



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

STRENGTHENING OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN SIERRA LEONE

IST QUARTERLY ACTIVITY REPORT: PROGRAM ACTIVITIES THROUGH JUNE 30, 2005

July 2005

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared Management Systems International.

Strengthening of Democratic Governance in Sierra Leone

CA # 636-A-00-05-00066-00

Ist Quarterly Activity Report

Project Start-up – June 30, 2005

June 2005

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared Management Systems International.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. Executive Summary 3**
- 2. Introduction 3**
- 3. Activities undertaken during the Quarter 4**
 - I. Program inputs 4
 - II. Program conceptualization 6
 - III. Program interaction and linkages 7
- 4. Challenges During Period, and Responses 8**
- 5. Notable Successes and Relevant Trends 8**
- 6. Financial Status Error! Bookmark not defined.**
- 7. Highlights of Upcoming Period 9**
 - I. Events, Visitors, and Travel 9
 - II. Activities for Upcoming Quarter 9

Strengthening of Democratic Governance in Sierra Leone

CA # 636-A-00-05-00066-00

First Quarterly Activity Report: Program Start-up – June 30, 2005

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the first of a series of quarterly reports detailing progress in the program “Strengthening of Democratic Governance in Sierra Leone”, a three-year program funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) through a cooperative agreement with Management Systems International (MSI) in partnership with World Vision Inc. (WVI), the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Christian Children’s Fund (CCF).

Inevitably, and in accordance with the draft work plan developed during the reporting period, most activity in the start-up quarter has been in the area of program inputs rather than outputs, given that expected outputs will emerge from the program’s primary activity of working with communities in the target districts of Kailahun, Koinadugu and Kono (as well as Tongo Fields in Kenema District) to develop community action plans. Such plans are anticipated to reveal both issues for discussion in forums to be held at Regional Information and Community Centers (RICCs) and topics for appropriate training for district leadership. They will also provide the justification for communities to apply for support from the program’s funds in implementing aspects of their plans and in commissioning inputs from civil society organizations to be supported by the program. The development of community action plans, therefore, provides the starting-point for the program’s outputs, and will follow the induction program for field teams that is scheduled for the coming quarter.

Activities undertaken during the reporting quarter are presented under three headings: those addressing inputs necessary for program start-up and preparation of field teams for work in the target areas; those dealing with conceptual issues relevant to the program; and those recounting various interactions and linkages developed in the period.

A major factor emerging from this period is the need to be very clear (and to ensure that all program participants are clear) about the nature of the program. Managing expectations, in the context of the recent history of Sierra Leone, the present context of donor support, and indeed previous engagement in target areas by program partners, will be a significant challenge. This makes it imperative that misunderstandings are avoided.

Significant successes included the establishment of a constructive relationship with the Decentralization Secretariat and linkages made with civil society organizations.

2. INTRODUCTION

This report describes activities in the first quarter of Cooperative Agreement # 636-A-00-05-00066-00, between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Management Systems International (MSI) in partnership with World Vision Inc. (WVI), the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Christian Children’s Fund (CCF).

The cooperative agreement was developed over a period of time following previous interventions in Sierra Leone implemented by MSI, in particular the Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace (YRTEP) program and the Nation Building (NB) program. Both of these addressed the problems the country faced in attempting to bring back into society those alienated by the war (whether as combatants or as those affected by the conflict) and equipping them to contribute positively to the re-

building of their communities. The present program takes this work a stage further by working with communities to help them develop plans of action around which all members can unite in a common purpose to better their lives, both individually and as a community. It is almost axiomatic to state that “communities” in fact emerge from a shared task – basically of living and working together, but more specifically of addressing their shared problems and contributing their various talents to their solution. This program therefore seeks to facilitate the process of developing action plans with which the whole community can identify – thus emphasizing such principles as inclusivity, transparency, accountability, self-sufficiency, fairness and peaceful cooperation.

The following section will present activity under the following headings:

- Progress on the inputs required for program start-up;
- Program conceptualization; and
- Interactions and linkages established during the reporting period.

Subsequent sections will discuss challenges, successes, the project’s financial position, lessons learned, and anticipated highlights of the coming quarter.

3. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING THE QUARTER

I. Program inputs

Overview

The Cooperative Agreement was signed on March 15. Immediately, arrangements were made for the induction of the Chief of Party at MSI Washington, and a Team Planning Meeting was held there with the three partner organization’s headquarter representatives.. The Chief of Party reported in Sierra Leone on April 17, along with the Program Manager, and both attended the USAID Performance Management Planning workshop for the following week. Thereafter, the Program Manager remained for a further week to make introductions to partners and to initiate discussion of implementation details. Interim arrangements were made with partners in country to agree contact persons, and a Program Management Team established to take forward implementation. This team has been the focus of in-country activity while their counterparts in Washington have been working on the sub-agreements and finalizing budgets.

Work summary

Personnel

- *MSI HQ.* The Program Technical Director, Program Manager, Lead Trainer and other support personnel at MSI head office, Washington, were all designated prior to signing of the CA.
- *COP/DCOP.* As soon as the CA was signed, arrangements were made for the Chief of Party to undergo induction in Washington in early April and immediately moved to Sierra Leone to take up his post. Advertisements were placed for the post of Deputy Chief of Party and applications received. An appointment is scheduled for early in the second quarter, in time for the DCOP to join in the induction for field staff.
- *Community Mobilizers (CMs) and District Participation Coordinators (DPCs).* These field staff are all designed to be personnel of the partner organizations (WVI, IRC and CCF) with the exception of

the DPC in Kono (MSI), and recruitment began following the negotiation of a pre-authorization to spend on the part of the partners. This was effected by June, and advertisements placed. The recruitment process will be completed during the month of July, in order to have the team together in time for the planned induction program in August.

- ❑ *Support staff.* Most partner support staff are already in place and will be allocated their responsibilities in the program following signing of sub-agreements. Recruitment of support staff at the MSI office in Freetown is in process.

Procurement

- ❑ *Office accommodation.* Program Office facilities are secured at 47 Wellington Street, Freetown.
- ❑ *COP residential accommodation.* COP residential accommodation was secured.
- ❑ *Vehicles and equipment.* The cars and motorcycles budgeted for were ordered and en route to Sierra Leone. In the meantime, vehicle needs have been met through hiring. Office furniture and equipment and necessary alterations to the premises are secure.

Partners

- ❑ *USA.* Since the Team Planning Meeting held in April, partners have been in regular correspondence to finalize budgets prior to signing of sub-agreements. The agreements will be signed in the coming quarter, but pre-authorizations to spend have been agreed in order to allow movement, particularly in recruiting field staff.
- ❑ *Sierra Leone.* Following initial introductions and preliminary meetings with individual partners, the COP convened a Program Management Team comprising the contract managers (or their interim substitutes) from each of the organizations, and this group has been responsible for taking forward the team planning process, including such issues as agreement of common job descriptions for field teams, harmonization (insofar as possible) of terms and conditions of employment and preparation for the induction program.

Work Plan

- ❑ *Draft work plan.* A draft work plan was developed and submitted to the USAID Freetown office. As agreed, discussions will be held on the USAID response, and an agreed work plan for the first year of the program finalized.
- ❑ *TPM.* The “Team Planning Meeting” (as described in the program description) will, in effect comprise both a meeting of partners now that the program is underway, an induction training for the field teams, to ensure that all are clear on the program’s objectives, principles and methods, and an opportunity to refine elements of the work plan. This has been agreed with USAID and modifications arising from the TPM can be incorporated into the work plan.

Issues requiring attention

- ❑ The sub-agreements with partners need to be finalized so that partner commitments are clear.
- ❑ The full complement of program staff needs to be appointed and in place to move ahead with program implementation.
- ❑ The “Team Planning Meeting” (and induction program for field teams) needs to be successfully implemented to bring the whole program implementation team together with a shared understanding of the program’s objectives, principles and method.

- Remaining procurement (including vehicles) needs to be completed as soon as possible.

II. Program conceptualization

Overview

The program design was developed in accordance with the Special Objectives of the USAID program in Sierra Leone and the Intermediate Results leading towards them. In the initial stages of design, it was also slightly broader in scope than the final version: the component dealing with Members of Parliament was removed when it was discovered that another donor (DFID) already had a program designed to accomplish similar objectives, and the element of use of local radio was removed when a separate cooperative agreement was made between USAID and Search for Common Ground to support Talking Drum Studios (TDS). Neither element was regarded as superfluous, rather it was recognized that with others handling these aspects there was no need for duplication. The final program design assumes coordination with TDS and with other donors—with the original program design in mind—whenever possible so as to achieve as much as possible during the three year period. A final issue of relevance to this section is the realization that clarity in describing the program will be of the utmost importance in managing expectations – at the level of participating communities, local councils and paramount chiefs, government agencies and even of program partners themselves. Initial field visits have confirmed the fact that the recent history of Sierra Leone has meant that rural communities have been recipients of relief efforts, including significant donor grants. Given that the present program is premised on the fact that Sierra Leone is moving into a different phase of its development, the goals and expectations need to be made very clear if misunderstandings are to be avoided.

Work summary

- *USAID intermediate results framework.* In the course of developing indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of the program, indicator reference sheets have been proposed to USAID, using the revised IRs. These continue to be negotiated, and it has been agreed that refinements will be made during the TPM in August. Final reference sheets will be produced by the end of August.
- *Program illustration.* Work on the program illustration continues, in order to show more clearly what the program itself will do and what is anticipated to be done by others; to simplify the overall picture for the benefit of field teams; and to clarify exactly what activities will be undertaken in pursuit of each of the intermediate results.
- *Initial field visits.* Visits to target areas by the COP in the company of partner agency personnel have resulted in a better understanding of the context in which the program will be implemented. Of particular significance is the potential expectation on the part of target communities that donor interventions translate into access to funds. This is in some ways reinforced by the fact that partner organizations have indeed been engaged in providing funding inputs in their previous work in those areas. For example, World Vision's work in Tongo Fields involved administering USAID grants for housing, markets and training schools.

Issues requiring attention

- Emphasis during the TPM on the program's purpose and method must result in a clear distinction between this and previous interventions in target areas. The expectation of participant communities will inevitably revolve around funding support. If field teams and their supervisors are not clear that this is not what the present program is about, initial field work will be frustrated and program objectives will not be accomplished.

- A revised program illustration that can be used by field teams in explaining the nature of the program needs to be developed and agreed.
- The revised monitoring and evaluation framework needs to be brought into line with USAID's modified results framework

III. Program interaction and linkages

Overview

Even in the development of the CA, changes were made to program design as USAID learned of other donor interventions in Sierra Leone and attempted to avoid duplication and promote cooperation. Interaction with other donor programs is therefore a necessary part of program implementation. Furthermore, the civil society component of the program anticipates significant participation on behalf of a variety of civil society organizations, of which there are many in Sierra Leone.

Work summary

- *Civil Society Organizations.* Contacts have been made with most of the organizations listed as potential partners, or resource groups, in the CA. Most have little idea at present of the specific ways in which we might cooperate, but contact having been made, and invitations extended to participate in some way in the program induction, possibilities can be expected to emerge in the coming period. Other civil society organizations in addition to these have either been contacted or have made contact themselves, some through the mediation of USAID. Many of these are likely to interact with the program as field activity takes off.
- *Government of Sierra Leone.* The program has been introduced to the Ministry of Local Government, and in more detail to its Decentralization Secretariat, as well as with the Governance Reform Secretariat. The COP, along with the USAID Country Representative, attended the first of a planned series of forums to present, critique and improve the Decentralization Secretariat's implementation frameworks for the various aspects of the Local Government Act passed last year. Following this, some revisions were proposed to the M&E Framework, and these have been incorporated into the revised draft, to be presented at the next forum.
- *Other donors and organizations.* Contacts have been made with UNDP, UNAMSIL, the EU, DFID (in particular its ENCISS program, which has many similarities with ours, but will operate in different districts), VSO and others. CARE, GTZ, Oxfam and some local NGOs are piloting a training course for Ward Committees. The COP has engaged with these groups, with the intention of ensuring that CMs are able to access such material and impart a consistent message in regard to Ward Committee rights and responsibilities.

Issues requiring attention

- *Consistency of message.* Given Sierra Leone's need for support and anxiety to accept assistance from any quarter, there is need to ensure that those taking up training activities ensure that the training they are giving is consistent with the latest legislation, in particular the Local Government Act that defines the functions and modalities of Councils, Ward Committees and representatives. Already it is clear that this is not the case. It will be important for the program to beware of this and not contribute to current confusion.

- *Sifting of civil society organizations.* The number of “NGOs” or “civil societies” as they are often designated locally is both surprising and confusing. Some are associations of organizations, others claim to be membership organizations, while others fall into the category of “youth service organizations”. No doubt others are private businesses. It will be important for the credentials of potential civil society partners to be assessed as potential cooperation is considered.
- *Program profile.* Given the importance of democracy and governance activities at this point in Sierra Leone’s history and the strategic nature of this program, program staff will make every effort to identify activities as USAID interventions, with the intention both of ensuring cooperation with others and of raising the USAID profile within the donor community. *Continued Strategic Programming.* The extent and complexity of the civil society context in Sierra Leone is something that must inform all programming of individual donors and their collaboration in the future. While all donors are anxious to see a vibrant and empowered civil society in the country, it will be important not to allow this to lead to careless dispensing of resources to organizations that may lack credibility, constituency or even integrity.

4. CHALLENGES DURING PERIOD, AND RESPONSES

The single major challenge emerging from the first quarter must be the nature and level of expectations of the program as a source of funding support. This has already been addressed in the attempt to articulate the program’s purpose in-country and to redesign its diagrammatic representation. It will be important to continue this process during the induction of field teams and beyond, with careful monitoring of the messages being carried to participating communities, as well as to local councils and chiefs.

The challenge of getting all partners together and operational has presented its own challenges, in particular in respect of their requirements for recruitment of staff – above all the security of funds required prior to employing personnel. This was dealt with through the negotiation of pre-authorizations to spend up to a certain level, in advance of the signing of formal sub-agreements.

5. NOTABLE SUCCESSES AND RELEVANT TRENDS

The establishment of a positive working relationship with the Decentralization Secretariat must count as a notable success, given its importance to the context within which the program will operate. The COP’s critique of the M&E framework proposed a distinction between the needs of the Ministry (or Secretariat), the donor, the council and the people of the district for information, both the nature of that information and the means of its availability. This has been taken on board in the revised framework and means that the program is firmly established as a partner in the decentralization process.

Linkages with civil society organizations have been established, and this appears to have provided USAID with a means of handling the endless approaches by organizations seeking funds. Obviously, the majority of those referred to the program through the local office of USAID come looking for financial support, but this in itself allows for dialogue to begin. Although in this quest, most depart disappointed, the linkages being developed enable the program to refer such organizations in the appropriate direction to find support elsewhere.

7. HIGHLIGHTS OF UPCOMING PERIOD

I. Events, Visitors, and Travel

The “TPM”, comprising a strategic meeting of partners and an induction program for field staff will be held during the first two weeks of August. It is hoped that it can be opened by USAID and closed by the US Ambassador, and this event turned into a public launch of the program together with a press release and occasion for interaction with other donors and GOSL.

For this TPM, in-country staff will be joined by the Program Technical Director, Ms Zoey Breslar, the Lead Trainer, Ms Gloria Fauth and the Assistant Program Manager, Ms Alisha Eisenstein.

Some of the partners may have HQ staff present at the same time.

Following the TPM, field teams will head for their districts and activity with communities will begin.

II. Activities for Upcoming Quarter

First year work plan to be discussed with USAID, modified in light of TPM and agreed.

M&E plan to be finalized, in line with USAID PMP and indicator reference sheets.

Second quarter report to follow approved work plan format.