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Inside This Edition



GC Researches Liberia National Police Relationship with Civilians
MICAT holds Dialogue on Liberia's National Symbols and History
GC collaborates with CSOs on Decentralization advocacy Training

GC Researches Liberia National Police Relationship with Civilians

The Governance Commission, GC, has completed a research on the “United Nations Training of the Liberia National Police: Effectiveness, Results and Future Implications”, implemented by the United Nations Mission in Liberia, UNMIL. The research takes a microscopic look at the relationship between the Liberian National Police and civilians in post conflict Liberia. Key findings from the study disclose numerous contending issues that negatively impact public trust and integrity in the police; and interventions to help mitigate possible future problems.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed among the warring parties in Accra, Ghana, on August 18, 2003 called for its implementation to be led by the United Nations. Against this backdrop, the United Nations issued UN Security Council Resolution 1509 which established the **United Nation’s Mission in Liberia** (UNMIL) with the mandate to monitor the ceasefire agreement, provide national security protection, and implement security sector reforms including training and restructuring of the Liberian National Police (LNP).

The findings note several categorized internal and external challenges in UNMIL’s training program, suggesting that the training program has yielded mixed results and impacts on the effectiveness of police performance in Liberia. Adverse impacts, however, are not entirely training related but results also from the behavior of the Government of Liberia towards its police force.

Deficiencies in the UNMIL’s police training and reform interventions reflect a broader problem of shortcomings in various reform programs implemented by the UN and other international nongovernmental organizations in Liberia. The greater shortcomings in the implementation of reform programs are: (a) lack of strategic guidance for a long-term larger vision for a post-conflict society; and (b) lack of effective coordination amongst implementing agencies, and their failure to engage Liberians as stakeholders in designing and implementing reform programs.



Commissioner Yarsuo Weh-Dorliae

The study’s findings are categorized in three sections:

1. Recruitment
2. Training and
3. Effectiveness of Performance

1. Recruitment

According to the findings:

- UNMIL’s recruitment and vetting practices were not exhaustive as candidates were not investigated with due diligence regarding their character and previous human rights records. The procedures were not thorough and did not adhere to the standards applied in other UN police reform missions (2004-2007).

- UNMIL's failure to apply due diligence resulted in the admission into the program of known criminals and former combatants of warring factions who had committed human rights abuses during the civil war. Preference for quantity in recruitment of large numbers of candidates compromised quality in the context of establishing a sustainable long-term police force. (Target was training 3,500 officers by 2007).
- Psychological counseling was needed as part of the training package because the country was just emerging from 14 year civil conflict which traumatized the nation. Former combatants, criminals, and individuals with questionable character had found their way into the rank-and-file of the new police force and some had become supervisors.

UNMIL's shortcomings

- The admission of individuals who had committed human rights abuses was partly responsible for the citizens' lack of trust, and confidence in the new police to bear arms and integrity of the police as an instrument for peace-building, given that some of the UNMIL trained officers were found to be involved in various crimes, such as armed robberies and drug smuggling around the country; and
- UNMIL's decision to deactivate and disband the entire old LNP and to build an entirely new one was contrary to international police reform standards, and resulted in the lack of institutional memory and the absence of experienced police leadership.

Government's shortcomings

From the perspective of the government, qualitative findings show that:

- The Liberian government failed to provide adequate resource support to complement UNMIL's training due to its weak commitment; and did not put itself in the position to take ownership and provide much needed leadership and direction;
- Had government committed to taking responsibility and ownership of the training program, it would have been able to insist on country-specific training and orientation of the LNP.

2. Training

UNMIL Perspective:

- Correlations and regression used to test the hypotheses show a moderately significant correlation between police perceived knowledge and skills gained during UNMIL training and the job effectiveness perceived by them. In other words, the police job performance is the result of the training acquired, and effected some relative changes to the maintenance of law and order. However, as an inverse relationship, as knowledge gained increases, job performance changed in manner or direction.
- The implication is that as more resources were used in training the police, limited resources were allocated to facilitate their job performance;

- Diversity of trainers from contrasting policing jurisdictions compromised training effectiveness and produced an outcome that lacked a country-specific context for Liberia. (training, organization, structure, and rank nomenclatures); and
- The LNP was not trained under a uniform criminal justice system and tradition. Liberia is a common law country with a criminal justice system and a policing tradition specifically patterned after that of the United States.

Government's Perspective:

The Government of Liberia did not take ownership of the training program and did not provide needed resource support to complement UNMIL's training. Equipment and Resources were complementary to UNMIL's training and necessary to ensure effectiveness of performance.

3. Effectiveness of Performance

✚ The police job performance is the result of the training acquired, and effected some relative changes to the maintenance of law and order. However, as an inverse relationship, as knowledge gained increases, job performance changed in manner or direction.



Cross session of members of security institutions

✚ Civil society does not believe that the LNP was capable to maintain law and order after UNMIL leaves Liberia. Police and civil society agreed that police lacks the capacity to respond effectively and timely to crimes. They linked these to the need for sustained resource support from government and additional training. This significant relationship further implies that police effectiveness would be higher if their capacity regarding logistics and materials for job performance were adequately provided.

✚ The LNP remains state-centric and not people-centric. The reform intervention did not address political interference in policing operations and therefore the need to depoliticize the police; and

✚ UNMIL training had no impact on integrity in the exercise of police authority. Police and civil society linked the lack of integrity within the LNP to factors such as poor salary, and benefits such as housing, transportation, medical care, and pension programs for officers.

According to the study, international police reform assistance has become an integral component of post-conflict peacekeeping and state building operations of the United Nations. The overarching goal is to support sustainable state-building and democratic governance. Since 1990s, the UN has increasingly been mandated to maintain international security by involvement in international security sector reforms through police training in countries transitioning from conflict to democracies with emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law.

It can be recalled that Liberia in December of 1999, was plunged into a bloody civil war which lasted fourteen (14) years, leaving the country devastated, a death toll put at more than 200,000, and hundreds of thousands more made either internally or externally displaced, becoming a nation inflicted with untold human suffering, military/police brutality, and cases of genocide. Policing issues revolving around inadequate response, political suppression, and abuse of human rights before and during the civil war were also central to the dynamics of the Liberian conflict.

Study's Recommendations:

- a. The Liberian Government and UNMIL must collaborate to professionalize, depoliticize and restructure the LNP as a semi-autonomous service institution; and to situate the police in its common law criminal justice system with organization, structure, and rank nomenclatures harmonized with its policing tradition. A functioning professional police service will reduce the risk of conflict and make society safer by providing security for all, and creating the enabling environment for investment, sustainable economic development, enhance state authority, and strengthen Liberia's semi-fragile democracy.
- b. Liberian government in collaboration with the Civil Service Agency should establish a pay and grade system base on position classification that begins with police entry-level officers, and benefits graduated over time period. Housing, medical care, education for dependents and other benefits must be legislated.



Partial view of government officials at security dialogue

The report notes that Liberia is a common law country with a criminal justice system, and a policing tradition patterned after that of the United States of America. Policing in Liberia is based on that particular context and history, which should have been the basis upon which UNMIL's police training, was conducted. Therefore, future UN police training missions must be guided by the general standard of a strong partnership and collaboration to integrate, rehabilitate and strengthen what is found on the ground in the host country. UN should also collaborate with local counterparts to reform national institutions to place it in synch with contemporary international policing principles and standards. As far as practicable, trainers must be recruited from countries whose policing traditions and jurisdictions are the same or similar to that of the host country.

MICAT holds Dialogue on Liberia's National Symbols and History

As you may already know, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf recently turned over the National Symbols Review Project (NSRP, a Liberian Government project) to the Ministry of Information Culture and Tourism, MICAT. The project was previously hosted by the Governance



Vice Chair Elizabeth Mulbah & Minister Lewis Brown

Commission. The reason behind the relevance of this national initiative is based on vocal and thoughtful expressions of Liberians about our national symbols and the need for review. Many have debated that our national symbols should help address the burning issues of national unity, reconciliation and identity.

To jumpstart the active discussions, Information Minister Lewis Brown, on September 10, 2015, held a one day dialogue at his Ministry, inviting Governance Commission's Vice Chair Elizabeth Mulbah, Presidential Advisor Ambassador George W. Wallace, and Dr. Joseph Saye Guannu to serve as panelists. Commissioner Mulbah spoke on the topic "**National Conversation on Liberia's National Honors of Merits and Distinction**", Ambassador Wallace spoke on "A symbol, whom it should be given to, and for what reason it should be conferred", while Professor Guannu talked generally on "Liberia's history and national symbols".

Minister Brown noted that Liberia has a complex history which needs to be rewritten, and a number of cultural artifacts and symbols that mean different things to different people reviewed. This, he said, necessitated the need for the national conversation.

"Our action today is in support of effort to re-examine our existing Symbols and meanings to promote unity, a common identity and patrimony. We have a long and complex history that needs to be rewritten to find a rallying point to cultivate a true sense of patriotism collectively, prioritize collection of cultural artifacts, and identification and rehabilitation of historical sites".

It can be recalled that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf constituted the National Symbols Review Project (NSRP) in 2012 appointing Dr. Elwood Dunn to head the process, a process which led to a series of activities to comprehensively review Liberia's current national symbols and make the necessary recommendations to enhance unity and national identity. A major outcome of this effort is the involvement of local people in determining the significance of our present symbols and their active participation in recommendations for change.

Governance Commission Vice Chair Elizabeth Mulbah pointed out that as the nation grapples with what she referred to as a "crisis of identity", more explanations around the true meanings of Liberia's national symbols should be prioritized, cultural artifacts interpreted and respected, and history harmonized to promote unity.



Vice Chair Elizabeth Mulbah

"The reality of a cultural mosaic or the idea of our being heirs to a triple heritage (African, Islamic/Christendom and Western civilization) seems to escape us. Knowledge of our history and founding ideals remain areas of immense contestation. After almost two centuries of political

independence, we have yet to establish whether we are a nation based on a set of ideas or one based on a federation of ethnicities such as Sao Bosso's Kwando of the 19th Century. As we are all aware, a nation founded on idea renews itself periodically absorbing new cultures and new peoples or reinterpreting old cultures. A nation founded on ethnic federalism perpetuates itself by the facts of birth. Ours is to truly reflect on who we are and make the necessary adjustments in the onward march for a country united with one common goal, that of making Liberia a better place for all, regardless of the origin of your migration to this shore".

The national conversation on Liberian identity is expected to affirm the belief that what unites is far greater than what divides us as a people. It is common place in Liberia to observe the key role ethnicity plays in our social interactions but such role in itself enhances division among the people. Some have argued the influence of ethnicity around the formation of political parties drawing membership/hierarchy from ethnicity of the **Party's standard bearer or founder**, language and/or tradition of the people from a particular region of Liberia. Commissioner Mulbah therefore emphasizes the need for Liberians to transcend ethnic or group absorption.

*"A sense of national identity is necessary to enable individual Liberians transcend self or ethnic group absorption and commit to the common good. Without it, Liberia can neither reconcile nor can it genuinely pursue the lofty goals of Vision 2030 as expressed in the Vision Statement or slogan, **"One people, one nation united for Peace and Sustainable Development"**.*

According to Commissioner Mulbah, the current existing national orders though they mean well, are not understood by many people including some of the people who have justly received them, and that this in itself could be because they do not speak to the culture of the time, place and person. The symbols are unknown and therefore the need to bring additional cultural context to the national Orders to increase the level of appreciation.

*"In conclusion, the task at hand is the review of our cultural symbols as they resonate within the various tribal and ethnic groups in the nation. These symbols, when thoroughly reviewed and incorporated **either** in the present Orders of Merit and Distinction (may help to reduce the discontentment among the citizenry)**or** if more engagements are done, another Order of Merit and Distinction can be introduced to exclusively address the marginalization of a group of people in the national recognition process as stated above."*

For his part, **Ambassador George Wallace** elaborated on **the origins of Liberia's Symbol or Order of Distinction** linking them to the Spanish siege or Grand Cross in the Knighthood of Isabella Estella awarded Liberia's then President, Anthony W. Gardner in 1879.

*"The President decided to emulate the good example and so adapted the concept to institute an order of symbol in Liberia which he referred to as **the Humane Honor of African Redemption** with wording **"to Christianize our neighbor to make them good citizen"**. Also in that order is the knighthood with its equivalent in European style and order as the **Knight Great Band, the Grand Cross, the Knight Grand Commander, Knight Commander, Knight Official and the Chevalier"**.*

According to Ambassador Wallace, the second order was **the Star of Africa** initiated by Charles Dumber Burgees King 1920– **Grand Band (Siege)**. Others he initiated include **Grand Commander, Commander, Official and Chevalier** in descending order.



Ambassador George Wallace

*“President King instituted another order of medal for Civil Servants in the category of **Gold, Silver and Bronze medals** for their hard work and long service in government and to the state”*

In those days, the name of the nominee would come from the various government ministries to the Civil Service Agency, and then forwarded to the grand chancellor (Minister of Foreign Affairs). He/she is the keeper of the Seal and Scroll for all these honors. Honorees are then recorded in categories in a record book from a personnel form called **Chancery Order** filed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ambassador Wallace added that **Distinguish Service Honor** was instituted by President Arthur Barclay in 1910. This honor was originally meant for the military or servicemen who fought the Camp Johnson battle, an army mutiny organize by European (British) in an attempt to topple power and control the state. Camp Johnson was named after President Hilary R W Johnson.

President Tubman, in the same vain, initiated the “Venerable Knighthood of the Pioneer” (in 1955) through an act of the national Legislature, to honor the memory of the pioneers for declaring Liberia an independent country, and introducing modern governance. Ambassador Wallace recommended that “the Ministry of Information encourage artists to look at our local symbol and design symbols that we can vet and modify for use in our new Symbols project”.

Professor Saye Guanue -Director of Peace and conflict resolution/CUC

Dr. Guannu emphasized the importance for Liberians to know their history. According to him, if we knew our history the national conversation on Liberia’s symbol and history review would be unnecessary.

“I therefore want to encourage all of us, the political society and individuals and civil society to rewrite our history so that it can be comprehensive as well as complete or objective. Our history is not all that objective and it’s not all that complete.”

Liberia’s history as is right now reports events that many historians find contradictory and have therefore recommended the need for review and harmonization. Dr. Guannu provided several examples of such contradictions.

*“The pennies are referred to as **Lorma money** or **Liberia iron money** but if you read the history correctly and not outside down you will know that this is known as the **Kissi penny**, from **Kissi country** which later went to **Sierra Leone** and then to **Guinea**, so it was used in the three countries. Also in **Lofa**, there is a slogan that we misunderstand that says “**It is from Gourd to man**”. The **Gourd** there is not **God** but rather **Gourd**, meaning “**the palm wine there is from the drinking table**”.*

Dr. Guannu also noted the need for the re-visitation of Liberia's numerous Orders of Distinction with the aim of maintaining those still relevant to the people of Liberia but discarding those that



Dr. Joseph Saye Guannu

denote disunity or irrelevant to our nationhood. He cited as an example - the "Humane Order of African Redemption" which, he pointed out, is not a symbol that promotes unity, but rather one that is divisive in meaning.

The "Humane Order of African Redemption" was instituted in 1879, and was, at that time, conferred upon anyone who had contributed immensely to the civilization and evangelization of the natives in and around Liberia.

According to Dr. Guannu, if we as a people are trying to unite or build a united nation this Order is no longer necessary, logical or friendly.

"On the issue of the Seal, "the love of liberty brought us here" should be the first thing that should go. How it will be replaced - I don't know but it does not unite us and it is historically faulty. Take a closer look at the wording; the "US" stands for whom? It is not the people of Masabolahum or Gbarnga. It referred to our brothers and sisters that came on the ship from America. The man from Sesebolahum can't say that "the love of liberty brought him here or met him here". So we need to look into that and correct it. Because we don't know our history, off course, we make many mistakes in our life."

The university professor also noted the need to recover historical sites and preserve them, adding that they too are symbols and rallying points with special importance to the Liberian people. Dr. Guannu recommended a review of Liberia's culture and the need to produce Orders like what he calls "the **Order of the Mask**" to deal with the recognition of **"tribal cultural practices in our value system"**, renaming **the country devil as "the Poro Master"** since in fact it was wrongly named as a result of the lack of understanding of our culture system. There can be a national order - **"Order of the Poro Master"** in recognition of its important in traditional communities.

Dr. Guannu ended with a word of caution saying **"A country that does not know its past will not know where it is, and where it is going"**.

In his introductory remarks earlier, Information Minister Lewis Brown noted the historicity of Orders of Distinction worldwide dating as far back to the 13th Century. Minister Brown explained that honors of Distinction were developed from and amongst the European noble class for the general public for services rendered to the state and humanity, and executed as the highest honor in France. This gesture, overtime time, has become a globally acknowledged system for honoring those that have performed with distinction, all kinds of services or contributed to all types of courses, at home or abroad, to save humanity/planet Earth.

"No one is ever honored for what they receive but rather for what they give".

GC collaborates with CSO on Decentralization advocacy Training

The Governance Commission in collaboration with the National Civil Society Secretariat has completed the second of three regional base capacity building workshops for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) covering the fifteen counties. The first was held in Zwedru Grand Gedeh earlier this year. **The workshops emphasize “the Role of Civil Society in the Decentralization Process: *Engaging the Policy***



Group leaders during presentation

***Process”* and local government development.**

Specific objectives of the training were:

- To highlight expected role of CSOs on women and youths involvement in the decentralization process;
- To help Civil Society advocates (women and youth groups) comprehend the gradual transfer of services that would expand their knowledge on benefits of the process;
- To strengthen the capacity of Civil Society groups to actively engage in the advocacy of Liberia’s Decentralization.

Speaking at the opening of the second Regional workshop held in Gbarnga, Bong County, GC Vice Chair Mrs. Elizabeth Mulbah emphasized the importance of the decentralization process and its impact on local communities. Liberia has explored centralized governance for nearly two centuries with limited results as it relates to people participation in governance, access to basic public facilities and services, and development. Commissioner Mulbah noted that decentralization has the propensity to assure that rural dwellers become better decision makers and stakeholders in nation building.

According to the Commissioner, when the Local Government Act, LGA, (otherwise referred to as decentralization) is passed into law, local governance/local political power will then be in the hands of their “local county councils” with the consent of their people as envisage in the **National VISION 2030**. Mrs. Mulbah then challenged all participants that history was in the making and that every Liberian should serve as an ambassador for change.

Mr. Alex Mulbah, Sr. is Special Assistant to Bong County Superintendent Selina Polson Mappy, Hon. Mulbah welcomed the workshop’s organizers and participants, noting that the training program was timely and will both civil society organizations and local government officials in a

better position to drive the decentralization process in local communities. He urged participants to make the most of the training.

Ms. Frances Greaves, Chairperson of National Civil Society Council of Liberia (NCSCCL) commended the Governance Commission for its tireless efforts toward engaging civil society organizations and enhancing their participation in the decentralization process. She observed that until recently, citizens had limited involvement in the decision making process of Liberia.

Governance Commission a partner of Civil Society Organizations and has continued to ensure that there is a shift toward greater CSO/citizen participation in decisions that govern our society.



Participants doing group work

The workshop's presentation among other topics covered:

1. Overview of Decentralization Reforms in Liberia.
2. Subsidiarity.
3. Political Decentralization
4. Fiscal Decentralization
5. Administrative Decentralization
6. Decentralization and its benefits
7. The role of civil society organizations in the decentralization process

Participants included representatives from civil society organizations from Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Margibi and Rivercess counties. The third and final of the three workshops will be held in later Bomi County.