

USAID/OTI Liberia Field Report

July - September 2006

Program Description

The Liberia Transition Initiative (LTI) advanced 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 a number of avenues:

- 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 is helping 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

Independence Day Lights On - The Government of Liberia (GOL) met its promise to provide limited emergency electrical power in targeted neighborhoods in the capital city of Monrovia on July 26, Liberia's Independence Day. The United States, the European Union and Ghana provided assistance, enabling the GOL to make good on its promise. The provision of electricity throughout the country is a key priority for the GOL, as Monrovia has been without electricity for 16 years.

ECOWAS Audit Released - The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) released its report of the audit of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL). The 30 page report documented the theft and misappropriation of state funds by members of the NTGL. Although tackling corruption and impunity are stated priorities of the Sirleaf administration, no indictments have been brought against any individual named in the report.

Guthrie Plantation Repossessed - Amid great pomp and circumstance, the GOL and the United Nations Mission in Liberia "officially" took re-possession of the Guthrie Plantation located in Bomi and Grand Cape Mount Counties. The second largest rubber plantation in Liberia, Guthrie has been illegally occupied for the past three years by former combatants who have been tapping rubber. The United Nations Regional Information Network (IRIN) estimates that rubber valued at approximately \$10 million has been harvested and sold during this period. Despite the United Nations Mission in Liberia's (UNMIL) presence, residents in surrounding villages indicate that illegal tapping and sale of rubber continues.

Forestry Legislation - The national legislature passed the National Forestry Reform Law designed to provide greater transparency and accountability in the forestry sector. The passage of this important piece of legislation is likely to influence the UN Security Council's 90-day review of lifting of timber sanctions.

Legislature Rejects Executive Request - Citing a lack of funds to hold local elections, President Sirleaf sought the approval of the national legislature to grant her the power to appoint mayors and district commissioners. Both the Senate and House of Representatives rejected the request.

USAID/OTI Highlights

A. Narrative Summary

Over the past three months, OTI has worked closely with USAID/Liberia in anticipation of the transition of responsibility of the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) to USAID/Liberia. Under its new auspices, ALP will be expanded to encompass formal primary education, life skills, service learning and community restoration activities which support the new government's priority of revitalizing the education sector. USAID/Liberia will manage the new three year activity that began under the OTI contract with Creative Associates. September 30, 2006, marked the end of this phase of LTI programming.



AITB leadership discusses vocational training standards with their colleagues in Ghana. A pending concordat will support the retraining of vocational instructors and promote exchanges between the two.

In conjunction with this transition, LTI also devoted significant efforts to close out the other components of its two year program, including the successful administrative closure of more than 500 grants. Implementing partners of CYPEP, the abbreviated urban version of the YES program, made strong headway in delivering the third cycle of training in Yekepa, Zwedru, Saclepea,

Voinjama. More than 500 young people have "graduated" so far. Engaging youth in these strategic areas addresses the formidable challenges of stability, security and economic growth posed by disaffected youth on a sub-regional basis.

OTI continued to provide support to the Agricultural and Industrial Training Board (AITB), helping to revitalize this struggling organization responsible for developing trade standards, tests and certification, and for monitoring trade schools and apprenticeships. As the country embarks on reconstruction activities, and skilled labor increases in demand, the AITB is now better positioned to fill its role as a key secretariat to all ministries with oversight responsibilities for workforce development. OTI consultant David Gooday worked with the AITB to: 1) provide management and technical assistance to the AITB senior leadership team; 2) provide clear delineation of roles and responsibilities of key ministries to facilitate inter-agency collaboration and coordination; 3) provide strategic support for the establishment of vocational training standards; 4) design an appropriate outreach campaign to vocational training schools; 5) facilitate AITB office renovations; and 6) forge links between the AITB and its counterpart organization in Ghana, including the drafting of a concordat of support for vocational training in Liberia.

OTI awarded a contract to Development Alternatives, Inc. to develop a new Building Recovery and Reform through the Democratic Governance (BRDG) program.

B. Grant Activity Summary

FOCUS AREA	New Grants in this Quarter		Total Committed	
	Grants	Amount (\$)	Grants	Amount (\$)
Civil Society Org. Support			22	\$ 378,376

Community Impact Activities	2	\$ 74,252	391	\$3,714,686
Conflict Management	1	\$ 72,608	40	\$1,098,973
Election Process			17	\$ 403,478
Justice/Human Right			18	\$ 430,122
Media			17	\$ 462,620
Good Governance	3	\$ 70,958	44	\$1,456,171
Reintegration			2	\$ 16,642
Totals	6	\$217,818	551	\$7,961,068

C. Indicator of Success

Speed – OTI assistance enabled the GOL to implement a strategic communication plan around key issues and events such as the end of the GOL first 150 days; provision of emergency electrical power; and the visits of former President Clinton and UN Secretary General Kofi Annon.

Speed, however, remains an elusive and moving goal in the implementation of YES community training and grants. Both the training and community grant implementation reflect the challenges of capacity and the lack of social capital in post-conflict Liberia.

Re-targeting/Flexibility – In transitioning to its new BRDG program strategy, OTI's technical assistance to several key agencies enabled the US Government to provide critical resources for urgent needs identified by the new GOL. Rolling analysis with the technical experts and their counterparts in each government agency enabled OTI to identify and support further activities. For example, a small grant to the AITB supported the renovation of its offices and a trip to Ghana to establish a partnership with its counterpart agency, which hopes to model its program after Liberia.

Resource Leveraging – LTI short term technical assistance to the AITB enabled its staff to collaborate with UNESCO and the Ministry of Education to develop a survey instrument to assess vocational training schools in Liberia and to conduct the pre-test as well. It is envisioned that the full survey will be conducted in October and outreach information about AITB will be included during the survey, thus eliminating the need for additional funding for this purpose.

Policy Leveraging – The Federation of Liberia Youth (FLY) launched its "Youth for Truth" campaign that trained young leaders from six locations in Liberia about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) mission and processes. The campaign focuses on getting the leaders' peers and family members involved in this national healing initiative.

D. Program Appraisal

OTI successfully handed over the Accelerated Learning Program to the USAID Mission where the program will be expanded and implemented over the next three years. The hand over illustrates the manner in which OTI interventions can provide a foundation upon which longer term USG development assistance can be structured.

NEXT STEPS/IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

- Close completed YES community grants and other grants under LTI
- Complete third phase of the CYPEP program

- Ramp up BRDG programming in Liberia
- Begin regional visits to develop sub-regional program activities