

# USAID/OTI Liberia Field Report

April - June 2006

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## Program Description

The Liberia Transition Initiative (LTI) advances prospects for an inclusive, peaceful, political transition in Liberia in the context of the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Accord. By increasing public understanding of key political transition issues and promoting participatory community reintegration and peaceful resolution of conflict, LTI is helping to build the momentum for peace in Liberia through:

- Running the Youth Education for Life Skills (YES) program, a community-focused reintegration activity with the goal of enhancing peace through non-formal education. YES helps youth, one of the largest and most war-affected populations of Liberia, become productive members of their communities.
- Linking the YES program with small grants through a participatory process that reinforces community cohesion, assists in reconstruction and rural development, and facilitates youth leadership development.
- Awarding small grants to national organizations in the fields of justice, media, conflict management, good governance, and human rights.
- Giving technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and USAID/Liberia's Accelerated Learning Program (ALP).

Creative Associates International Inc. implements the LTI program of small grants and technical assistance, while Mercy Corps and a consortium of World Vision, Action Aid and Search for Common Ground implement the YES program.

## Country Situation

**Government Resolve** – In response to unruly demonstrations by former government soldiers, the Government of Liberia (GOL) suspended the payments of retirement and related benefits until the soldiers were amenable to peaceful discussions. Similarly, pursuant to its commitment to tackle corruption, the GOL has dismissed a number of senior officials for financial improprieties. And, in a move that has been sharply criticized, the GOL destroyed market stalls that were built in public streets, forcibly removing vendors without a well-conceived plan for their relocation. Following ethnic clashes in Nimba County, a presidential commission was appointed to investigate the incidences and a major conference was held on the matter.

**Emergency Electricity Plan Announced** – The Governments of Liberia, the United States and Ghana, along with the European Commission, have launched an initiative to provide limited electrical power to the John F. Kennedy Hospital and selected areas of Monrovia by July 26, Liberia's independence day. The provision of electricity is a key priority for the GOL and its ability to deliver on this promise will buy domestic political capital.

**Charles Taylor at the Hague** – Following approval by the UN Security Council, former president, Charles Taylor, was transferred to the International Criminal Court in the Hague where he will stand trial for war crimes. He will be tried under the auspices of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The United Kingdom has agreed to imprison Taylor if he is found guilty, a key condition that paved the way for Taylor's transfer from Sierra Leone.

**Sanctions Eased** – The UN Security Council voted to lift sanctions on Liberian timber, with a follow up review in 90 days. The GOL immediately imposed a ban on the export of timber until further forestry reforms are put into place. The Security Council continued the sanctions on diamonds for an additional six months but lifted the ban on arms so that the new army and police can be appropriately equipped.

## USAID/OTI Highlights

### A. Narrative Summary

Over the past three months, significant effort and resources have been devoted to assisting communities to complete small projects that are funded through the Youth Education for Life Skills program. Approximately 155 projects which range from the construction of multi-purpose halls, wells, rice and cassava mills, to training in small animal husbandry, have been completed. YES participants and other community members contributed unskilled labor and in some instances, locally available materials.



Teachers listening to ALP radio broadcast.

In furtherance of support for the USAID-funded Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), OTI launched *Let's Learn Together - An ALP Professional Forum*, a 30 minute radio program that's aired twice a week in four cities in Nimba County. The program improves the skills of teachers by offering them the opportunity to listen to examples of new teaching techniques and expert commentary from master teacher trainers. Teachers then discuss in a

group how to apply the new methods and content in their own classrooms. ALP utilizes innovative learning techniques to condense six years of basic primary education into three years for over-age students who have missed formal schooling. The USAID-funded program targets approximately 100,000 young people.

### B. Grant Activity Summary

FOCUS AREA	New Grants in this Quarter		Total Committed	
	Grants	Amount (\$)	Grants	Amount (\$)
Civil Society Org. Support	5	\$126,582	21	\$ 372,004
Community Impact Activities			389	\$3,796,257
Conflict Management	11	\$368,123	39	\$1,029,747
Election Process	1	\$ 29,314	17	\$ 402,942
Justice/Human Right			18	\$ 430,122
Media	1	\$ 59,710	15	\$ 409,268
Good Governance	3	\$347,329	41	\$1,375,602

Reintegration			2	\$ 16,642
<b>Totals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>\$931,058</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>\$7,832,584</b>

### C. Indicator of Success

**Speed** – The sheer number of small community projects – more than 300, some in remote areas – has presented enormous logistical challenges. Even with improved procurement and delivery systems to improve efficiency, implementation still requires time and thus, speed remains a moving goal post with respect to YES community grants.

**Re-targeting/Flexibility** – Youth are a significant force in the democratization and development processes of Liberia. OTI has, therefore, made a strategic programmatic approach to engage young people. In addition to LTI approaches and partnered-activities, short term technical assistance is being provided to the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The goal is to develop a strategic agenda which will mainstream youth programming in all GOL development activities. Additionally, it is envisioned that this assistance will provide youth with opportunities to gain marketable skills. To further support youth workforce development, consultants plan to re-vamp the Agricultural and Industrial Training Board so that appropriate trade standards can be set for training and certification.

OTI continues to provide technical assistance to the GOL, supporting the new government's strategic imperative to deliver on its promises as well as managing heightened expectations, particularly by youth. Consultants have been made available to assist the Office of the President in communicating GOL priorities, progress and challenges to the general public. This effort has been supplemented by grants, enabling the state-run media service to provide more public service broadcasting, expand the coverage of community radio and equip the presidency with suitable space for press briefings and other media events. Assistance is also being provided to improve the efficiency of the Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs.

Implementing partners of CYPEP, the abbreviated urban version of the YES program, have begun the third cycle of training in Yekepa, Zwedru, Saclepea, Voinjama, all border towns with large numbers of youth, ex-combatants and ethnic groups, spanning the frontiers with neighboring Guinea, and Cote d'Ivoire. Engaging youth in these strategic areas will provide avenues for OTI cross-border activities that begin to address the youth challenges of stability, security and economic growth.

**Resource Leveraging** – Plans are under way to hand over the Accelerated Learning Program to USAID/Liberia. In addition to the basic education component, funds have been committed to expand ALP to include elements of the life skills training previously provided via the YES and CYPEP programs. Community participation in school beautification and rehabilitation will complete the expanded USAID-funded ALP program over the next three years.

Through a grant to the Ministries of Commerce, Youth and Sports and Agriculture, OTI is assisting the GOL in resource mobilization for establishing a youth-focused agri-business center modeled after the Songhai Project in Benin. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have made preliminary commitments of support. USAID/Sierra Leone has expressed strong interest in supporting this effort by identifying youth from Sierra Leone who, along with young Liberians, will form a core group from the Mano River Union (Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone) to participate in this initiative.

**Policy Leveraging** – In response to recent ethnic clashes in Nimba County along religious lines, OTI provided support for the presidential commission that was appointed to mediate the conflict. With this support, the US Mission has an avenue for advocating that the GOL begin tackling the broader underlying issues of Mandingo citizenship and land disputes.

OTI has supported not only strategic planning and basic operational capacity of the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY), but also an outreach campaign to CYPEP participants. This campaign supports the national youth policy - funded by the UNDP – that sets forth the framework for youth development in Liberia. By enabling FLY to set up its office and providing an effective mechanism for communicating with its constituents, OTI is supporting positive engagement by youth, the population that will most influence how the political and economic transitions unfold in the future.

### D. Program Appraisal

As part of the re-focusing of resources for YES community grants, efforts are underway to better reinforce the linkages to the content of the curriculum. Implementing partner Mercy Corps is working through local theater groups to dramatize YES modules and also to expand the coverage of YES training circles to the broader community.

LTI support is also providing leadership training for YES participants for longer-term community development that will extend beyond this phase of OTI programming. Similarly, the WAS consortium (comprised of **World Vision**, **Action Aide**, and **Search for Common Ground**) is preparing to launch *Stepping Stones*, an HIV/AIDS education program to reinforce this module of the YES curriculum. *YES To Soccer*, a previous HIV/AIDS training piloted in YES communities in two counties, has shown an overall increase in participant knowledge about HIV/AIDS prevention.

On-going political analysis has enabled OTI to re-target its programming to better support US Government imperatives in Liberia and in the sub-region. Short term technical assistance allows OTI to provide critical help to the Government of Liberia as it seeks to realize its priorities and communicate its progress and challenges. This support is serving as a platform for longer-term institutional capacity building efforts that are envisioned by other donors.

## **NEXT STEPS/IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES**

- Close completed YES community grants
- Complete third phase of the CYPEP program
- Hand over Accelerated Learning Program to USAID/Liberia
- Final evaluation of current phase of OTI Liberia Program
- Ramp up next phase of OTI programming in Liberia
- Begin regional visits to develop sub-regional program activities