

Liberia: Key Factors of Child Vulnerability

April 20 - May 3, 2008

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From: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Topographic_map_of_Liberia-en.svg#file

INTRODUCTION

The Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF) sent its technical advisors, Lynne Schaberg and John Williamson, to Liberia to review the current situation in Liberia and identify possible areas for DCOF support. This visit was carried out in conjunction with the Health Office of the USAID Mission in Liberia during the period April 20 – May 3, 2008. Its specific aims were to:

1. Develop a broad understanding of the key social, economic, and policy issues affecting life in Liberia,
2. Identify the key factors causing child vulnerability in the country and those that might be more susceptible to short and medium term interventions,
3. Identify the Government of Liberia's current efforts and capacity to address the key child vulnerability issues,
4. Identify the primary NGOs and the content of the vulnerable children programming in Liberia, and
5. Explore with the Mission possible mechanisms, gaps in ongoing programs, and issues that could be addressed with DCOF and Mission funding.

DCOF previously provided a total of \$5.47 million for programming in Liberia. Between 1994 and 1998 a total of \$3.8 million was allocated to UNICEF for the reintegration of demobilized and other war-affected youth. An additional grant of \$1.67 million was made to the International Rescue Committee to support the reintegration of women and children associated with fighting forces for the period September 2003 - September 2006.

Liberian Context

Between 1989 and 2003, the people of Liberia suffered through 14 years of brutal civil war, and an estimated 270,000 people died.¹ In addition, hundreds of thousands of people (86 percent of rural households and 78 percent of those in Monrovia) became refugees or were displaced within the country at least once during the war.² The fighting also destroyed much of the country's public and private infrastructure of health services and schools. War likewise destroyed the institutions of governance. The country's economy collapsed, leaving much of the population impoverished.³

In August 2003, a comprehensive peace agreement formally ended the war. By December 2004, a total of 103,912 individuals had been disarmed and demobilized. Among them were, 11,780 children (9,042 boys and 2,738 girls). It has also been estimated that around 4,000 children who had been associated with one of the various fighting forces did not go through the demobilization process. UNICEF has reported that 99 percent of the children demobilized were subsequently reunited with their immediate or extended families.⁴ However, it is also clear from discussions with agencies that some proportion of the children demobilized did not remain with their families, and some are currently on the streets of Monrovia and likely in other parts of the country.

In October 2003, The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), took responsibility for managing the country's security. As of March 2008, UNMIL security personnel included 12,242 troops, 196 military observers, and 1,148 police. In addition, it included over 1,600 international and domestic civilian personnel.⁵

Liberia began a new era in January 2006 when the elected government headed by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf took office. The sentiment repeatedly expressed to the DCOF team during its 2008 visit was that this government enjoys wide support and confidence among the country's people. In its first year, this government:

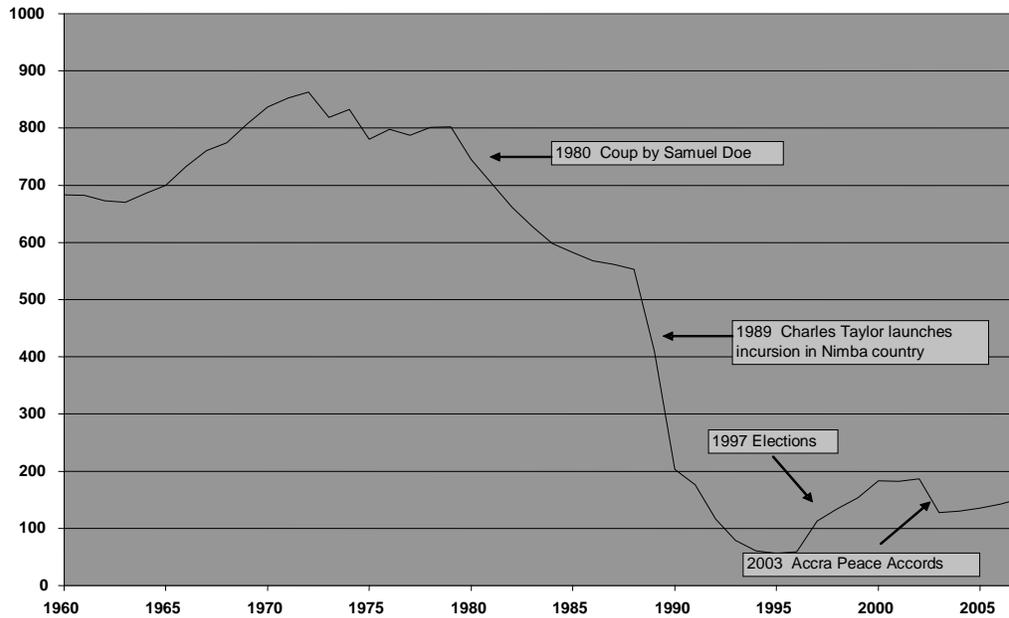
- Demobilized and reintegrated over 75,000 ex-combatants through formal reintegration programs, including placing 36,000 ex-combatants in formal 3-year education programs.
- Deactivated or retired over 17,000 members of the Armed Forces of Liberia, the Liberian National Police, and the Special Security Service.
- Began recruiting and training a new Armed Forces of the Liberia, which will eventually number 2,000 troops.
- Recruited and began to train over 500 police officers as a first step towards building a force of 6,000 police and security officers.
- Facilitated the arrest and detention of Charles Taylor, and brought charges against several other former high-ranking officials.
- Repatriated over 40,000 refugees back to Liberia and returned over 50,000 internally displaced persons through organized programs; tens of thousands more have returned to their communities spontaneously outside of formal programs.⁶

The country's population is estimated to be 3.57 million⁷, of which about 40% is thought to be in Monrovia. The first national census in 24 years was done in March of this year, and the preliminary results should be available soon. The population is relatively young, with 55% estimated to be below age 20.

Poverty is deep, pervasive and an underlying cause of child vulnerability in Liberia. Liberia is one of the poorest countries in the world, with GDP per capita of only \$190.⁸ In late 2006 a major study found that about 64 percent of the population lived below the poverty line.⁹

Liberia began to decline economically prior to the years of civil war. The country's 91 percent decline in GDP between 1979 and 1996 was one of the largest in the world in recent decades.¹⁰ Figure 1,¹¹ graphically shows the country's dramatic economic decline.

Figure 1. Evolution of GDP per capita, 1960-2007 (constant 2004 US\$)



Roads are a major issue in Liberia’s economic recovery and indirectly affect the capacity of families throughout the country to protect their children and provide for their needs. During the country-wide community consultation process for the development of the country’s Poverty Reduction Strategy, people throughout the country stressed the needs for roads. Roads to most communities range from poor to non-existent, and many are impassible in the rainy season (about four months), leaving many communities isolated. Access to the southeastern part of the country is particularly difficult, leaving the area generally underserved.

The current Government has charted a course for economic recovery through its development of a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), which is not yet final and under review by the Cabinet. While the draft PRS is grounded in market-based approaches for recovery, international assistance figures significantly in the proposed plans. With regard to international assistance, the country is in a transition phase from the war and its aftermath, when humanitarian assistance was relatively plentiful, to a focus on development.

Despite the shift in macroeconomic focus toward development, extremely significant protection issues for children remain, such as gender-based violence; warehousing children in “orphanages” (which have very few orphans); and an undetermined number of street children and working, out of school children. With the international funding pattern shifting toward development, serious questions remain as to whether there will be significant support to address ongoing child protection issues.

At the community level, Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) have figured significantly in the strategies that some international and local NGOs have used to address child protection issues. Some of these committees were reported to have developed a strong sense of ownership of child protection issues in their communities and continue to address them, seeking support and making referrals to a variety of governmental and non-governmental actors. There is potential to build

on and strengthen CWCs as the foundation of a national child protection mechanism. CWCs were frequently mentioned as the most likely mechanism for addressing child protection issues in rural areas. Children's Clubs are also widespread and can also play a role in identifying and addressing problems at the community level.

Though the war has ended, ethnic and social tensions were reported to remain, with the potential for disagreements to escalate rapidly into conflict. It will take years to rebuild social cohesion in communities. The level of trust among members in many communities was reported to be low. Developing trust and social cohesion will need to be incorporated into any programming at the community level.

On the positive side, the current Government appears to have broad support among the people of Liberia, and people are hopeful due to the positive changes they are experiencing, such as road repair and construction; the opening of schools; the abolition of school fees; the rehabilitation of clinics, schools, and other public structures; and increasing provision of electricity in Monrovia. Government Ministries with responsibilities for vulnerable children are taking action, however, they tend to have limited capacity (insufficient trained personnel and resources and limited mobility). The team also had reservations about some of the policy directions foreseen for addressing needs among vulnerable children.

Both the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Gender and Development have responsibilities relevant to vulnerable children. The latter has a mandate to coordinate child protection activities in the country; specific responsibility lies with the Division of Child Protection. This Division convenes the Child Protection Network, which includes 36 governmental agencies, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Each county has a designated lead organization for child protection. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the Network's primary frame of reference. The issues addressed in its recently developed annual work plan are:

- Juvenile justice
- Social reintegration of demobilized vulnerable children
- Prevention of sexual violence, exploitation and abuse
- Enhance the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Children affected by HIV/AIDS
- Children without primary caregivers and children with disabilities
- Combating Child labor and Child Trafficking
- Coordination
- Emergency preparedness.

There is a significant presence in Liberia of international and domestic organizations experienced in addressing needs among vulnerable children, and coordination among these groups appears to be good. Particularly with regard to GBV issues, different international NGOs described a well-functioning network with a clear division of responsibilities broken down geographically.

UNICEF is working with the Government on the development of a Children's Act. Similar to existing legislation in Sierra Leone, the draft law would establish community-level CWCs as elected, statutory bodies with the authority to address some children's issues and levy fines if

their decisions are not respected. They would have no authority beyond prevention efforts to address such serious crimes as sexual violence and abuse.¹² It remains to be seen, however, whether a Children's Act with provisions for CWCs becomes law, and if it does, whether the Government will have the capacity to mobilize and support these committees on an ongoing basis. Such Committees have the potential to provide a foundation for a national child protection system if they combine an effective approach to mobilization and support.

Another relevant policy initiative is a draft National Social Welfare Policy which the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has disseminated for discussion. The DCOF team had the impression from reviewing the draft and talking with the Deputy Minister responsible for its development that it is currently oriented toward a rather top-down, service delivery approach that the Ministry is unlikely to have the capacity to implement effectively. No mention was made in the draft policy of a role for CWCs.

Education is a high priority for Liberians. In principle, primary education is free and compulsory, but there are expenses (e.g. uniforms, supplies) that create a barrier for some children. Some remote areas do not have schools, and in many communities that do, the student teacher ratio is too high for effective learning. Many teachers are untrained; the Ministry of Education has responded with training to upgrade skills. In 2006 only about 40% of children of primary school age attended school. Many young children old enough to attend school do not, but around half of those in primary school are beyond the target age range. For example, about 80% of the country's 15 year olds were in school. At present, it is difficult to capture children's school participation in a single meaningful statistic.

HIV/AIDS prevalence appears to be lower than previously thought (around 1.5% of the sexually active population according the 2006 DHS) but there is the potential for significant spread. For example, Liberia has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the world, indicating early sexual activity. Sexual violence and abuse targeting girls in the 6 – 12 year old age group was a significant concern of most of those with whom we spoke. The likelihood of HIV transmission from unprotected sex is statistically higher for young women and girls prior to their early 20's because their reproductive systems are not fully mature.

The Mission has PEPFAR funding that is to be used to benefit orphans and vulnerable children and has expressed interest in jointly funding a project with DCOF. Such a project would need to benefit children affected by HIV/AIDS but it would not have to target them exclusively.

Potential Areas for USAID Mission/DCOF Support

If a decision is made to undertake a program in Liberia, three areas appear to be a potential match for Mission/DCOF mandates, areas of competence, and level of resources.

1. Family Reunification for Children in Orphanages

Background

In 1989, prior to the war, there were only 10 orphanages in Liberia; by 2006 there were 108 with 5,106 children (2,771 boys and 2,335 girls) in residence.¹³ While this growth may be indirectly

attributable to the war, it was not due to war-related orphaning. The vast majority of children in Government accredited orphanages in Liberia have one or both parents living,¹⁴ and there is no reason to think that the situation differs in non-accredited orphanages. Children enter these institutions primarily through recruitment by orphanage proprietors and their associates. Based on a review of relevant documents and interviews with a number of informants, it appears that motivations for this recruitment primarily include a mix of religious evangelism, making children available for international adoption, and well-intentioned but poorly executed efforts to help poor children. Poverty appears to be a primary factor pushing families to allow their children to be taken to institutions, where they hope education may be available.

Between August 2005 and June 2006, Sophie Parwon, a consultant hired by UNICEF and seconded to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, carried out a rapid, country-wide review of orphanages in Liberia. Of these institutions, 49 had been accredited by the Government, while 59 were not accredited. Of the total of 108 institutions, 45 were found to be well below the national standards established for such facilities in 1999. Among the non-accredited institutions, the study found that all “have deplorable and congested sleeping areas which contributed to poor health and hygiene of the children.” While boys and girls sleep in separate rooms, often there are no doors. Among the accredited institutions, all were found to have “poor managerial child care practices (such as protection, security, hygiene/sanitation, etc.)” Systems for keeping records on the children ranged from poor to fundamentally distorted, as it was reported to be common practice even among the accredited institutions to change children’s names on arrival.¹⁵

The main sources of food for these institutions were reported to be Christian Aid Ministries and the World Food Program. Concerning non-accredited orphanages, the report says, “Essentially, food aid appears to be one of the contributing factors for the high placement of children in orphanages because the more children an orphanage has the more food it gets.” It goes on to say that community members reported that orphanage proprietors sometimes sell food that they have received, as well as providing it to their family members and staff. Donated food appeared to be a primary means of compensating workers, who were not otherwise paid. Not surprisingly, given such practices, the report indicates that orphanage proprietors frequently complained that they did not have enough food for the children.¹⁶

When the review led by Parwon was initiated, 34 orphanages had already been slated for closure based on an earlier assessment. The process of closing these institutions was initiated, and 17 were closed, reunifying 361 children. However, the process was halted by the National Police due to intervention by members of Parliament.¹⁷

A more recent review by UNMIL of human rights violations by Liberian orphanages released in March 2007 found that the problems previously identified remain.¹⁸ It summarizes its findings, “Children living in Liberia’s orphanages are denied basic rights – ranging from the right to development and health, the right to identity, family, education, leisure and participation in cultural activities.” It concludes that these violations constitute “a major human rights problem.” Those interviewed by the DCOF team in April 2008, indicated that the problems identified in the UNICEF and UNMIL reports persist.

Changing this stalemated situation, however, will require more than technical capacity and resources to facilitate successful reintegration. It will also be necessary for currently reluctant members of the Government to be convinced that care by their own families is in the best interests of the children concerned, their families, and the country as a whole. There do appear to be local actors capable of addressing all of these issues, but their first challenge would be to mobilize the necessary political support to permit the work on deinstitutionalization and family reunification.

If DCOF and USAID/Liberia were to make funding available to address the many issues related to children in institutions, possible program activities could include:

- Strengthen the capacity of key actors to engage constructively with leaders who favor the status quo regarding orphanages
- Strengthen the capacity of the MOH/SW to fulfill its mandates regarding the monitoring of standards, accreditation, and protection of children in orphanages
- Support family tracing and reunification for children in substandard orphanages
- Strengthen the livelihood and child care capacities of the families of children in orphanages
- Support the training of social workers and paraprofessional social workers to play essential roles in child protection and care and in case management
- Strengthen the capacity of CWCs to prevent the recruitment of children for orphanages
- Raise community awareness as to children's need for family care
- Support the development of appropriate family-based alternative care

Reasons to Consider Providing Support in this Area:

- There appears to be limited donor support
- Groundwork has been done through studies conducted by UNICEF and UNMIL, yet substandard orphanages remain open and without sufficient action, the situation is likely to worsen
- Timing may be good, as access to education is increasing, reducing a major pull factor into orphanages
- DCOF has significant experience in this program area

Challenges:

- Even with DCOF support, it is not certain how long it might take to mobilize sufficient political will for closing substandard orphanages, stopping the proliferation of orphanages, and controlling placements
- Although monitoring orphanages falls within the mandate of MOH/SW, another ministry, has the authority to formally recognize all organizations that wish to operate in Liberia, including orphanages. This fact undermines the capacity of the MOH/SW to stem the proliferation of orphanages.
- Limited capacity of MOH/SW

2. Children on the street

Background

Surprisingly, children living on the streets of Monrovia and other cities and towns in Liberia have not received significant attention from child protection agencies. They are not among the groups addressed in UNICEF's work plan nor that of the Child Protection Working Group. Don Bosco appears to have the only significant program addressing street children in the country, and its program is relatively limited. No study had been done to assess the scale of the problem.

The Director of Don Bosco identified a number of locations in Monrovia where groups of children, mostly boys, live on the street. We were told that girls tend to be less visible because they often rely on prostitution to survive and are on the street at night. As in other cities, it is likely that the large majority of boys and girls working on Liberia's street are part of a household, while others live full time on the street. These are not necessarily distinct groups. The route to living fulltime on the street often begins with working on the street, then becoming involved in street life with other children, and eventually sleeping away from the family.

A concrete example that underscores the desperation of Liberia's urban poverty and the need to address the fundamental economic circumstances of vulnerable families in order to reduce child vulnerability was provided by the Country Director of Save the Children. Save provided a place to live to a group of girls who had been engaged in prostitution. Yet some of the girls' mothers were unhappy with Save's assistance because the money their daughters earned supported the household, and thus they wanted the girls to return to the street. This situation appears to be an extreme example of an oft mentioned phenomenon in Liberia – children are widely seen as a resource for the family.

At least two factors seem to have contributed to the number of children living on the street in Monrovia. Interviewees described a recruitment pattern similar to that used for orphanages. Someone doing business in a rural area may get to know a mother and offer to take one of her children to Monrovia to go to school. In the city, however, the child is put to work selling on the street or forced into prostitution; after a time such children may run away from that situation but remain in Monrovia. A traditional pattern in Liberia and much of West Africa is for parents to send a child to live with an extended family member in an urban area, where there are better opportunities to attend school. This tradition coupled with the desperation many impoverished and isolated rural Liberian families are likely to feel, could increase receptivity to an offer to send a child to school.

A second contributing factor is that some former child combatants who after demobilization failed to find work and left their home communities, ended up on urban streets. Also a small percentage of former child soldiers never returned to their communities, but remained in or migrated to Monrovia.

If DCOF and USAID/Liberia were to make funding available to address needs among children living on the street in Liberia, possible program activities could include:

- Support a collaborative situation analysis involving relevant Ministries and NGOs focused on street children (particularly those living on the street)
- Develop a network among organizations working with street children, family strengthening, and family reunification
- Initiate outreach work in selected areas where street children gather
- Reinforce or, as necessary, develop options for children to get off the street
- Develop a protocol for family tracing, mediation, counseling, and reunification or care within the extended family, where this is in a child's best interests
- Enable children to go to school or (for older children) to learn vocational skills
- Train police officers to deal humanely with these children and not harass or beat them
- Provide limited basic assistance such as health care and counseling for children living and working on the street
- Incorporate an economic strengthening component to increase the capacity of households to send their children to school and provide more adequately for their health, nutrition, and material needs.
- Monitor and facilitate reintegration
- Work with CWCs to prevent child recruitment from rural areas, sensitize families to the importance of enabling their children to go to school, and intervene in families where children may be at risk of separation.

Pros and Cons of Providing DCOF Support in this Area

There appears to be very limited programming or donor support to this area in spite of the significant needs. Children living on the street in Monrovia are highly vulnerable. DCOF has significant experience with programming for street children in Africa and has published the guidance document prepared by David James-Wilson, *Building Bridges to Mainstream Opportunities*.

One consequence of the very limited programming for street children in Monrovia or elsewhere in Liberia is that there is almost no hard information about this population. Program design would need to follow some initial research. Additionally, it can be difficult to enable street children, especially those who have been on the street for an extended period, to reintegrate into their families. Measures to improve community integration would likely be necessary. Another issue that would affect program design and implementation is that the street environment of Monrovia can be fairly dangerous. Careful assessment would be necessary to develop approaches that minimize risks to program personnel. Making a significant difference in the situation of children living on the street in Liberia and, hopefully, reducing the number of such children would require funding for an extended period in order to achieve sustainable results.

3. Gender Based Violence (GBV)

Background

According to Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the vast majority of people interviewed by the DCOF team, gender based violence continues to be a major problem, particularly for

adolescent girls. This is born out by the fact that the Liberian National Police report that rape and other sexual offenses rank among the most common crimes reported nationwide,¹⁹ despite the likelihood that most rapes are not reported. Violence against girls and women, sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy and girls turning to transactional sex to survive are regularly identified as serious problems by both children and adults. Recent GOL studies conducted in 67% of Liberia's counties indicate a high prevalence of GBV which appears to be driven by cultural beliefs, behavior acquired during the civil conflict, and weakened extended family and community networks due to the war.²⁰ During the war years, GBV was primarily perpetrated by the fighting forces; currently the perpetrators are ex-combatants, community or family members, teachers, and husbands/partners.

The devastatingly negative impact of GBV on both the physical as well as psychosocial wellbeing of survivors lasts long after the abuses are committed. The predominant social and economic consequences of rape are stigmatization by the community and families, divorce/partner abandonment, transmission of STIs, HIV, and unwanted pregnancy. Because of the fear of being stigmatized, many GBV survivors are unwilling to seek the medical and professional help that they desperately need, let alone to report the assault. In addition, they are deterred by the difficulty and danger of reporting due to gaps in legal, protection, health and psychosocial services that fail to ensure confidentiality.

If DCOF and USAID/Liberia were to make funding available to address gender based violence in Liberia, possible program activities could include:

- Provide support to various Ministries: Ministry of Gender & Development (MOG&D), Ministry of Justice (MOJ) & MOH/SW to fulfill their mandates to protect women and girls and prosecute cases of GBV
- Train police officers
- Provide training and support to medical facilities
- Train and support health care workers to provide appropriate care
- Improve psychosocial support and counseling for survivors
- Develop economic strengthening opportunities for survivors and those at risk
- Provide small grants to improve the security of schools and communities, e.g. separate latrines, street lighting, dismantling unused structures that may be used as places to violate girls or women.
- Conduct community and school sensitization regarding sexual violence, especially with men and male community leaders
- Mobilize protective community action
- Address issues related to female genital cutting (FGC), e.g. community sensitization, work with traditional midwives and health providers regarding negative health outcomes of FGC, etc.
- Strengthen relevant aspects of the legal system

Reasons to Consider Providing Support in this Area:

- The ubiquity of GBV was mentioned in almost every interview the team conducted – it is a problem that requires substantial and sustained attention
- The President and MOG&D recognize the gravity of the situation

- The MOG&D is providing good leadership on the issue
- Coordination among the INGOs is good; they have created a strong referral network
- DCOF has relevant program experience in other countries, e.g. DRC

Challenges:

- Considerable donor and government support already exists
- Changing the entrenched attitudes that allow for GBV is a very long and challenging undertaking
- The results of prevention work are difficult to measure
- It could be challenging to craft a program that focuses on DCOF's target population of children/youth under 18 years old given that girls/women of all ages are negatively effected by GBV.

4. A Crosscutting Option

The three problem areas addressed above are to a significant extent generated or exacerbated by inadequate protection at the rural family and community level. Accordingly, another programming approach could be a competition focused on strengthening family and community capacities for child protection and care in targeted rural areas.

As people returned to their villages in the aftermath of the conflict, many CWCs were mobilized in Liberia by NGOs. The team was informed that many of these committees are still active and appear to have developed a sense of identify and ownership independent of their respective NGO patrons. The reality in Liberia is that Government structures responsible for child protection and support (Ministries of Gender, Health and Social Welfare, and Women and Children's Desks of the Police, the courts) have very limited reach. For the foreseeable future, the best that they are likely to be able to do is have a limited presence at country level. It would seem that a viable child protection system for the country would have to depend to a very significant extent on CWCs, PTAs, or some other community structure. It also seems likely that some level of ongoing support (e.g. access to relevant information, training, establishing links to external authorities, and limited material assistance) will be needed to sustain these committees and enhance their effectiveness. This could be one element, perhaps the key element in a fourth option for a jointly-funded DCOF and Mission project in Liberia.

Abject poverty and the desperation that it generates was a consistent underlying theme during the interviews that the Team carried out. Supporting viable economic approaches at grassroots level could have an impact in countering the willingness of families to send their children to orphanages or with strangers promising to take them to Monrovia. Within a year, a DCOF field project in Liberia entitled "Supporting Transformation by Reducing Insecurity and Vulnerability with Economic Strengthening" or STRIVE, may have initiated viable options for strengthening vulnerable households economically. Possibly there would be opportunities for some collaboration between a new project targeted to strengthen community child protection capacities and STRIVE.

This fourth option could help prevent the flow of children from targeted areas to orphanages or to the streets. If the political will materializes to close the worst of Liberia's orphanages, a significant amount of the work will involve assisting children to reintegrate into their families and communities. It would be possible to build in provisions to support this, at least in the geographic areas where family and community strengthening was being done. In addition, this fourth option could include sensitization of communities to the nature and threats of GBV as well as support relevant protective action at the community level.

Pros and Cons

The fourth approach would have some relevance to each of the three areas described above. Its limitation would be that the impact in any of the three areas would be less significant than that of a project that focused in one area.

Additional Considerations

Apart from considering the most appropriate assistance to provide in Liberia, it is important to give attention to potential geographic focus. With an estimated 40% of the country's population concentrated in the Monrovia area, it's clear that many of the country's problems are concentrated there as well. It is also true, however, that much of the existing programming is also concentrated in Monrovia, though there is undoubtedly an enormous gap between needs and existing service. The USAID Mission identified Nimba and Lofa Counties as being of particular concern for security reasons. Bordering on Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Cote d'Ivoire, they were flash points during the war and could well be again. The Mission also identified the southeast as the most isolated and underserved part of the country. In Liberia it is difficult to reach even the cities and larger towns, much less its rural areas, so few agencies work in the southeast. These need not be the determining factors concerning where DCOF and the Mission might jointly target assistance because there are needs throughout the country, but they need to be considered.

Timing is also an important consideration, and the time appears to be right to strengthen child protection in Liberia. The country is in transition from relief to development. Funding for humanitarian assistance is drying up, and much of what has been accomplished with humanitarian assistance is at risk of withering away if there is insufficient support for a transition to sustainable policies and programs. CWCs are one example. Mobilized during the war, many continue to be active. However, without some limited support and capacity building, i.e., enabling them to link with relevant country-level Government offices, they may cease to function.

Providing funding at this time would also help to influence and reinforce policy developments in the country such as the draft Children's Act and the national Social Welfare Policy. Such funding would be very timely in supporting implementation of aspects relevant to DCOF's priorities. Unless funding is forthcoming (from DCOF and the Mission, or from some other source), any new policy provisions will only be words on paper.

There are two additional factors to take into account regarding the provision of DCOF and Mission funds for a child-focused project in Liberia:

- By general consensus, the remaining years of the President's term represent an excellent window of opportunity for moving things forward in Liberia
- The Government of Liberia appears to be trusted and committed to change.

Next Steps:

Upon returning to Washington, the DCOF team will debrief relevant parties and consult with the Africa Bureau to gather their input regarding a possible program in Liberia. DCOF will consider possible mechanisms and consult with the USAID/Liberia Mission once firmer plans have been made.

APPENDIX A: SCOPE OF WORK

Liberia is undergoing a challenging transition from 14 years of armed conflict and disorder towards sustainable development. Children suffered greatly from the violence, displacement, and breakdown of basic services. Much has been achieved since the end of the war and the elections in 2005, but many threats remain to children's safety, well-being and development.

John Williamson and Lynne Schaberg, technical advisors for USAID's Displaced Children and Orphans Fund, will visit Liberia from April 20 to May 3. With the collaboration and support of the USAID mission, the aims of this visit are to:

- (1) Develop a broad understanding of key social, economic, and policy factors currently affecting life in Liberia,
- (2) Identify the key factors causing child vulnerability in the country, and those which might be more susceptible to short and medium term interventions,
- (3) Identify the GOL's current efforts and capacity to address the key child vulnerability issues,
- (4) Identify the primary NGOs and the content of their vulnerable children programming in Liberia,
- (5) Explore with the Mission possible mechanisms, gaps in ongoing programs, and issues that could be addressed with DCOF and Mission funding (e.g. OVC funding from the HIV/AIDS account, DG protection, etc.).

During the visit the team will continue to review relevant documents and statistical information and meet with relevant governmental and NGO informants with a view toward identifying the underlying causes of child vulnerability and potential points and methods of intervention. They will seek to identify strengths, limitations, and potential in Liberia's child protection system, ranging from the level of community Child Well-being Committees, through that of national policies and programs. Given the brief duration of the visit, only limited travel beyond Monrovia is anticipated. A mission debriefing will be provided before the team departs.

APPENDIX B: KEY RESOURCE DOCUMENTS

Child Protection Network, “Draft CPN work plan for 2008/2009”

Department of Social Welfare, draft “National Social Welfare Policy,” April 18, 2008

Steve Hejna, “An Assessment of the Inter Country Adoption Laws, Policies and Practice in Liberia: A Joint Consultancy between UNCIEF and Holt International Children’s Services,” 2007

Sulaiman Momodu, “Spotlight on Street Children,” in UNMIL Focus, December 2007 – February 2008, pp. 30&31

Poverty Reduction Strategy of the Republic of Liberia [Draft for Cabinet Review] March 16, 2008

The Republic of Liberia and UNICEF, “Drafting of Liberia’s Children’s Act: Drafting Instructions,” March 2007

Steve Radelet, “Reviving Economic Growth in Liberia,” Center for Global Development, Working Paper Number 132, November 2007

Paul Richards, et al, *Community Cohesion in Liberia: A Post-war Rapid Social Assessment*, The World Bank, Social Development Papers, Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction, no. 21, January 2005

Save the Children Liberia, Position Paper: Institutional Care and International Adoption, 2007

Sophie T. Parwon, “Orphanage Assessment Report, submitted to Hon. Vivian J. Cherue, Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, June 2006

Irma Specht and Hirut Teffari, “Impact Evaluation of the Reintegration Programme of Children Associated with Fighting Forces (CAFF) in Liberia,” A report submitted to UNICEF Liberia, April 2007

UNMIL HQ, “Human Rights in Liberia’s Orphanages,” Monrovia, March 2007

US Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, “Background Note: Liberia<” December 2007

APPENDIX C: ITINERARY

Date	Time	Organization	Activity	Place
April 20	-	-	Arrival	Embassy apartments
April 21	0900-1000	RSO	Meeting	Embassy
	1000-1100	MOH&SW	Meeting	Corina Hotel
	11:30-1:00 p.m.	Restaurant	Lunch	TBD
	2:00:3:00 p.m.	UNICEF	Meeting	UNICEF Office
	3:30-4:30	LOAF	Meeting	LOAF's Office
	-	-	Going back	Cape Hotel
April 22	9:30-10:00	Education	Meeting	USAID
	10:00-11:00	Embassy	Meeting	Ambassador's Office
	11:00-12:00 p.m	Health team	Meeting	Health office
	2:00-3:00 p.m	Plan Int.	Meeting	Plan International's Office
	3:30-4:30 p.m.	SC-UK	Meeting	SC-UK's Office
	4:40-5:40	Deputy Minister	Meeting	MOH&SW
April 23	9:00-10:00	Mother Pattern	Meeting	School building
	11:15-12:15	Right to Play	Meeting	Right to Play Office
	2:00-3:00 p.m.	EQUIP	Meeting	EQUIP's Office
April 24	9:00-10:00 am	IRC	Meeting	IRC's Office
	10:00-11:00			
	1100-1200	Deputy Minister, Gender Ministry	Meeting Rufus Kaine	Gender Ministry
	12:00-1:00	CCF	Lunch	CCF Office
	3:00-4:00	CVT	Meeting	CVT's Office(MAKI)
April 25	1000-1100	Ministry of Gender	Presentation	Gender Ministry
	11:30-12:30	UNICEF	Meeting	UNICEF's Office
	4:30-5:30	MOH&SW	Meeting	Deputy Minister's Office
April 26	1000-1100	ACDI, VOCA, Robin Wheeler	Meeting	ACDI's Office, near Old Road junction

April 28	10-11	Embassy-CR	Security briefing	RSO Conference Room
	11:30-12:30	Don Bosco Homes	Meeting	Don Bosco Homes David Konneh
	12:30-1:30	Independent Consultant	Meeting	William Cauley
	2:00-3:00	IRC (Cycle)	Meeting	Dorthy
	3:00-4:45	ARC	Meeting	Marie
April 29	9:30-10:30	UNMIL (David)	Meeting	UNMIL Office
	1100-1200	UNICEF	Meeting	UNICEF's Office
	1:30-2:30	CRS	Meeting	CRS's Office
	1:00-2:00	UNICEF	Meeting	UNICEF's Office
April 30				
	10:00-11:00	CAP	Meeting	CAP's Office
	12:00-4:00	ANPCANN	Field visit	Siafa Washington village
May 1	1000-1100	SC-UK	Meeting	SC-UK Offices
	1:30-2:30	Consular Office	Meeting	Embassy Compound
May 2	0930-1100	Invited Mission and NGO participants	Debriefing and discussion	PAO Conference Rm.
May 3			Departure	RIA

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- ¹ *Poverty Reduction Strategy*, Draft for Cabinet Review, March 16, 2008, p. 1.
- ² Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity (SENAC), *Republic of Liberia Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey*, Monrovia, October 2006, p. 7.
- ³ *Poverty Reduction Strategy*, p. 2.
- ⁴ Irma Specht and Hirut Tefferi, "Impact Evaluation of the Reintegration Programme for Children Associated with Fighting Forces (CAFF) in Liberia: A Report Submitted to the United Nations Children's Fund, Monrovia, Liberia," April 2007, p. 6.
- ⁵ Liberia - UNMIL - Facts and figures, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmil/facts.html>
- ⁶, Radelet, p. 9.
- ⁷ Background Note: Liberia, US Dept. of State, Bureau of African Affairs, December 2007, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm>
- ⁸ *Poverty Reduction Strategy*, p. 12.
- ⁹ Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaire cited in *Poverty Reduction Strategy*, p. 14.
- ¹⁰ Steve Radelet "Reviving Economic Growth in Liberia," Working Paper Number 132 November 2007, Center for Global Development p. 4.
- ¹¹ *Poverty Reduction Strategy*, p. 2.
- ¹² "The Republic of Liberia and UNICEF, Drafting of Liberia's Children's Act: Drafting Instructions," Honorable Parliamentary Committee on Gender Equality and Child Development and The Multi-Sectoral Reference Group for a Children's Act in Liberia, March 8, 2007.
- ¹³ Sophie T. Parwon, "Orphanage Assessment Report," submitted to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and supported by UNICEF, June 2006, pp. 1, 6&9.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 11
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 5-10.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.7
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 12.
- ¹⁸ *Human Rights in Liberia's Orphanages*.
- ¹⁹ *Poverty Reduction Strategy*, p. 46.
- ²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 46