The College is expected to become operational in 2007 and will offer degrees in: Liberal Arts and Social Science, Education, Accounting, Business and Public Administration, Nursing, Cargo, English, Sociology and Political science, and Agriculture.

4.3 Skills Training

Most training currently taking place is carried out by private individuals through some form of apprenticeship and by NGOs within the framework of the DDR programme (see Box 5).

³¹ Each household can be engaged in several economic activities.

Box 5 Skills Training providers

Institution	Location	Types of training	Targeted beneficiaries
CAP – UNICEF grant	Harper	Cosmetology, pastry, carpentry, masonry, agriculture	CAFF
SARA – FAO grant	Maryland	Agriculture	Internally Displaced People (IDP), returnees, ex-combatants, and other members of the community
Project New Outlook	Pleebo	Carpentry, pastry, mechanics, masonry, agriculture	Ex-combatants
Diocese Cape Palmas, Caritas	Harper	Computer course	Commercial. Open to everybody.

The operations of NGOs in the county are characterised by similar constraints and limitations as found elsewhere in Liberia. Few if any of the training providers have based their curricula on market needs assessments, and many of the graduates are unable to apply the skills acquired during the training. There are also difficulties involved in targeting youth as beneficiaries in income-generating projects like for instance the assistance provided to farmers.

Over the past 3 years, the South-Eastern Agricultural Relief Agency (SARA), a local NGO partnering with the FAO, has provided assistance to more than 2000 farmers. Farmers are trained in low land rice production, fish ponds management and piggery. Presently, the numbers of beneficiaries per district are as follows: Harper: 100; Pleebo: 95; Barrobo: 750 and Karluway: 625. In spite of this impressive programme, both in terms of numerical and geographical scope, youth in their twenties constitute less than 10% of the beneficiaries.³²

This non-inclusion of youth seems to be characteristic for many agricultural projects. Partly, it can be explained by the implementing organizations' reliance on village leaders and elders for the identification of beneficiaries. This eventually opens a room for the marginalization of young people. Moreover, beneficiaries are often identified by household and most households are led by parents or some older member of the family. The consequence of this is that technical know-how, seeds and tools are not shared directly with the younger generations, thus potentially contributing to young people's general lack of interest in agricultural activities. A mechanism needs to be established whereby young people within farming households are directly targeted as farmers and provided with the necessary support and training to make this activity more attractive and rewarding.

4.3.1 Reintegration of ex-combatants

So far, the RR options available to ex-combatants in Maryland have been limited to enrolment in formal education. As a reflection of Liberia's centralised set-up, and the concomitant marginalization of peripheral areas, reintegration initiatives have arrived later to the south-eastern

³² Interview SARA project officer, Harper.

region. While in Monrovia ex-combatants have been able to enrol in formal education since 2004, this option was only available in Maryland from the end of 2005. The period 2006-2007 is the last phase of support before the UN Trust Fund terminates its activities. Needless to say, ex-combatants in this part of the country express disappointment and anger about the limited options available to them.

In Maryland, 1024 ex-combatants demobilized and of these 352 are currently enrolled in formal education. The UNDP DDRR programme intends to provide reintegration opportunities for the remaining and JIU have approved a skills training programme for up to 670 ex-combatants. For the moment 400 to 500 are registered as RR 'seeking', but out of this number only 105 have been found qualified and approved.³³ In order to raise the number of ex-combatants, UNDP has now re-opened the inscriptions. However, it is a widespread assumption that many of the ex-combatants have left Maryland by now.³⁴

The planned skills training programme is located in Pleebo and managed by the International NGO "Project New Outlook". If the number of participants reaches 400-500, an additional skills training centre will open in Harper. The programme offers skills training in carpentry, pastry, mechanics, masonry, agriculture among others. There are also plans to initiate collaboration with "Global Computer School", a private business in Monrovia which is currently opening a branch in Harper. In the future this facility will provide computer training courses to beneficiaries of the DDRR programme and others.

The Danish Refugee Council concluded an EC funded project that combined infrastructure development with temporary employment generation with the overall aim of stabilizing the security situation in the region. Throughout the project, 5,745 persons have had temporary employment for an average of 3 months - they were paid one dollar per work day. Of the beneficiaries 65% were youth (48% out of this total were ex-combatants). For the majority of participants in the rural areas the dollar-a-day work functioned as cash supplement to the daily subsistence agriculture, for others the project was the stepping stone for new collective efforts (See Box 6).

Box 6

Case study: Ex-combatants initiate Collective Farm

A group of ex-combatants previously employed in the EC/DRC Peace and Stabilization project initiated their own farming activities with the aim of upgrading their agricultural skills and improving their livelihoods. The group asked the Gbolobo village leaders for land to farm - the leaders approved, assigned a plot on the Grand Kru road and the project became a reality. The farm has now 275 members - the majority of them ex-combatants, but members also include villagers from a nearby town - and its management structure consists of a board, a financial officer and a treasurer. The members are required to work on the farm 3 days a week, and to take part in regular planning meetings. The farm has received outside support (seeds and tools) and has successfully sold its first vegetable harvest on the local market. Due to limited availability of seeds, the farm only grows cassava. The farm is currently awaiting the donation of a mill to process the cassava to *farina*. So far all revenues have been reinvested into the farm, and the members have not profited yet. The interviewees expressed that rather than making business the main objective running the farm is to enable the member to acquire agricultural skills training.

Focus group interview 27/10/06 in Pleebo; Participants: 3 ex-combatants, farm members

³³ The rest have not been approved because they already have benefited from the reintegration program.

³⁴ Interviews with UNDP/JIU Officers in Harper and Monrovia.

Within the mentioned project a group of 36 young ex-combatants worked as bridge builders and received on-the-job training and specific skills training in bridge construction techniques. Upon project completion, a focus group interview with the bridge builders revealed that the experience has not led to permanent employment so far.³⁵ The knowledge and the skills are there, but the lack of market demand means that young people are unable to apply their skills upon termination of the project. This is an unfortunate situation which we have encountered several times during the course of the fieldwork.

4.4 Economic Activities

4.4.1 Agriculture

The scarcity of fruits and vegetables available in Maryland County is striking. Crop diversification could be of major benefit, both in terms of people's diets and food security, and in terms of creating a new source of employment and revenue. Maryland County has wide swaths of land available for growing fruit and vegetables, yet cash crop production of tomatoes, lettuce, carrots, mushrooms, peppers, pineapples, papaya and mangoes remains limited. Of the agricultural production 38% is cash crops in Maryland County, but it is centred on rubber, banana/plantain and sugarcane (CFSNS, 2006). The limited interest in growing fruits and vegetables is in part justified by the extremely limited market demands. For the purpose of developing an agricultural export business the creation of local market demand would be if not necessary, then at least beneficial for the long-term success of such an endeavour.

4.4.2 Fishery

The Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey of 2006 found that 44% of households engage in fishing activities, mainly confined to inland fishing with only 9% ocean fishing (CFSNS, 2006:111). Most of the fish is smoked and dried by traditional processes of conservation and sold at the local markets. The rest has to be sold and consumed immediately due to the lack of storage facilities. In Harper, Kru people and Fantis (originally from Ghana) engage in ocean fishing, with the latter owning better equipment for fishing like nets, canoes and outboard motors. The canoes and fishing equipment is either bought in Accra or Monrovia. There are around 100 youth engaged in fishing activities.³⁶ Youngsters are taught on the job by relatives and patrons, and usually form small groups of three to five to undertake the fishing activities. Most of the fishermen make use of a barter system to start business. Money is borrowed from local market women, who are paid back with fresh fish until the debt is recovered. The re-sale of the fish is exclusively in the hands of these market women.

From our group discussions we learned that in contrast to the Fantis, the Kru people regard fishery as a subsistence activity rather than a commercial activity. Thus there lies unexplored potential in encouraging Kru people to regard fishing as a business. Along Maryland's coastline the possibilities for engaging in profitable commercial fishing are great, with potential markets in the interior of the country or even in neighbouring countries. Finding ways of promoting the commercial exploitation of Maryland's fishery sector could be a source for employment generation and economic growth. However, since the fishing activity is a lifestyle that is typically transmitted over generations, it might be hard to attract, recruit and train young people who are completely alien to the trade.

Another potential source of employment for young people – and in particular for the young market women already in charge of selling the fish - lies in developing post-fishing processing and services. The installation of storage facilities could spark an extensive market for fresh fish, including trading, packaging, marketing, exporting. It may be that young men and women with no

³⁵ Focus group interview, Pleebo, participants 5 ex-combatants bridge-builders.

³⁶ Focus group with young fishermen, Harper.

background in fishing are more attracted to these aspects of the trade rather than engaging in the fishing activity itself.

4.4.3 Plantations

“Rehabilitating and revitalising the plantations are the most promising options for immediate job creation in the South-East” (James Logan, Deputy Minister of Agriculture)³⁷

Small private plantations constitute a major source of employment and income in Maryland. Rubber tapping is especially prominent, with 27% of households relying on this activity for their daily livelihoods, but sugar cane and oil palms are also important (CFSNS, 2006). The rehabilitation and expansion of commercial plantations could create further employment opportunities for rural and urban youths in Maryland and bordering counties.

In the early 1980s the parastatal company Decoris Oil Palm Corporation (DOPC) was engaged in growing oil palms. As of 1983, the DOPC had almost 15,000 acres in oil palms. At the time, the corporation had ongoing programmes to expand their oil palms production, and the plantations were supplemented by production from local smallholder contractors. DOPC sensitized communities around the plantation and issued palm seedling on agreement that all palm would be sold to them. Recently, the Government of Liberia signed a contract with a foreign company for the rehabilitation of several palm plantations (including DOPC), the establishment of out-grower planning schemes and the industrial production of edible oils. It is expected that the operation will create 1000 jobs nation-wide during the rehabilitation phase and 60.000 in the longer term.³⁸

The Rubber Brokers Union Association recently carried out a survey among local small producers and identified 805 privately owned rubber plantations in Maryland.³⁹ With its 10,000 acres the Cavalla Rubber Plantation Company is by far the largest. It was formerly run by Firestone Rubber Company, but is now government-owned, while the management has been turned over to the Rubber Planters Association of Liberia (RPAL). The RPAL will manage the plantation for 18 months until its contract expires in January 2008. The plantation currently employs 1500 persons, 903 of which are tapers. Young people constitute a very minute proportion of the workforce. Those that work as tapers merely help their aging parents, who are themselves formal employees. The salary of each taper depends on his/her output. The company pays 0.10 USD (ten cents) per kilogram of latex tapped. On average, a taper will produce about 35 kg daily, which is equivalent to 4 USD. No benefits such as meals or medical care are provided.

In the long term, the employment possibility for youth in the plantations is without doubt one of the most important in the county. At the moment however, there is hardly any skilled youth employed at the plantation sites. The young people engaged in rubber tapping, particularly at the smaller plantations, usually have very basic skills picked up on-the-job or through other friends and relatives. This applies to a large proportion of students in the rural areas, which supplement their own or their family's income by engaging in rubber tapping in the afternoons and the weekends.⁴⁰ In the absence of other employment opportunities, these youngsters are most likely to continue rubber tapping after graduating from high school. Yet tapping rubber trees renders them vulnerable in terms of rights and protection because of the very unregulated nature of the business (See Box 7).

³⁷ Interview Deputy Minister of Agriculture.

³⁸ Interviews, Office of the Vice-President.

³⁹ Interview with representative from the Maryland Branch of the National Rubber Brokers association, data provided from the study: “A Comprehensive Listing of Rubber Farms in Maryland County”, 2005.

⁴⁰ Focus groups and interviews, villages along the Harper-Pleebo road.

In line with a previous UNMIL report (2006a), the team found that workers experience harsh and unacceptable labour conditions. In the Cavalla plantation for instance, plantation workers were exposed to hazardous working conditions without proper training or safety equipment⁴¹.

Box 7

Student jobs: Rubber Taping

Francis, a 19 year old 6-grade student at the Baraken Public School in rural Maryland explained that he and other male students occasionally receive contracts to work at the Wilson Rubber Farm which is located about 3km from the school. Francis attends classes in the morning and spends the afternoon working on the farm. He is paid USD 0.08 per kilo taped, about two cents less than what tapers on bigger plantations. Although Francis and his colleagues complain about the working conditions they are nevertheless happy for the opportunity to work given the precarious employment situation in the area. From the money he makes, he buys food for himself and his girlfriend and pays for school uniforms and books. Since Baraken Public School is Government-owned, no fees are charged for elementary students. However, Francis is worried that with his promotion to the junior high division pending, he won't be able to support himself on his current income.

The Government's focus, and that of the international community, needs to take account of the operations of small rubber plantations as well as of the bigger and better known ones. In order to engage young people in productive employment at the rubber plantations, and to protect their rights as workers, it is important that activities at these plantations are monitored. In order to upgrade their skills it may be necessary to offer more substantiated and possibly institutionalised training that could provide a more comprehensive insight into the entire process of rubber production from nursing the rubber tree seedlings to the rubber processing. Adequate skills would also ensure that the tapers working at the plantations do not damage the trees, which often results in long-term production losses for the plantation owners. Finally, drawing on existing structures in Maryland, such as the Rubber Farmers Cooperative that is operating could be effective for organising plantation owners and workers for capacity building and awareness rising.

⁴¹ For a detailed account on the working conditions in several Liberian rubber plantations see UNMI, 2006a.

4.5 Maryland Findings & Recommendations:

- A priority area of intervention in Maryland concerns the rehabilitation of the Tubman College, Maryland's only technical training institution. Its reconstruction has been identified as a priority for the local authorities. UNDP has submitted a proposal to the EC that concerns the rehabilitation of the college using the skills and services of ex-combatants. This project will deliver reintegration assistance to demobilized ex-combatants in the form of vocational skills training in building construction while engaging the ex-combatants and unemployed youth of the local communities in productive activities. We commend this initiative for its combination of vocational skills training with the direct and practical application of these skills for community-based reconstruction efforts.
- The fishing industry is a potential source of employment for young people – and in particular for the young market women already in charge of re-selling fish - through developing post-fishing processing and services (storage and packaging facilities, as well as trading, marketing, and exporting).
- A two-pronged strategy is needed to revive the rubber economy in the county. First to replant old and uneconomic rubber plantations and secondly to enhance general productivity levels. While the replanting of old and uneconomic trees is a long term strategy, productivity enhancement should be adopted as a short- to medium-term strategy. Young people in particular would benefit from professional skills development in rubber production. Already many students are employed in the rubber sector on a part-time basis and the likelihood that they will continue in this line of work after graduating from high school is high. Upgrading their basic skills, and training them in agricultural methods around the activities as tapers, will enhance both their competencies and motivations.
- There is great scope for local small enterprise development in the rubber sector, pertaining not only to big size plantations, but certainly the hub of smaller plantations around the county. Small rubber entrepreneurs should be equipped with business skills and have access to credit, marketing and transport. Few Liberian organisations are already working towards that aim, e.g. the Rubber Brokers Association.
- Interventions that aim towards protecting workers rights and upgrading young people's skills have to focus their attention on small plantations. The work of the already established Rubber Farmers Cooperative should be supported, and the structure used to introduce a number of interventions such as capacity building, skills training and awareness rising. Possible links and cooperative relations with the Rubber Brokers Association should be established and promoted.
- The coastal areas of Maryland offer significant and unexplored potential for tourism. Harper and its beaches, as well as the surrounding area (Fishtown, Rocktown) could be developed into a popular tourist attraction once peace and security is fully restored and Liberia reaches some minimum standards in terms of infrastructure and basic services. Tourism could be a major source of direct as well as indirect employment that cannot be neglected in thinking about Liberia's future development.

5. LOFA COUNTY

5.1 Introduction

Before the war, Lofa was considered the “bread basket” of the country on account of its high level of food production, especially the national staple food, rice. It is said that in the 1980s, Lofa could provide the entire country with rice. Today, Lofa has the highest number of food insecure people, with 70% having poor or borderline food consumption levels. This year, Lofa produced its first proper harvest since the end of the war.⁴²

Lofa County was particularly affected during the second phase of the Liberian civil war, resulting in the massive exodus of people to the neighbouring countries Sierra Leone and Guinea. Today Lofa county is a major area of voluntary and facilitated return and resettlement. 93% of the total population was uprooted at some point during the course of the war. Since the beginning of the resettlement in February 2005 up to March 2006, Lofa received 119,443 IDPs. Another 49,600 refugees have returned with UNHCR convoys from Guinea and Sierra Leone⁴³. Common to almost all returnees is severe destitution paired with a strong desire and will to become self-supporting and to re-establish sustainable livelihoods.

Box 8

Lofa: Economic Activity

Percentage of households engaged in economic activities⁴⁴: palm oil seller/producer 33%, contract labourers 16%, petty trade 9%, hunters 7%, food crop farmers 6%, skilled labourers 5%

Percentage of households with access to agricultural land 88% - of these 97% have personal plot or community land without deed

Percentage of households cultivating main food crops: rice 95%, cassava 17%, vegetables 14%, pulses 11%

Percentage of households cultivating main cash crops: Coffee 82%, cacao 53%, plantain 12%, palm oil 10%

Percentage of households with access to credit: *susu* club 3%, cooperatives 1%

Source CFSNS, 2006

5.2 Formal Education

The education sector is picking up gradually but it remains unable to cope up with the high numbers of returnees. In 2004 there were 12 elementary schools with about 214 teachers and close to 6000 students in Lofa. Presently, due to the support of various UN agencies and international NGOs, the number has increased to about 53 functioning public and private schools (UN HCS, 2006).

The two institutions that provided technical and vocational education in the past are currently non-operational. The Zorzor Rural Teacher Training Institute in Zorzor District used to be a major teacher training institution in Liberia. The Ministry of Education has secured funding from USAID for the reconstruction of the school, and it will be operational from autumn 2007 subject to the availability of teachers. With further assistance from UNESCO, intensive teacher training will be implemented.⁴⁵

The Voinjama Multilateral High School provided vocational training alongside its regular academic programme. Students were given the option to engage in technical trades, science,

⁴² Interview UNMIL/Civil Affairs, Voinjama, Lofa.

⁴³ UNHCR information officer, Monrovia.

⁴⁴ Each household can be engaged in several economic activities.

⁴⁵ Interview UNICEF County Officer, Voinjama.

agriculture or business education. The High School was damaged during the war and is now being renovated by Peace Winds Japan. It still operates from a make-shift structure close to the UNMIL/Pakistani Base but offers only a formal academic programme at the moment. With the reconstruction of the school by autumn 2007 a new curriculum will be introduced. This opportunity to design a training programme that is relevant, up-to-date and adjusted to local labour market and community needs should not be missed.

5.3 Skills Training

Presently most available skills training in Lofa is provided by externally funded national and international NGOs. The table below shows the locations and type training being provided or currently underway

Box 9 Lofa Skills training providers

NGO	Location	Types of training	Targeted beneficiaries
International Rescue Committee	Zorzor, Voinjama, Kolahun and Foya	Carpentry, tailoring, tie and dye, hairdressing and bread making	WAFF and CAFF and vulnerable groups
Sustainable Agriculture Services Union	Voinjama and Kolahun.	Agriculture	Ex-combatants
United Methodist Commission on Relief	Zorzor, Voinjama, Kohun and Foya	Carpentry, auto mechanics, tailoring and masonry	Ex-combatants
Christian Empowerment and Sustainability Program (CESP)	Voinjama	Agriculture, carpentry, tailoring and mechanics	Ex-combatants
UNICEF implementing Partners. Action for Greater Harvest, Action Aid Liberia, Samaritan's Purse and Center for Justice and Peace Studies	Voinjama, Sarkonedu, Konia, Fessibu, Gbrolu, Beyan and Ganglo	Agriculture, carpentry, cosmetology masonry, pastry. Beauty care, tailoring and secretary science	CAFF and vulnerable groups

The experience of forced displacement has exposed the citizens of Lofa to skills training provided by humanitarian agencies in refugee- and IDP camps. A recent survey points out that 38% of the children from Voinjama district that had lived in IDP camps reported having attended school there (Boas and Hatloy, 2006). Many of the young people we interviewed in Lofa received skills training in camps in Sierra Leone, Guinea as well as Liberia. Such already acquired skills are an unexplored potential, and efforts should be made to facilitate and support processes where they are put into actual use. Thus, skills training providers need to take note of this in order for their training to be relevant and adjusted to the previous experiences, as well as the needs, of the beneficiaries and the community at large.

5.3 Traditional Skills Training

There are a number of private individuals who offer apprenticeship opportunities to young people. The apprenticeship is on-the-job training and takes several years; often the trainees are not paid, but provided with food and sometimes lodging (See Box 10).

Box 10

Carpenter Apprenticeship: Joseph Furniture Shop on the main road in Foya trains 13 youths in carpentry. Recruitment is done upon expression of interest by the student or his parents. The trainee is then brought in to assist with some minor tasks while observing and learning the trade of a carpenter. Joseph said that the training takes at least one year. Afterwards, the youth is given the choice to either stay with the shop or move on. If they decide to stay they are entitled to a share of the profit, which however is not stable and determined by the owner.

5.4 Economic Activities

5.4.1 From Subsistence Farming to Commercial Agriculture

In Lofa 70 per cent of the county's population are engaged in agriculture with rice farming as the main source of livelihood. Households in Lofa county grow cassava and vegetables (pepper, bitter ball and okra) as food crops. Cash crops such as coffee, cocoa and oil palms are equally important. The palm nuts are pressed into oil, which is sold in Guinea and Monrovia. Hunting is an important source of income across the districts. Most of the returnees have access to land, but due to the lack of manpower, seeds and other farming inputs, they were not able to produce crops in 2005. The first harvesting took place in 2006. Humanitarian organizations involved in agricultural projects focus on swamp rehabilitation, planting of cassava, sweet potatoes and small-scale agriculture such as backyard gardens, clearing for palm, cocoa, and coffee farms. These organizations include international and local NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs).

Prior to the war two government owned agricultural enterprises operated in Lofa: The Liberia Agricultural Land Development and Mechanization Corporation (AGRIMECO) and the Lofa County Agriculture Development Project (LCADP). The main objective of the AGRIMECO was to clear farmland by mechanized means and to turn the land over to farmers. This was intended, inter alia, to increase food production and minimize land degradation that would otherwise result from traditional methods of farming. The project was established in 1975 and sponsored by the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD). The LCADP was established in 1977 and it also received funding from the IFAD. It was concerned mainly with cocoa and coffee production, but also assisted farmers in order to boost the production of rice.

Box 11

Between the school and the garden: a young man's interest in agriculture

Francis S. Woiwor II is a 20 year old 12th grade student at the Voinjama Multilateral High School. He farms in order to pay his education and sustain himself. Francis is a former IDP from the Maimu Camp, Lower Bong County where he stayed between 2001 and 2005. While displaced he was a beneficiary of an agriculture skills training program (crop production) conducted by the Sustainable Development Program (SDP) in Gbarnga, Bong County in 2004. He returned to his town in Bawomai, Voinjama in 2005 where his parents owns a large farm growing coco, kola nuts and oranges. Utilizing the knowledge he gained from his agriculture training, he added plantain to the selection of crops.

Driven by a strong desire for formal education, Francis matriculated at the Voinjama Multilateral High School in Voinjama City in 2005. But life in the city is expensive. He moved into a room that cost 4 us per month in rent; school fees and uniform add up to 35 us per semester. With no family in the city to rely on for support, Francis turned to what he knew best to earn a living. He obtained permission from his landlord to use a parcel of land (about two lots) to plant cabbage, sweet potatoes, cassava, bitter balls, and pepper. While awaiting the crops to grow he did casual work for people including washing clothes, cutting grass and carrying loads. He considers

agriculture as a career path. However, he also believes that bad roads, the lack of tools and seeds will be major constraints towards realising his ambitions as farming.

5.4.2 Cooperatives

Prior to the war, Lofa was the cradle of the cooperative movement in Liberia. Cooperatives were formed in the seventies and their main objective was to encourage production and expand rural farmers' income. Prior to the formation of the cooperatives, the farmers sold their produce to middle buyers (merchants) on an individual basis and were normally underpaid. To avoid this, local farmers organised themselves and started harvesting and marketing their produce through their organisations and selling it collectively to the Liberia Produce Marketing Cooperative (LPMC). The cooperatives used their profit to construct warehouses, establish sub-branches and to pay workers. LPMC marketed the commodities and sold them to foreign companies. The Lofa Agricultural Development Project, supported by the World Bank, provided extension services to the cooperatives. The Development Superintendent for Lofa, Fofee Bemah, has presently submitted a project proposal to revitalise the cooperative societies, including assisting the cooperatives in establishing sound management structures, rehabilitating cooperative warehouses and offices, providing agricultural tools and small loans to farmers. The project's cost is estimated at 100,000 USD.

It is unclear however to what extent the former cooperative movement structures are already in place. If the organisation of farmers depends entirely on external financial support, that is, if farmers haven't already formed small-scale cooperatives on which to draw, then the sustainability of the undertaking is questionable. The aim should be to take advantage of existing cooperatives and assist them, rather than to provide the means by which to develop them from scratch.

5.4.3 Cross Border Trading

Most trading activities take place in towns that are connected through trading routes with Guinea. Dry goods such as cigarettes, batteries, Maggie cubes and others are bought in Guinea and sold in Lofa. During their time in refugee and IDP camps, many people's only real income generating activity lied in petty trade or micro-entrepreneurship. Since any kind of formal employment was hard to come by and people lacked access to land, individuals had to diversify their livelihood strategies and in many cases this entailed shifting their economic activities from subsistence farming to petty trading.

Some of the young returnees have continued trading. The following cash generating activities were common among the ones we interviewed in Voinjama, Zorzor and Foya: buying and selling goods like charcoal, prepared foods, sweets and cigarettes; services provided by hair dressers and food preparation. Taking advantage of the diverse experiences and new skills people acquired as a result of the forced displacement and migration during the war years could offer major opportunities in terms of economic revitalisation of Lofa. The challenge is to devise effective intervention that would enable people to build on and enhance the entrepreneurial spirit they have acquired in the course of their experiences (See Box 12)

Box 12

Patience Story

Patience is a 24 year old Liberian who sought refuge in Guinea at the Laine camp. She took part in the American Refugee Committee's micro-credit program that entailed literacy training and business support. The program had a three step grant It begins with a starter grant of \$50 for groups of three The aim of the grant was the initiation of a small enterprise. Repayment must occur within three months. The second step is a basic loan where groups of 5-7 people, mostly women, applied for a loan of \$65 per person to repay in 6 months without interest.

Patience returned to Liberia in 2005. In the camp she received business support classes. An experience she appreciates, since it formed the basis for her current business: a small hair dress boot on the main street of Foya.

5.5 Lofa Findings & Recommendations:

- Agriculture and related agro-industries should form the backbone of any long term recovery strategy for Lofa. Capitalizing on the long history of Lofa in agriculture and tradition for cooperative movements, and the positive attitudes of young returnees towards agriculture, is crucial.
- Prior to the war the existence of rice mills encouraged communities to increase their rice production in the past. The rehabilitation of the rice mills, which help farmers to clean and bag the rice, could have an immediate impact on the rice production levels. The operation and maintenance of these mills require new skills that could be especially appealing to young people. *Support tasks gangs* centred around agricultural activities is the way forward that will serve the purpose of introducing those men and women with limited knowledge of farming to agricultural techniques. For instance, encouraging youngsters to form gangs to visit villages offering mechanised ploughing cassava/rice milling services could be a concrete action to support; simple forms of rural transportation, using wheel barrows and carts to bring produce to weekly markets etc. should be disbursed.
- An institutional set-up that provides extension services is currently lacking and must be put in place. The idea of an agricultural revival should strongly be tied to providing entrepreneurial skills. One of the programmes could support communities to reactivate cash crop production of banana, plantain, vegetables and rice in the short run, while working towards the rehabilitation of coffee and cocoa plantations which have a longer harvest period (4-5 years time span). To sensitize communities in the advantages of surplus production, as a strategy for reducing costs, curtailing importation needs and creating opportunities for processing the produce, would be a necessary step forward.
- It is important to strengthen agricultural cooperatives in Lofa. The cooperative movement has a long history in the county and used to be a primary institution for the well-being of rural dwellers before the war. It is important to note that the launching of the cooperatives is not only an agriculture-related enterprise. The transmission of knowledge from elders to youngsters as how best to run an institution of this kind could be of value to people engaged in any kind of economic activity. The process of creating cooperatives (with the vision of empowering youth) will also provide a forum for mutual exchange, understanding and much needed collaboration amongst different age and ethnic groups.
- We recommend that all livelihoods support programmes take into account the different experiences of returnees. Capitalising on the different skills and knowledge that people of Lofa have acquired over the past decade, including entrepreneurial skills and skills training provided in refugee and IDP camps, could offer great opportunities for the development of the county.
- Technical skills (such as soap making, masonry and others) are not difficult to develop, especially given that many of the returnees have already developed some of those skills in the camps. The focus in any kind of skills training programme should be on the sustainability of small private enterprises.

6. NIMBA

6.1 Introduction

Nimba was particularly affected by the war and has experienced some of the most intense clashes between rebels and Government forces. Tribal tensions, especially between Manos and Mandingos concerning land and property rights disputes are alive and ongoing in the county.⁴⁶ It is also the county with the highest concentration of ex-combatants outside Montserrado. Due to its border with Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea, Nimba County experiences a high number of cross-border movement on a daily basis. Economic relations amongst the three countries are extremely important to the livelihoods of the people of Nimba County.

Box 13

Nimba, Economic activities:

Percentage of households engaged in economic activities⁴⁷: cash and food crop producers 20%, food crop farmers 17%, petty traders 14%, palm oil producers/seller 11%, contract labourers 11%, 3% skilled labourers 3%

Percentage of households with access to land: 72%, of these 48% have personal plot with deed and 46% without deed

Percentage of households cultivating main food crops: 80% rice, 78% cassava, 35% vegetables

Percentage of households cultivating main cash crops: 45% plantain and banana, 38% rubber, 37% cacao, 34% sugarcane

Households with access to credit: *susu* clubs 52%, cooperatives 0%

Source: CFSNS 2006

6.2 Formal Education

There are 469 schools in Nimba County, 293 of which are public schools and 176 private schools (UNCT 2006). The UNMIL Humanitarian Coordination Section (HCS) estimates that the number of schools in need of reconstruction is double the number of current facilities (UN HCS, 2006).

The United Methodist Mission station in Ganta provides educational opportunities from kindergarten to senior high. What started out as a small elementary school has developed into a large academic and vocational school with about 900 students enrolled. During grades 10-12 students specialize in a vocational area (tying, home economics, agriculture or building construction). Much of the school's operational funds come from registration and tuition fees (averaging 75 USD per year). Some of the students have so-called scholarships, whereby their fees are withdrawn in exchange for some work around the campus.

6.3 Skills Training

The Liberian-Swedish Vocational Training Centre (LSVTC) is the only post-secondary educational facility in the county. Prior to the war, the centre was jointly owned and sponsored by the Lamco J.V.O Operating Company and the Government of Liberia. It offered vocational skills in the areas of plumbing, masonry, carpentry, auto mechanics and others. Today, the LSVTC is the only Government-owned vocational centre that is operational in the county; 500 students are currently enrolled at the school.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ During the conflict, pro-government militia suspected Mandingo Muslim youths of being sympathetic to the LURD rebels cause and harassed and imprisoned them. During 2003, LURD forces destroyed churches around the county. For example in Ganta, rebel forces systematically burned down local places of worship. When government troops regained control of the town, they destroyed mosques and homes that belong to ethnic Mandingo.

⁴⁷ Each household can be engaged in more than one economic activity.

⁴⁸ Interview, Ministry of Education, Monrovia.

In an effort to assist with ongoing training needs, the United Methodist Mission station in Ganta offers a practical vocational training programme for students enrolled at the Liberia Swedish Vocational Training Center (LSVTC) in Yekepa, as well as for ex-combatants and war-affected youth supported by UMC Germany. As mentioned earlier, the United Methodist Mission station also provides skill training as part of its formal education curriculum, and a computer literacy class for the general community. Practical vocational skills training is provided in the following areas: carpentry, building construction, plumbing, auto mechanics, computer literacy and electricity.

Since April 2006 The Liberian Opportunities Industrial Centre (LOIC) is providing training to 200 beneficiaries mostly ex-combatants. The training provided covers masonry, carpentry, arts and crafts, metal works and animal science, but the selection has not been based on any market needs survey. Despite the demand for mechanics training in the bustling city, donors are hesitant to offer the training. At a focus group discussion held at the site, several of the beneficiaries expressed that they chose metal works in the absence of the opportunity to train as mechanics.⁴⁹

The International Rescue Committee is implementing a number of programmes in the county. The Economic Opportunities Programme (EOP) targets WAFFs and CAFFs and other vulnerable community members such as orphans, street kids, widows and teenage mothers. EOP concentrates on three areas: skills training through apprenticeships; income generation through supporting farmers and small businesses and business management training. The aim is to assist beneficiaries to perform in the market place. Trainers receive material support in exchange for facilitating training activities. Materials provided include: zincs, cements, generators, plywood, planks, construction nails, sewing machines, hammers, saws, planes etc.

Box 14 Skills training in Nimba

Institution	Location	Types of training	Targeted beneficiaries
Liberia Swedish Vocational Training Institute	Yekepa	Carpentry, building construction, plumbing, auto mechanics, computer literacy and electricity.	Students
LOIC	Ganta	Masonry, carpentry, arts and crafts, metal works and animal science	Ex-combatants
United Methodist Mission Ganta.	Ganta	Carpentry, building construction, auto mechanics, plumbing, electricity, computer science	Students and Ex-combatants
IRC		Carpentry, tailoring, tie and dye, hairdressing and bread making	WAFF and CAFF and vulnerable groups

⁴⁹ Focus groups discussions, LOIC, Ganta.

UNICEF implementing partners. Young Men Christian Association, Sustainable Development Promoters, Samaritanian Pursue	Ganta, Saclepea, Tappita	Carpentry, tailoring, plumbing, tie and dye, hairdressing and bread making	CAFF and vulnerable groups
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A new and promising example of civil-military relations is the work of the Bangladeshi UNMIL Battalion in Ganta. Alongside medical campaigns, the Battalion is actively involved in the social and economic rehabilitation of the county. Three cycles of skills training have been completed over the past three years, benefiting more than 1000 young people⁵⁰. The contingent is also involved in a large-scale agricultural project involving 2000 local farmers who are able to plant rice on Government-owned land in Kpein and Gbdein (300ha land). The contingent provided tractors to plough the land and the rice will be divided equally amongst the farmers. The impacts are manifold and include employment generation, improved food security, the updating of farmer's skills after many years of inactivity during the war and finally, the clearance of vast areas of land for sustainable farming activity.

6.4 Economic Activities

6.4.1 Agriculture

Nimba has one of the highest cash crop production and crop diversification in the country. Rubber is becoming the most important cash crop, followed by coffee, cacao, sugar cane, pineapple, plantain and palm nuts (CFSNS, 2006). There is no large-scale farming in the county, but the wide spread of cash crop production is a good basis for the further expansion of some sort of agro-business enterprising.

Sugarcane farming and processing into cane juice is a major source of livelihoods in some villages on the road from Ganta to Sanniquellei; and for many families it constitutes the only income-generating activity. In geographically remote places, the cane juice business is the only entry point into the cash economy. Cane juice is an important export item which is commonly sold in Guinea or transported to Monrovia.

6.4.2 Mining

Nimba county has vast resources in iron ore, gold and diamond, particularly in the areas between Sanniquellie and Yekepa, along the bank of Yar River and in Zoe-Geh district. In Nimba, the rehabilitation of mining activities in general and of the iron ore sector in particular, carries expectations of employment and revenue. The successful signing of the Mittal Steel agreement, the world's largest steel company contract to exploit Liberia's extensive reserves of iron ore, will provide sources for employment creation. Mittal steel is expected to invest around US\$900 million over the next 25 years. According to a recent report, Mittal Steel estimates that 476 people would be employed in Liberia by the end of 2006, and that by 2008 the number would have risen to 3,200 direct and indirect employees (Global Witness, 2006).

However, while the successful signing of the agreement will provide employment opportunities, industrial mining has become less labour intensive and more capital intensive through the years. The most important benefit to the country will probably be the tax revenues and royalties

⁵⁰ Interview, Bangladeshi Batallion, Ganta.

collected by the central government. Thus the revitalization of iron ore mining should form part of a diversified and holistic economic strategy comprising local communities. A strategy that is not only based on the extraction of iron ore, but is exploiting the ‘multiplier effect’ created by the injection of capital once the company initiates its operations in the area.

6.4.3 Motorcycle Riders Union

In Ganta, the Transitional Safety Net Allowance payment of 300 US to demobilizing ex-combatants has spurred an explosive development of new businesses, most notably the provision of transport by motorcycle and the resale of fuel products. Motorcycles, locally known as *Kpenn Kpenn*, are the only means of public transportation available in the city and surrounding villages, and more than 500 motorcycles offer this service.

This motorcycle business boom can be traced directly back to the disarmament exercise and in a sense it was a spin-off or by-product of the war. Many of the new entrepreneurs in the motorcycle business were returnees from Guinea who had spent some years in the city of Nzerekore (two hours drive from Ganta) and were inspired by the common use of motorcycles and the profits generated hereby. These early entrepreneurs inspired ex-combatants who became attracted to the business primarily because it did not require much capital (two or three could put their allowance together and buy a motorcycle). It was (and still is) a tax-free business and perhaps most importantly, it provides some sort of independence and social status.⁵¹ The motorcycle business has become a stepping stone for many young men to more prestigious and profitable businesses such as selling gasoline or clothing.

The riders, many of them previous fighters, have by now established an association for lobbying local authorities. The association also serves to provide a (financial) safety net in case of accidents. Against a registration fee of 5 USD, the *Kpenn-Kpenn* owner receives an ID card and a plate. In the future the association hopes to institute a loan facility, to provide financial support to members who are looking to purchase a bike and to supply cheaper motorcycle spare parts for its members. Each bike operator earns 7 USD per day. For many youths, including students who are engaged in the business on a part-time basis, this is a viable business.

The motorbike riders are among the more empowered youth segments we have encountered in our field work. Yet several problematic issues can be identified, such as the gender bias inherent in the business (which is male dominated), and the lack of awareness amongst riders concerning traffic regulations and safety norms. The riders themselves are not trained in repair and maintenance services, relying instead on a limited number of local service providers.⁵²

Bax 15

At the “Park It Better” Gas Station in Ganta

Adonis is a 26 year old entrepreneur in the commercial district of Ganta. He sells gasoline and fuel at the “Park It Better Gas Station”, a bustling corner-shop in the heart of Ganta City where young men gather to make money and establish their businesses. Adonis is doing well with his fuel retailing business. With proud smiles he discloses that he has 3,000 USD on hand, and LD225,000 invested in three local credit unions. The clothes he is wearing and the accessories he is carrying with him – amongst them an advanced NOKIA camera phone worth 300 USD – are visible evidence of his success.

⁵¹ Interviews, Ganta Motorcycle Union chairperson.

⁵² Ibid.

Adonis has not always been a big time fuel retailer. Upon graduating from the Jonny Pearson High School in Ganta, Nimba County in 2002, he received 40 USD from his father to establish his own business. With this money he bought wholesale assorted drugs (medicines) from a pharmacy in Monrovia and returned to Ganta to start retailing. Business was booming and within six months Adonis had earned up to 190USD in profit. However the arrival of the war in 2003 put an end to his business: as fighting intensified between Ex-President Taylor's forces and LURD Rebels and Ganta was under siege, he was pressed to join the war and fight alongside Government soldiers.

Eager to get back to his business at the end of the war, he did not wait to go through the disarmament process but turned in his arm to his commander. Instead of returning to his old business of selling medicine, he was encouraged by a friend to switch to fuel (gasoline) retailing. He still had 200 USD in savings and with that amount, he was able to buy gasoline from across the border in Guinea and start retailing. Within three months he had made 350 USD in profit. The constant harassment he encountered in Guinea led him to start buying fuel in Monrovia. Business was booming again for Adonis. By mid-2004, he decided to partner with a fellow gas retailer and start buying directly from the Liberian Petroleum Refining Corporation (LPRC) in Monrovia. The large quantity purchased at the LPRC meant that he could sell for a longer period of time, thereby reducing the number of trips to Monrovia and increasing his profit. For 1050 USD, he and his partner were able to purchase barrels containing a minimum of 500 gallons. They made 0.50 USD profit on each gallon, leading to 275 USD net profit per week.

In early 2005, both partners felt confident that they had generated enough capital to go solo. Adonis purchased a used car for 1900 USD which he turned into a taxi. This time he wasn't fortunate. His brother whom he had entrusted with the running of the taxi mismanaged the car. Adonis was spending more on repairs than he was receiving in income. Fearing that the deficit would cause the collapse of his business he joined the Wesley Credit Club and the Yen Yen Credit Union. He obtained a loan of 900 USD which he used to reorganize the business.

6.4.4 Cash and Credit

Due to the city's commercial outlook, Ganta inhabitants have a long standing tradition in the establishment of local credit unions and *susu* clubs. We identified a total number of 15 locally-owned credit unions. There is a growing number of youth who are becoming a part of this, but still the vast majority lacks the necessary capital. Furthermore, a staggering 25% interest rate is charged on loans. Every starting member who invests in the club or union is obliged to take up a loan as a way for the union to generate additional dividend. In spite of this, savings schemes of this type are extremely popular, especially compared to the rest of the country (See Box 16). At its inception, the scheme served as a safety arrangement for entrepreneurs who had nowhere to save their surplus income in the absence of operational banking institutions.

Box 16

The Klee Credit Union

The Klee Union was established in 1998 as a weekly *susu*-club and has since developed into a successful credit union with more than 400 members per year - the majority women. Shares are bought at a minimum of 10 US. Credit is obligatory, and the union charges 25% interest and allows 3 months to pay back. The system works in yearly cycles and after 12 months' functioning the profit is divided to the members on the basis of shares. The 2005 cycle saw return of 100.000 US from an initial share of 18.000. The union is currently negotiating with a newly established bank for deposit facilities.

The establishment of a local ECOBANK branches in Ganta provides both an opportunity and a challenge for the Credit Unions. It could provide better security for credit union deposits.

However, due to the high interest rates charged by the credit unions, one could expect that several of their members would switch to take advantage of the services of the bank once it begins full operation and starts offering credit facilities to clients.

6.5 Nimba Findings & Recommendations:

- In Nimba cross-border trade is of outmost importance, but there is still an unexplored potential for further economic growth and development, which could be unleashed through liberalising the cross-border trade, establishing bilateral trade agreements and confronting the harassment traders face at border areas by government officials. The latter is a grey-zone that needs urgent attention and implementation of fair and good governance regulations; without doubt, the arbitrary collection of money from traders passing through curtails the level of economic activity possible in the area.
- The availability of skills training opportunities in Ganta has attracted many students from other rural areas of Liberia. Several of the interviewees are planning to remain in Ganta after completion of the training, depending on their employment prospects.
- The mining industry in Nimba is slowly picking up and the agreement between the Government of Liberia and Mitta Steel will provide employment within the Yekepa area. Mining has a ‘multiplier effect’ in that it creates direct as well as indirect jobs. For local youths to be able to access these jobs, the development of skills in relevant areas such as trained mechanics, plumbers, upholsters, and electricians must be actively stimulated and encouraged.
- With the rapid population increase in Ganta the demand for service providers rises. The need for trailers, mechanics, blacksmiths, carpenters, cosmetologists and others has become a serious concern, providing great opportunities for those with marketable skills.

7. MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The most important information collected in this study can be summarized in the following:

Education is highly valued by youth and pursued when financially possible, but does not automatically lead to employment. Tuition fees remain the most significant factor preventing young people from finishing their education. Certain frustration is visible when primary or secondary education does not lead to employment. Vocational and business skills training should become part of high-school curricula in order to equip graduates with some basic marketable skills.

Students lack focus and concrete ideas when it comes to thinking about their future. The lack of information and awareness regarding opportunities for further education and job market situations is striking and urgently needs to be addressed.

The provision of business and management skills is at least as important as technical training. Upon completion of skills training, trainees are often provided with tools and starting capital. This is a one-time offer and the development of the business is dependent on the trainee's basic investment and business management skills. Experiences with collective business cooperatives reveal that responsible and accountable leadership is the most important factor for success.

Presently, the skills training available to youth, provided mainly by donors and NGOs, is not based on actual market demands. Livelihood programs generally follow one of two approaches: some allow participants to choose from a range of options, while others guide participants into certain professional fields according to potential demands. Each model has its benefits and drawbacks. The efforts of international and national NGOs to adjust training curricula to the demands and interest of the community and the students is commendable, however, more focus on current and future market demand is necessary. This should be coupled with awareness raising and job counselling to encourage male and female youth to train in non-traditional skills.

In the absence of formal skills training institutions, most young people rely on traditional skills training through apprenticeships for their technical education. Pending the reconstruction of formal technical training institutions, these already existing structures need to be supported and further expanded. Micro-businesses with the capacity to provide apprenticeships to young people need to be identified, assisted and monitored.

Youth demonstrate great creativity and perseverance in managing their daily life and generating income to sustain themselves. Irrespective of education and skills training provision, youth find employment in three main areas: (1) self-employed in the informal sector, (2) casual workers, and (3) apprentice/cadet/vacation worker. Young people are employed as casual workers in mining, rubber, farming, tailor shops, garages, welding shops, factory hands, carpenter shops etc.

Liberia's returnee population is highly diverse. In many instances, refugees and IDPs have received schooling and skills training in the camps. In other cases, refugees have had to rely on their own initiatives and entrepreneurial skills in order to sustain themselves during displacement. It is important that these experiences and the skills acquired during the conflict years are recognised and turned into a productive source of livelihood.

The following recommendations were developed in response to the findings of this study:

At the individual level

- Things are changing at a fast pace in post-conflict Liberia and counselling sessions for young people in the form of information brigades at high schools or learning cycles in the communities could support youngsters in making informed decisions about their future. There is a need for disseminating information on available options in the locality and in other parts of the country relating to further studies at college level, vocational training and self employment, as well as opportunities for financial support, scholarships or study options after working hours.
- In order to increase young people's interest in agricultural activities the sector must be developed such that it is able to generate income beyond the mere subsistence level. This would require small level mechanization – for example through cooperatives acquiring a tractor or a mill - and training of young people in middle level modern farming techniques for cash-crop production.
- Male and female youth follow traditional gender patterns when choosing skills. Advocacy and incentives are needed to encourage youth to follow non-traditional career paths, for example by encouraging young women to train in technical trades. At the same time, the Ministry of Labour and ILO must make an effort to ensure the protection of women in the workplace, including the promotion of childcare facilities.

At the community level

- Pending the establishment of vocational training institutions, traditional skills training in the form of apprenticeships provided by micro-enterprises is the way forward. Existing apprenticeship schemes should be identified and supported, and additional small enterprises encouraged and assisted in taking on apprentices. In the longer term, the ILO may wish to support Ministry of Education in ensuring quality training by developing minimum standards for training relating to both theory and technical skills, accrediting qualified 'master trainers', and ensuring adequate working conditions.
- It is important to take advantage of the knowledge and qualifications of the older generation within each community. Traditional trades and crafts should be re-vitalized and passed on to the younger generations, and where appropriate, 'forgotten' trades and crafts should be re-introduced. Through small incentives and support, 'master trainers' should be supported to carry on accessible, low-cost training for youth within their communities. This is particularly relevant and important for geographically remote communities where active outreach to the youth that finds few other opportunities for productive employment is critical.
- In addition hereto new skills and trades of relevance to future market demand should be introduced in the communities. Donors and NGOs should focus their work on raising awareness within the communities of the forecasted growth industries and occupations (such as electricians, plumbers, electronics repair, skilled construction, and business/accounting skills) and developing training related to these fields. This process needs to be informed by what skills are sufficiently demanded in the market and the current supply of workers in those occupations.

- Projects implemented at the community level by donors and NGOs should include a cross-generational focus and secure that young people are included among the project beneficiaries.
- Due to the diverse needs of young people, projects that target them should foster linkages among sectors such as labour, education and health. Linkages and complementarities not necessarily occur at the level of national institutions, but can be effective at the community level.
- UNDP/ILO should evaluate the possibilities for the increased involvement of the private sector in youth employment issues.

At the national level

- For the Government of Liberia and international donors, reinforcing the policy on free primary education and substantially reducing or supplementing the high cost of secondary education in both public and private institutions will be important investments in the human resource development of youth.
- Support the decentralization plan of the University of Liberia and other higher institutions of learning. One concrete step would be to establish regional Universities across the Country. For example, rehabilitating the W. V. S. Tubman College in Maryland and upgrading it to a full degree granting institutions could service the post-secondary education aspiration of students in the South-eastern Counties of Grand Kru, River Gee, and Grand Gedeh.
- Revise the curriculum to include vocational training for those in the senior division (10-12 grade). This could provide young people graduating from high school some minimum skill for entry into the job market and also give them some career focus.
- Develop and enact the National Youth Policy and a budget mechanism to allow operationalisation of youth-targeted programmes. Although the issue of youth and employment has received increasing attention and is reflected in major policy documents concerning Liberia, treating youth as a cross-cutting issue has failed in practice to lead to any tangible results. Rather than estimating the impact that specific policy intervention can have on young people, policies that target youth directly have to be implemented. This can be achieved through the institution of quotas and measurable benchmarks, or through the implementation of a systematic and well-formulated youth policy or youth employment strategy. Examples include instituting ‘employment creation for youth’ as a major component of the UNDP’s Community Based Recovery Programme (CBR); establishing a trust fund for youth initiatives, instituting quotas and benchmarks concerning the recruitment of youth in national public works programmes.
- The participation of youth groups in the formulation and implementation of policies such as the LEEP is critical in order to confront the feelings of marginalization amongst young leaders. The failure to involve young people in the policy process undermines both the spirit of the National Youth Policy and the Youth Employment Network (YEN). Job creation is not only about announcing the availability of jobs but ensuring that young people, who make up a bulk of the working force, benefit from such availability of jobs.

- Public work schemes and infrastructure rehabilitation projects are promising sectors for employing young people. It is of paramount importance to create a strong skills training component related to these sectors.

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Annex 1. Terms of Reference

Study on Employment Opportunities and Working Conditions of Rural Youth

Introduction

This study aims to explore the employment patterns and opportunities of rural and peri-urban youth in Liberia. In particular, it hopes to shed light on the nature and dynamics of the social networks, mobility patterns and livelihood strategies in which young Liberians in rural areas find themselves today.

Liberia represents a special situation of a country that has been in crisis for over twenty years. Any interventions thereafter cannot neglect to take account of the local dynamics of violence and resource mobilization generated by prolonged armed conflict. It is equally important to investigate domestic and international migratory patterns and labour mobility in order to fully understand the factors that influence the prospects of young people's economic reintegration and employment opportunities.

Young people's economic activities are analysed in this study from a livelihoods approach, which implies studying the way people live, the meaning they attach to their way of life and why and how this way of life changes in an environment where violence and poverty have become entrenched as a result of armed conflict and chronic political instability. Thus the analysis will take into account employment in a livelihood framework in a post-conflict situation, and investigate how the post-war experience has changed and shaped the economic prospects and opportunities of rural and peri-urban youth.

To explore these dimensions, the project will address the constraints and opportunities of reintegration and undertake an assessment of the dynamics of the socio-economic pull of Monrovia and other urban centres. It will also analyse the differences and similarities of rural and urban contexts in terms of employment, livelihood mobility and community interaction. The project will culminate in the formulation of concrete recommendations towards creating sustainable employment in rural and quasi-urban areas.

Objectives

1. To provide a preliminary assessment of rural employment opportunities for young people.
2. To understand the structure of rural youth employment in terms of employment classification, education/skills level, access to finance and access to market.
3. To gain an insight into experiences, perceptions, needs and aspirations of young people, reasons for choosing to train for and perform particular jobs, experiences with and perceptions of job creation initiatives and possibly, suggestions for impact-effective programmes.
4. To identify the information gaps regarding rural youth employment and to propose how they can be addressed.
5. To investigate trends and tendencies in migration, including rural-urban migration.
6. To recommend rural youth employment interventions

Task Description

The External Collaborator, in collaboration with a youth employment focal point and an expert consultant on employment, will perform for the ILO the work described in detail below, in accordance with the specifications and within the time limits set out. The study will be further supported and supervised by the ILO youth specialist.

Methodology

The project's methodology depends on several data collecting techniques and targets a cross-section of Liberian youth, including women, ex-combatants, disabled, returnees, displaced persons, school-leavers.

Phase 1: Desk-review of Key Documents and Meetings with Key Stakeholders

Undertake qualitative interviews with representatives from the following organisations, with the aim of making a preliminary assessment of the status and situation of rural youth and their employment opportunities. These interviews will be sources of information about existing or upcoming initiatives to improve the situation of rural youth:

- Ministries
- Trade Unions
- Employers
- NGOs
- Youth Employment Agencies or similar institutions
- UN Agencies and donors
- Agencies that support young entrepreneurs
- Microfinance institutions (MFIs)

Produce a *concept note* which will be presented to an Advisory Group comprising of the President of the University of Liberia, the Director of the Institute of Population Studies, the Vice-President of Liberia, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, and representatives from FAO, ILO, UNDP.

Establish contact to rural youth groups and rural associations in the areas where the research will be conducted in Phase 2.

Phase 2: Field Research and Data Collection

On the basis of the insights gained during the previous phase, a survey questionnaire will be developed. The data will be entered into a database and analysed in SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists).

Conduct ten focus groups, involving no more than 7 persons and 20 qualitative interviews per region. The ethnographic research approach consists of open-ended, semi-structured and focused interviews with a cross-section of rural and peri-urban youth. The interviews should be framed by a general questionnaire adjusted to the profile of individual interviewees according to their status of employment, location (rural or urban youth), gender, disability, education and skills level etc.

The target group is young people from a variety of backgrounds between the ages of 15 and 24.

The research will be undertaken in the following counties:

- 1) Maryland, 2) Lofa, and 3) Nimba

Phase 3: Data Analysis and Report

The data will be analysed and the write up of the project report will take place. Conclude the report with specific recommendations on possible interventions and priority areas that can improve access to rural youth employment. Indicate ways how partnerships can be established between the various players in the rural areas. It is expected that the consultants will produce a report to be 35 to 50 pages long and will be provided in electronic format in Work in English. It is envisaged that the study will be undertaken in a period of 8 weeks.

Annex 2. List of Meetings

People met during the mission

Action Aid	Ernest Kromah Gaie
Bankers Association, CEO IBL	Thomas Jeffrey
Cavalla Rubbder Plantation	Matthew Jaye
CAP Harper	Victor Smith, Charlesetta Garnett, Evon N. Wilson
Chamber of Commerce	Emmet Gooding
Community and Human Development Agency (COHDA) Voinjama	Lorpu T-Korboi
Custom Official Liberia/Guinea border	Prince Gbeinsaye
Congress of Liberian Trade Union	
Danish Refugee Council-Project Officer- Harper	Rovina Geddeh
Development Superintendent Lofa County	Fofee S. Bemah
Development Superintendent Maryland County	Ophelia Draper
Economic Advisor to President	Lawrence Clark
FAO	Reda Lebtahi
Foya Youth Association	Eunice Fallah, Rebecca Tamba, Ester
Ganta Motorcycle Union	Eric Johnson, Dexter Tukpei
Ganta United Brothers Credit Union	Eric Johnson
IBIS Harper HQ	Ray
IRC Ganta	Amigos S. Moris
IRC/EOP - Monrovia	Zinnah Kamah
IRC/EOP - Monrovia	Zinnah Kamah
IRC Voinjama	Corynne Harvey
Klee Credit Union- Ganta	Jerry Klee
Lebanese Business Association	Tony Hutch
Liberian Opportunities Industrialisation Center Ganta	Horace Yansine
Liberian Produce Marketing Corporation	Nyah Mantein
Liberia Federation of Labour Unions- Secretary General	G. Isaac Williams
Mayor Harper	Regina Sampson
Methodist Mission Ganta	Rev. Herbert S. H. Zigbuo and John Sinclea
Ministry of Commerce and Industry	Abraham Saysay
Ministry of Education/Department of Vocational & Technical Ed.	Gorely L. Suah

Ministry of Labour	Minister Samuel Woods
Ministry of Labour	Dueh Boley
Ministry of youth and Sports	Jamesetta Wolokollie, Jeremiah Witherspoon, Sneh Johnson
National Investment Commission	Robertson
National Rubber Brokers Association-Maryland	Charles Cooper
Norewian Refugee Council	Monica Olsen
Rubber Planters Association	Ben Garnette, Edward Sangoodi
Rural Rehabilitation and Basic Skills Training (RRBST) Zorzor	S. Lawoubah Moore
SARA Harper	Nathaniel Collins, A.S. Meta
Superintendent, Lofa County	Galakpai Kortimai
Superintendent Maryland County	Kla Hodo Clark
Transition International	Irma Specht

Annex 3. Questionnaire

Enum ID: _____

Survey No: _____

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Q 1	[Respondent's Sex]	1. Male 2. Female
Q 2	How old are you? [Number of years]	_____ years
Q 3	Where were you born?	County / District _____ / _____ Village / Town _____
Q 4	Where were you living before the war began?	County / District _____ / _____ Village / Town _____
Q 5	Would you characterize yourself as one of the following:	1. <input type="checkbox"/> IDP / Returnee / Refugee 2. <input type="checkbox"/> War wounded / Handicapped 3. <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above
Q 6	Would you characterize yourself as one of the following:	1. <input type="checkbox"/> Household head 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Chief / Zoe /Community Leader 3. <input type="checkbox"/> None of the Above
Q 7	What is your marital status?	1. <input type="checkbox"/> Single, Never married 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Married, monogamous 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced / Separated 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Married, polygamous 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed
Q 8	What id your religion?	1. <input type="checkbox"/> None 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Christian 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Other [Specify]:
Q 9	What is your tribe?	_____ and also _____ [Enter maximum of 2 numbers from codebook] _____ [Other]
Q 10	Do you speak your tribe's language?	1. Yes (<input type="checkbox"/>) 2. No (<input type="checkbox"/>)
Q 11	What is your highest level of education? Class I-VI = Primary School Form I-VI = Secondary School	1. <input type="checkbox"/> No School 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Some University 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Completed University 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Skills / Vocational Technical 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Senior High
Q 12	Were any of your close relatives alive at the beginning of the war?	1. <input type="checkbox"/> Mother 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Father 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Guardian
Q 13	Did any of your close relatives die because of violence during the war?	1. <input type="checkbox"/> Mother 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Father 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Guardian 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Brothers / Sisters
EMPLOYMENT QUESTIONS		
Q	Did you do any work for pay	1. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes [Person is working. Go to Question 17]

14	over the past four weeks?	2. <input type="checkbox"/> No
Q15	You did not do any work for pay or profit over the past four weeks. Were you looking for work? Were you willing to work? (write details down)	1. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> [Go to Question 19, fill parenthesis # 4 Unemployed] 2. No <input type="checkbox"/>

Enum ID: _____ Survey No: _____

Q16	You did not work for pay or profit. Are you ...?	1. <input type="checkbox"/> Performing home duties [Go to Question 19, fill parenthesis 5 Home Duties] 2. <input type="checkbox"/> A Student [Go to Question 19, fill parenthesis 6 Student] 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Retired [Go to Question 19, fill parenthesis 7 Retired] 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Not looking for Work [Go to Question 19, fill parenthesis 8 Not Looking] 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Sick / Disabled [Go to Question 19, fill parenthesis 10 Sick / Disabled] 6. None of the Above [Go to Question 19, fill parenthesis 9 Other]
Q17	Who did you work for?	1. I worked for myself [Go to Question 18] 2. I worked for somebody else [Go to Question 19, fill parenthesis 2 Employee]
Q18	Have you work for yourself, did you ...	1. <input type="checkbox"/> Work by yourself [Go to Question 19, fill parenthesis 3 Self Employed] 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Employ somebody to work for you [Go to Question 19, fill parenthesis # 1 Employer]
Completed by Interviewer:		
Q19	1. <input type="checkbox"/> Employer 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Employee 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Home Duties 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Student 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Retired 8. <input type="checkbox"/> Not looking for work 9. <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know / Other 10. <input type="checkbox"/> Sick / Disabled	
OCCUPATION AND INCOME		
Q20	What kind of job do you do today?	1. <input type="checkbox"/> Home Duties 8. <input type="checkbox"/> Retired 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Farmer 9. <input type="checkbox"/> Other Professionals 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Rubber Taper 10. <input type="checkbox"/> Petty Trader 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Trades / Skilled person 11. <input type="checkbox"/> Large scale trader or Business person 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher 12. <input type="checkbox"/> Unskilled 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor / Engineer / Lawyer 13. <input type="checkbox"/> Other 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Student _____
Q21	How much money do you earn in one day?	_____ [Enter Income in Liberian Dollars] Standard Conversion is \$50LD = \$1US
Q22	How many people do you support with this money?	_____
Q23	Household information: Besides you, who else is working and how much do they make?	_____
Q24	On average, how many times do you eat per day?	1. <input type="checkbox"/> One 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Two 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Three or More

Q 25	How do you usually get the meal you eat per day? Only One	1. <input type="checkbox"/> I hunt / fish for it 2. <input type="checkbox"/> I trade for it 3. <input type="checkbox"/> I buy it	4. <input type="checkbox"/> It is given to me	
Q 26	How would you describe your living arrangements, the house you live in?	1. <input type="checkbox"/> I own my house 2. <input type="checkbox"/> I rent my house 3. <input type="checkbox"/> My family provides it	4. <input type="checkbox"/> A friend provides it 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Don't have a home 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	

Enum ID: _____ **Survey #:** _____

SOCIAL ASPECTS		
Q 27	You spend most of your money in... Only One]	1. <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Food 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Beverages 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
Q 28	Are your friends working? Explain Briefly	
Q 29	Where do you go to, if you have a problem? Explain Briefly	
Q30	What skills do you have? Explain briefly	

MOBILITY PATTERNS		
Q 31	Where were you living before the war began? (Write down details)	County / District _____ / _____ Village _____ / _____ Town Country _____
Q32	During the War? (Write in this space details)	County / District _____ / _____ Village _____ / _____ Town Country: _____
Q33	After the 2003 War? (Write in this space details)	County / District _____ / _____ Village _____ / _____ Town Country _____
Q 34	As for now- Have you thought about leaving this area?	3. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> [Go to Question 35] 4. No <input type="checkbox"/>
Q 35	Where?	1. <input type="checkbox"/> County capital 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Monrovia 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Neighbouring country

Q 36	Which factor has the greatest influence on your decision to move to another place	1. ()Employment opportunities 2. ()Access to Education and Training Opportunities 3. ()Family 5. ()Other

Annex 4. LEEP/LEAP Planned Interventions

▪ Key Initiative 1: Boosting Employment in Public Works Investments

Ministry of Public Works (Chair)

Interventions:

1. Labour intensive road rehabilitation projects throughout the country estimated to create 30,329 jobs over the next 6 months; Partners: UNDP, USAID, World Bank, European Commission, UNMIL RRR, ILO
2. Planning for a comprehensive National Public Works Programme using labour-based approaches for infrastructure upgrading and maintenance; Partners: ILO, UNMIL, UNDP and other development partners.

▪ Key Initiative 2: Skills Training

Ministry of Youth and Sports (Chair)

Planned Interventions:

1. Rehabilitation of vocational training institutions including Monrovia Vocational Training Centre (MCTV), the Youth Agricultural Training Centre, Clay Vocational Training Centre
2. Promotion of Youth Agro Business, Centre Songhai
3. Link MVTC graduates to ongoing public works projects and construction jobs
4. Rehabilitate the AITB for standardized training

▪ Key Initiative 3: Facilitating the Transition of the Informal Economy and Boosting the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Sectors

Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Chair)

Planned Interventions:

1. Liberian Entrepreneurial Development and Enterprise Empowerment Initiative
2. Otto Essein “Practical Laboratories” (Young Entrepreneur Leadership Development Program)
3. Support for the Informal Sector (Centre Songhai, Satellite Business Development Services, Support to women Marketers in Greater Monrovia area, Ganta and other counties, Support for employment initiative for handicapped and disabled persons)

With National Investment Commission:

Planned Interventions:

1. Funding of Agricultural Businesses (rubber farms, chicken, food crop production – projections are for three funded businesses which will employ approx. 60 persons)
2. Funding of Service Businesses (pit sawing, tie dyeing, ice making, restaurants - projections are for four funded businesses which will employ approx. 48 persons)
3. Funding of Manufacturing Businesses (soap production, coal production, ice cream processing) - projections are for three funded businesses which will employ approx. 30 persons)

With International Labour Organisation:

Planned Interventions:

1. Liberian Entrepreneurship production of coal/charcoal
2. Bensonville labour-based road rehabilitation

With Catholic Relief Services:

Planned Interventions:

1. Post Harvest Market – development of 300 resource centres for poor farmers (with Grassroots Development Agency and linkages foreseen with Centre Songhai)

With Mercy Corps:

Planned Interventions:

1. Turn Around Businesses of buying and selling rental businesses, targeting 34 communities during the next 12 months

With Ministry of Labour

Planned Interventions:

2. Pilot Playground Project
3. Restoring humanity and dignity to women hair braiders while rationalizing their trade in the informal sector (relocating 250 hair braiders from sidewalks to proper facilities, organising cooperatives, renovating facilities, saving and social security to 250 women)
4. Liberian Entrepreneurship – Production of Charcoal (sustainable employment for 1000 youth in Grand Bassa County)

With Ministry of Agriculture (also under Key Initiative 6 – Agriculture)

Planned Interventions:

1. Multiplication of Planting Materials (seeds and cuttings)
2. Peri-Urban Agriculture
3. Fabrication of Agricultural Tools
4. Rehabilitation of Rubber and Oil Palm Plantations
5. Development of Fish Ponds
6. Manufacture of Organic Fertilizers
7. Development of swamp lands to be used for crop production

With General Services Agency

Planned Interventions:

1. Empowering small scale construction and rehabilitation companies
2. Skilled Workforce Identification (Development of vocational workforce database for short-term employment)
3. Skilled capacity upgrading in the utilization of power tools
4. Unskilled workforce identification (short term employment)

With Ministry of Youth and Sport

Planned Interventions

1. Youth Empowerment including vocational and on-the-job training
2. Youth and Health initiative (STI, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancies)
3. Drug Abuse and Alcohol Intervention

4. Community Youth Literacy Programme (establishment of literacy centres and schools in various communities)