

LIBERIA TRANSITION STRATEGY II

2001 - 2003

March 2001
AFR/WA

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LIBERIA TRANSITION STRATEGY 2001

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Liberia Transition Strategy II 2001 - 2003

Overview

Political, economic, and social conditions in Liberia remain in a state of transition. Following the end of the civil war in 1997, USAID has sought to help Liberia progress through the development continuum from crisis, to recovery, to sustainable development. From 1997 - 2000 the USAID program strategy has straddled this continuum through a modest, but successful program focusing on the resettlement and re-integration of refugees and internally displaced persons, and a modest, but less successful democracy and governance program. Programmed efforts were fairly evenly distributed and aimed at addressing constraints to development at the community and public sector levels. During this period, a vision was held of Liberia transitioning from an emergency/relief/ recovery program mode to a more sustainable development mode, especially during the past two years (1999-2000). Serious political backsliding, resulting in a stagnation of progress on the democratic governance front, unfortunately, has clouded this vision. However, throughout the country, at the individual and community levels, people are trying to improve their lives. USAID is addressing children's health needs, helping families feed themselves, and working with local communities to take care of the other basic needs of life - as best they can - in the absence of a responsive government and a favorable policy environment.

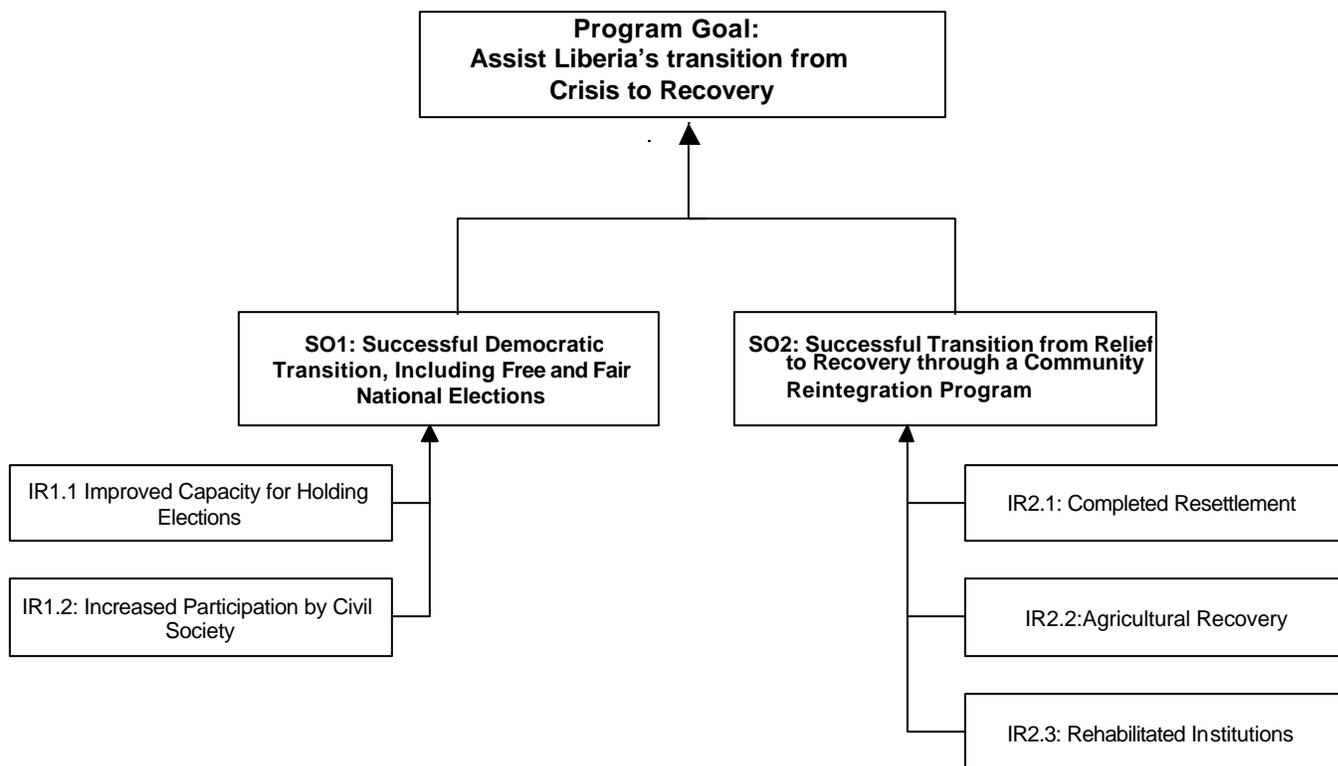
This transition strategy, 2001 – 2003, is premised on the expectation that a Charles Taylor - led government is unlikely to transform itself into a transparent, responsible, and effective democratic government. Meanwhile, civil society will continue - by necessity - to evolve in order to fill the vacuum left by the Government's inability to meet the basic human needs of its citizenry.

The 2001 - 2003 strategy will assist Liberian civil society in filling this vacuum by continuing the programs and activities of the current strategy. USAID will continue to support the delivery of primary health care services in targeted areas and help improve food security in those same communities. There will be, however, a fundamental shift in approach and direction. Whereas previous program efforts were planned, managed, and implemented by International PVOs and contractors, the 2001-2003 strategy will aim to increase the role of Local Non-Governmental Organizations (LNGOs) in the design, management, and delivery of selected social services. Development of this capacity in civil society will help move Liberia closer to a stage where sustainable development can occur. An important result of building this capacity will be the development of civil society's ability to organize itself, to acquire skills and experience in democratic governance at the local level, and to increase its voice in a broader range of civic actions. This idea is central to the vision and goal of this transition strategy. As experience has demonstrated in Nigeria, the engagement and development of civil society's voice and role in decision-making and governance - by building on the LNGO/Community-Based Organization (CBO) social service delivery platform - can preposition citizens to respond rapidly to democratic reform opportunities.

This strategy addresses an extremely fluid political environment and development situation, which has been evolving over the past five years. In order to grasp fully the context of the proposed Transition Strategy II, it is useful to review USAID program efforts over the past four years.

I. USAID Liberia Transition Program I (1997 - 2000)

Following the end of the civil war and presidential elections in 1997, the USAID program assisted the country's transition from the crisis situation, through a period of relief and recovery, to a more politically and economically stable situation. The strategy was built around two Strategic Objectives designed to promote a transition to democracy and to provide emergency support for the resettlement and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The initial program spanned a two-year period (FY 1997-FY 1998) followed by an extension covering FY 1999-FY 2000.



A. FY 1997 - FY 1998

Significant progress was made during the first two years of the Transition Program I. During this period the Government re-established relations with key players in the international community, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Resettlement efforts for about 450,000 refugees and 750,000 internally displaced persons reduced the numbers of each by more than half. Food production increased to within 75 percent of pre-war levels, and the Government initiated a national reconstruction program with donor support. In 1998 the Government officially declared an end to the emergency period and urged donors to focus on assisting the country and government to increase the nation's capacity to stimulate economic growth and manage its affairs.

1. Achievements of SO1: The achievements of this SO during the first two transition years was highlighted by Liberia's first successful multi-party elections in 12 years. Support to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the Carter Center, National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI) and several other international PVOs and local NGOs enabled a massive effort in civic education, political party training, elections monitoring, and related activities. Additional efforts to begin the process of rebuilding civil society, and promoting conflict resolution and related peace-building activities were carried out, but produced mixed results, as internal conflicts and Government oppression continued.

2. Achievements of SO2: Substantial progress was made in 1997-1998 under SO2, whereby 672,000 internally displaced persons were resettled and 250,000 refugees returned to Liberia. The Seeds and Tools program improved food availability and food security for over 1.5 million beneficiaries. The PL-480 Program assisted 397,594 primary school students through a school-feeding program and 23,427 teachers participated in the food-for-work activity. Monthly, 28,400 vulnerable persons were fed through institutional feeding programs. More than 11,000 ex-combatants and civilians, including former child- soldiers received vocational training, and 62 health posts, five hospitals, 133 schools, 189 bridges, and 114 wells were refurbished and revitalized.

In 1998 BHR/OFDA determined that Liberia had improved to the point that it no longer required the same level of emergency funding as was required during the height of the civil crisis. The number of refugees and internally displaced persons had been reduced significantly, food production increased to within 75% of pre-war levels, and the Government was making significant progress with donor support in implementing a National Reconstruction Program. With this in mind, BHR/OFDA phased out all emergency activities in June 1999. Many of these activities were important contributors under SO2 in the health and agricultural sectors, and were continued with AFR Bureau funding under an extension of the Transitional Strategy.

Despite this progress during the first two years of the transition strategy, advancements were overshadowed by an oppressive and unresponsive Government whose actions alienated its citizens and the international community. Government officials frequently intimidated the press; corruption and inefficient use of government resources abounded; and undisciplined security forces stepped-up harassment of the general population. This deteriorating situation reached a peak, spreading beyond the Liberian border, following the September 18, 1998 fighting between government forces and factional opponents, and subsequent claims by the United States, U.K. and several African nations that the GOL was funding the war in Sierra Leone.

B. FY 1999 – FY 2000

The 17-month extension of the Transition Strategy (covering FY 1999 - FY 2000) explicitly recognized that the political will and commitment of the GOL in promoting regional security and democracy would be the most important and overarching factors affecting future prospects for both SOs. Not only has the GOL not promoted regional security during this period, President Taylor has been actively fomenting instability in the region, and Liberia has become increasingly alienated and isolated from the international community. If this was not enough to stymie the USAID program, FY 1999 began with a six-month evacuation of USAID personnel. Repeated incursions by dissidents in Lofa

County resulted in the loss of NGO and UN vehicles, equipment, and 1,200 tons of food aid, thus prompting the complete withdrawal of donors and NGOs from Lofa County. In addition, the role of the GOL in causing regional instability led to Congressional funding holds and a significant reduction of funding in FY 1999 for democracy and governance programs. Nevertheless, USAID capitalized on the flexibility of its program and the resourcefulness of a dedicated staff to implement a program, which continued to support the Liberian people.

1. Achievements of SO1: Given the deteriorating situation in Liberia, it is not surprising that USAID was forced to abandon large portions of this SO aimed at enhancing the separation of powers and improving the effectiveness of the Legislative and the Judicial Branches of Government. While not necessarily optimal or desirable, a non-governmental D/G strategy focusing on strengthening civil society began to unfold. During the FY 2000 program, the mission began to transfer resources and its program focus towards strengthening the media, civic organizations and human rights groups. In this regard, several noteworthy accomplishments were realized. Support to the Elections Commission magistrates led to an improved voter registration process and higher voter registration; human rights monitoring continued in collaboration with the Carter Center and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) in training and assisting human rights monitors; civic education programs have continued in three counties through the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and several LNGOs; and the US Department of Justice conducted a series of training programs for judges, lawyers, magistrates and other court officials.

2. Achievements of SO2: The Transition Strategy extension assumed that continued progress in this SO depended on the degree to which the government created an enabling environment for the revitalization of rural communities. While the behavior of the GOL has certainly not promoted a favorable environment, its relative ambivalence has not forced a cessation of activities (as is the case in SO1). Although internal strife and turmoil continued, USAID's participation in the National Reconstruction Program has resulted in more than 900,000 refugees and IDPs being permanently settled in their home areas. USAID's focus on supporting the agricultural sector recovery was key to this successful resettlement. According to an FAO assessment, rice production in 1999 was 85% of pre-war level, an increase from just 30% in 1996. Assistance under this SO also helped to improve basic education, rehabilitate social services facilities, create jobs, and generate income. Over 11,000 ex-combatants (including child-soldiers) received vocational training; 133 schools, 62 health clinics, five hospitals, 189 bridges and 114 wells were renovated.

On the surface, a veneer of progress and advancement was seen. The number of refugees and IDPs has reduced significantly; food production almost doubled; and a large number of education and health facilities have been renovated and revitalized. In retrospect, it has become apparent that the improving situation in the rural areas was masked by a continuing and growing political crisis which would ultimately undermine any prospective transition of the country beyond one of relief and recovery.

II. USAID Liberia Transition Program II (2001 - 2003)

As events unfold in Liberia, the deteriorating political situation is narrowing the space in which development can occur and is, in itself, defining the appropriate response and strategy for the USAID program - strengthen civil society's capacity to positively influence the country's transition towards improved social, economic, and political conditions. A real opportunity exists at present to increase the capacity of civil society to deliver social services to its communities; to increase food and cash crop production; and to strengthen democratic governance during this transition period. As long as Charles Taylor and his Government continue on their current path, the country's future resides in the capacity of the Liberian people to effectively organize and exert pressure for political reforms; address the basic needs of the population; and to move quickly to fill the leadership void when the inevitable future opening materializes.

A. The Case for Continued USAID Engagement

The 1997 end of the civil war has brought with it significant peace dividends. With USAID's assistance, the international community made important progress in repatriating refugees, resettling refugees and IDPs, and rehabilitating health, education, and productive facilities throughout the country. USAID support has been vital to the transition from emergency humanitarian relief to economic recovery. The transition, however, is still very much at the beginning stages and is very fragile. The actions and behavior of the Charles Taylor-led Government do not bode well for the country's economic recovery. Liberia is rapidly becoming isolated, with widespread criticism from the international community and a significant reduction in foreign aid. The country is at a critical juncture, which can revert into a crisis/emergency relief state. This is increasingly likely, as the Liberian Government cracks down on internal dissent and opposition leaders, fails to provide social services, continues to foment conflict in neighboring counties, and further alienates the international community. If the country moves back to a crisis state, the international community and the USG would be faced with the prospect of returning to a costly emergency assistance program to forestall a humanitarian disaster.

The USAID program (Transition Strategy II 2001-2003) is a key element of the U. S. Embassy Mission Performance Plan, which supports the U.S. national interest of promoting economic prosperity, rule of law and democracy, reduced human suffering, and regional stability. The USG interest in promoting stability and economic growth in West Africa is furthered by the USAID program in Liberia, which supports and encourages a transition towards social, economic, and political stability. Given the current environment, this support is directed at strengthening the role of Liberia's civil society in democratic governance. It is imperative that civil society develops a strong civic culture and a sense of democratic values to effectively advocate, apply pressure, and eventually fill the leadership void. If this civic culture is not developed, any future leadership vacuum could be filled with someone cut from the same cloth as Charles Taylor, thus continuing Liberia's 20-year-old legacy of corruption and poor governance. USAID's program will play a limited but important role in helping this civic culture take root.

Liberia's geographic position vis-à-vis the Mano River States and Cote d'Ivoire means that assistance to Liberia will promote regional stability and in doing so, assist Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Cote d'Ivoire. It will logically increase the US influence, leverage our dollars, and link the US to a larger economic market in West Africa. While a \$7 to \$10 million

annual OYB is not enough to change the course of Liberia's history, it does send a message to Liberians at home and abroad. It says the US has not abandoned its 150 year- friendship with the Liberian people and it wants to see a stable, peaceful and prosperous Liberia. From a cost-benefit and long-term perspective, it would be cheaper to invest in human development with the greater prospect for peace and future trade than to pay for more UN and ECOMOG peacekeepers and emergency humanitarian assistance.

B. Transition Strategy II Goal

This strategy continues the objective of the USAID/Liberia program to assist Liberia's socio-economic recovery and its transition toward an effective, sustainable, and democratic government. However, given the actions of the GOL over the past nearly four years an adjustment in our approach is necessary. During the Transition I period, program activities were focused on reintegrating communities and fostering democratic processes and institutions at both national and local levels. The program approach provided assistance to both the public and non-public sectors; maintained a targeted, but distinct separation between community reintegration efforts and democratic transition activities; and relied on international PVOs and UN agencies for implementation. The planned Transition Strategy II will be completely non-governmental in nature, and a concerted effort will be made to increase partnership and participation of LNGOs in program leadership, management, and implementation. The program places civil society at the center of strategic emphasis, and it adopts a tactical approach of inculcating principles of democratic governance throughout civil society by targeting efforts at NGOs and CBOs in the delivery of key social and productive services.

C. Contingency Planning

By definition, transition strategies are intended for countries like Liberia, which find themselves in a period of high uncertainty. Accordingly, Transition Strategies need to be flexible, with "trigger points" clearly identified and predetermined. "Trigger points" are predicted events that cause a special review of the program or a previously agreed change in program direction in reaction to evolving country scenarios (ADS 201.3.4.3). The future behavior and actions of the Government of Liberia, and the resulting internal and international political consequences will mold the shape of the USAID program. The table below provides an overview of the different directions the USAID development program could take.

**Scenario A:
Core Program**

- Taylor regime continues in-place
- Liberia remains major contributor to sub-regional conflicts
- Oppressive government regime precludes engagement as a development partner
- Brooke sanctions remain in-place
- Electoral process characterized by lack of space for opposition candidates and active civil society participation

CORE PROGRAM:

- non-governmental in nature, supports the people of Liberia
- delivers basic social services (health & ag sectors) to selected populations
- lays groundwork for citizen empowerment and political participation (at the local level)
- assists monitoring of human rights
- supports international election observers
- provides foundation for transition to more comprehensive program with potential for greater results and impact when the situation improves

**Scenario B:
Improving Situation
(non-governmental)**

- Brooke sanction remain in-place
- Taylor regime begins to scale down "behind the scenes" leadership role in destabilizing sub-region
- Softening of government oppression
- Indications of electoral process opening-up

EXPANDED NON-GOV. CORE PROGRAM

- Scale-up program for expanded delivery of social services (health & Agriculture)
- Increased, more aggressive D/G initiatives related to citizen advocacy and direct participation in the electoral process
- New Results package to promote job creation & poverty alleviation

**Scenario C:
Improved Situation
(bi-lateral assistance possible)**

- Same as Scenario B with Brooke Sanctions lifted

EXPANDED CORE PROGRAM WITH GOVERNMENTAL PARTNERS

- Scale-up program for expanded delivery of social services (health & Agriculture) including addressing systemic, institutional & policy constraints
- Increased, more aggressive D/G initiatives related to citizen advocacy and direct participation in the electoral process, including D/G institution building activities and electoral support
- New Results package to promote job creation & poverty alleviation

**Scenario D:
Accelerated
Disintegration**

- Taylor regime "hardens" position and increases oppression of civil society & opposition leaders
- Sub-regional conflicts increase with continued GOL sanctioning and/or participation
- internal security declines further, coup attempts
- Electoral process completely stalled, elections cancelled and/or Taylor installs himself as Executive
- Constitution suspended

PROGRAM ROLL-BACK

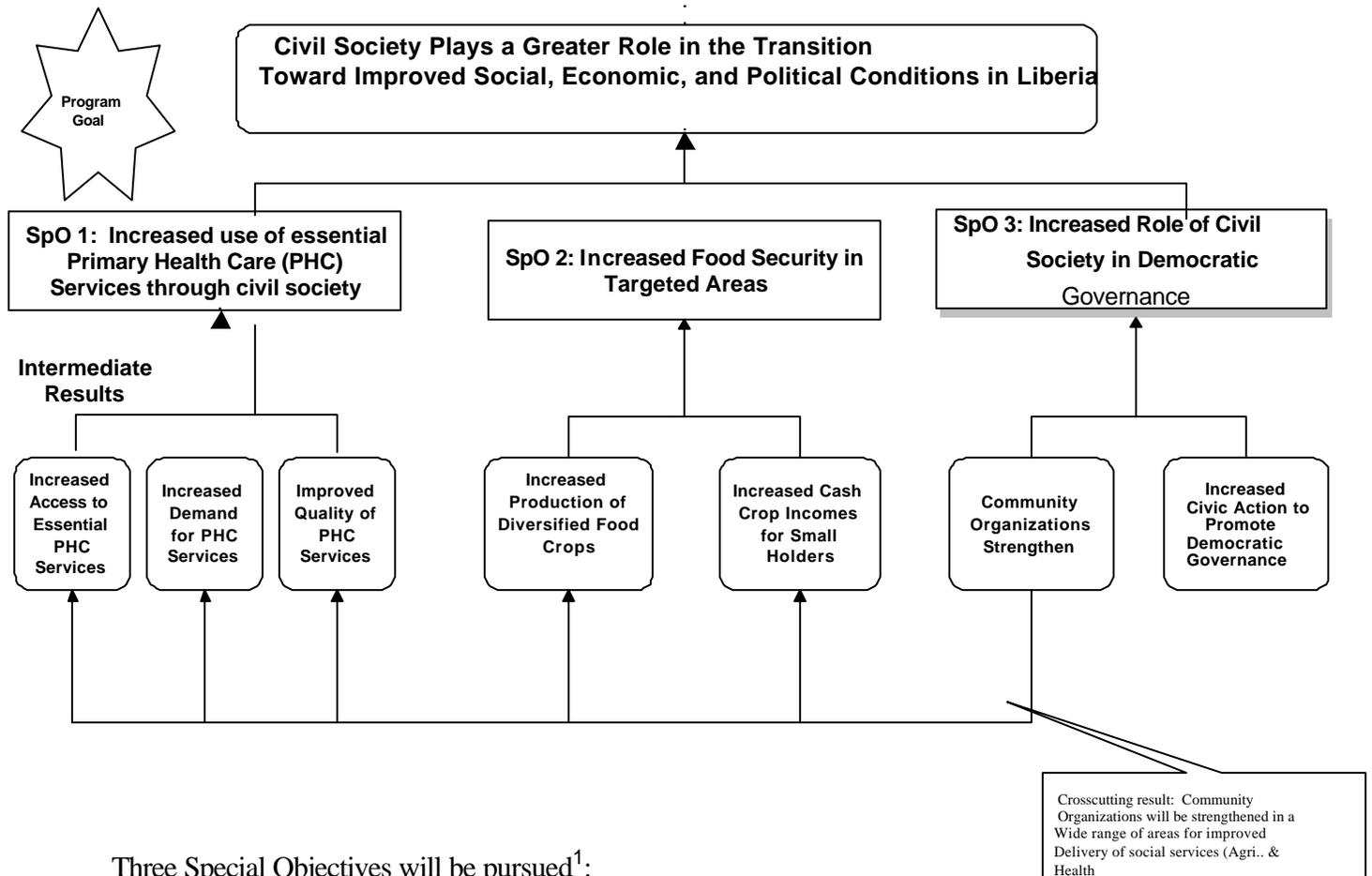
- Mission evacuates
- USAID program reverts to humanitarian & relief operations

D. The Strategic Framework: Liberia Transition Strategy 2001 - 2003

The 2001 - 2003 Strategic Framework will assist civil society to become increasingly engaged in Liberia's transition towards improved social, economic, and political conditions. The actual sectoral elements of the strategy continue those of Transition Phase I - that is, delivery of social services (primary health care and agriculture) and efforts to promote democracy and good governance. The fundamental shift of this strategy places an emphasis on developing the capacity of civil society to organize itself, to acquire skills and experience in democratic governance at the local level, and to increase its voice in a broader range of civic action. International PVOs will be the primary facilitators in developing LNGO capacity, while continuing the programs and activities of the current strategy, which provide for the delivery of primary health care services and improved food security in targeted areas.

The Results Framework is illustrated below.

Liberia Transition Strategy 2001 - 2003



Three Special Objectives will be pursued¹:

SpO 1: Increased use of targeted primary health care (PHC) services through civil society

SpO 2: Increased food security in targeted areas

SpO 3: Increased role of civil society in democratic governance

¹ An Interim (Transition) Strategy may consist of Special Objectives only (ADS201.3.4.3)

1. Overview of SpO 1: Increased use of selective Primary Health Care (PHC) services through civil society.

This special objective will contribute directly to the mission's goal of promoting a greater role for civil society in a successful transition towards improved social, economic, and political conditions in Liberia. This Special Objective encourages integration and fully supports maternal, reproductive and child health services, including HIV/AIDS. The objective is designed to engage the participation of Liberian partners, especially civil society in the development and implementation of critical health services. The mission's approach to improving access, demand and quality of these services will encourage PVOs to promote a greater role for indigenous NGOs and CBOs (community-based organizations). As participating NGOs and CBOs become more empowered, more civic-action oriented, and strong advocates for demanding health care services from the GOL, a platform for influencing broader democratic governance at the national level becomes more likely.

USAID/Liberia supports four international non-governmental organizations – World Vision, International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, and Africare. These organizations are providing selective primary health care services to 1,307 remote communities with an estimated population of 746,246 inhabitants in seven of Liberia's 13 counties – Lower Lofa, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Montserrado, Margibi, Bong and Nimba. An estimated 126,861 children under five years of age are being targeted for child survival services and 149,249 have being targeted for reproductive/maternal health services. An estimated 117,161 adolescents, 13 – 24 years of age, have been targeted for STI/HIV/AIDS prevention and control services.

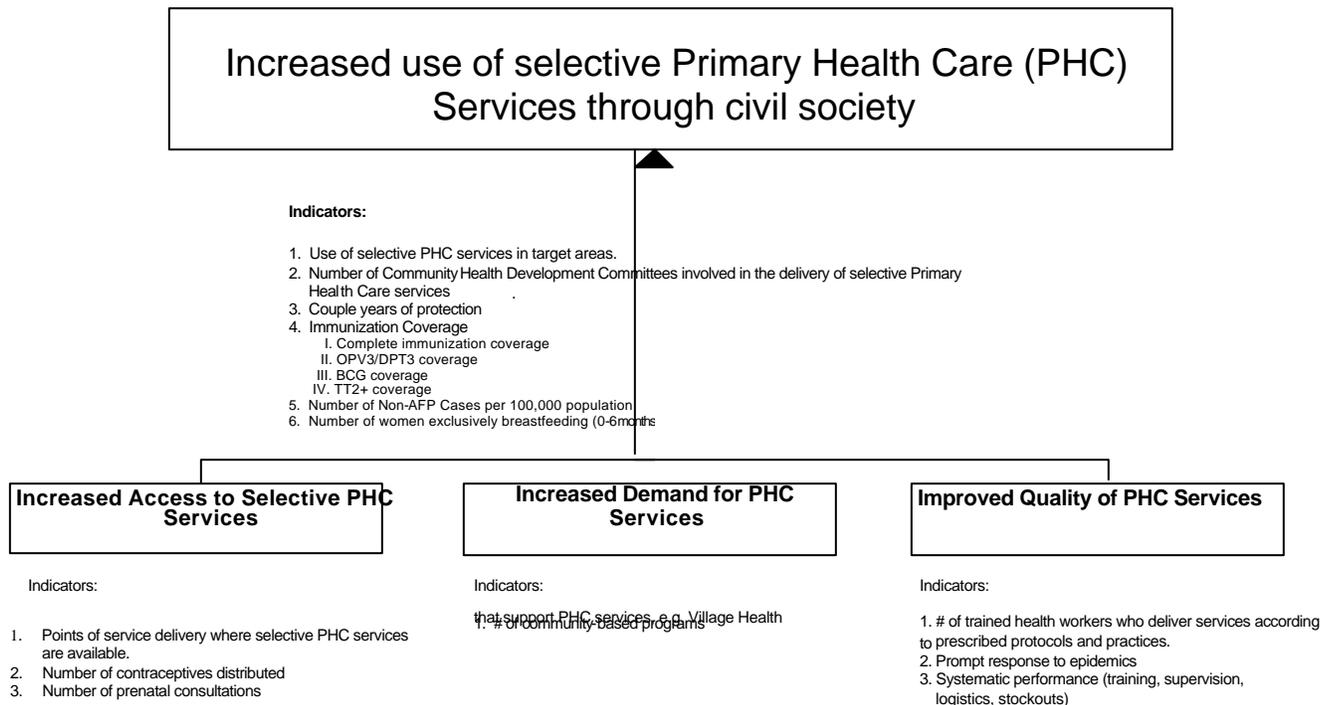
The selective primary health care services provided are as follows: Provision of essential drugs and medical supplies, curative services, immunization, health education, reproductive/maternal health, child health, and water and sanitation.

a. Health Sector Overview

The health status of Liberia's children and their families is desperate. In 1989, only 35% of the population had access to health services. Maternal mortality is among the highest in Africa. The current maternal mortality is estimated at 780/100,000. This may be an underestimation as statistics are hard to obtain and data are not very reliable. This is evidenced by the fact that there are more than two figures used as the current population estimate of Liberia. This was the difficulty experienced by the NIDs in trying to estimate the under-five population. During every round of the NIDs, those vaccinated exceeded the estimated target population thus giving a coverage rate of more than 100%. Immunization rates for children below two years of age for all antigens were 21% in 1997, while only about 28% of women 14 - 49 years old had received tetanus toxoid vaccination.

Regarding malnutrition, the problem for Liberian children seems to be that of stunting rather than wasting, with moderate malnutrition at 56%, severe malnutrition at 6.1% and stunting at 18.5% (1997). There is also a growing concern that given the recorded upward trend in prostitution and child sexual abuse, coupled with the high population mobility especially during and since the civil war, HIV/AIDS prevalence may be a time bomb waiting to explode.

Health Special Objective



b. Constraints

Three years after the crisis and the holding of presidential election in 1979, Liberia remains a country in prolonged post-conflict transition. The poverty, unemployment, income and debt levels are so grave, the country's capacity to recover, move forward and meet the basic needs of its citizenry is dismal.

The population of Liberia is estimated to be 2.6 million with 45% urban and 55% rural. Children below the age of 20 years account for 54% of the population while the current annual growth rate is 2.4% and the fertility rate is 6.7%. Amidst this rapid population growth, the socio-economic situation is simply harsh. The unemployment rate is estimated at 80% while about 55% of the population currently lives below the poverty line. The dependency ratio is 1:9 and the average household income is less than US\$1 per day. The 1999 national budget is US\$64 million as compared to the 1979/1980 national budget of US\$225.7 million. This precarious situation precludes the country's capacity to provide the basic social services for its rapidly growing population.

In view of this situation, the donor community has been funding international organizations to ensure the delivery of selective primary health care services. However, there has been an inadequate supply of drugs, vaccines and other commodities to facilitate the delivery of primary health care services because of dwindling support from donor organizations.

In addition to the current inadequacy of commodities to facilitate the delivery of primary health care services, the Liberian health sector is experiencing a serious brain drain because of the scarcity of trained professionals. A large proportion of Liberian trained health professionals and practitioners fled the country, leaving health and welfare services with limited skilled personnel and resources to respond to the health needs of internally displaced persons and returnees. Those trained professionals who are currently in the country are concentrated in Monrovia, the country's capital, thus leaving the rural areas where the majority of the population live, under-served. As a result of this mal-distribution of trained health professional, less than six of the 15 counties in Liberia have resident doctors. According to a 1999 MOH/UNICEF Health Sector Assessment, there are 32 doctors in public service out of 135 registered doctors, 185 nurses, 120 physician assistants and 42 trained traditional midwives.

c. SpO 1

This Special Objective encourages integration and fully supports maternal, reproductive and child health services, including HIV/AIDS. The objective is designed to engage the full participation of Liberian partners, especially civil society in the development and implementation of critical health services. The mission's approach in improving access, demand and quality of these services will shift and encourage PVOs to promote a greater role for indigenous NGOs and CBOs. The SpO will build on innovative training programs such as the "Training for Transformation" component by AFRICARE which promotes community participation. It is anticipated that during the transition, each PVO will build the foundation for Liberian ownership of health interventions and strengthen the prospects for sustaining the program in spite of future uncertainties.

Activities will be targeted to those that will have the greatest immediate impact on the health of the Liberian population while also developing the needed capacity and infrastructure to deliver the services. Activities will be designed so that they complement and add value to activities planned under the DG and Agriculture Strategic Objectives. This means that the focus will be on working with the Common Ground Studio to develop radio programs on DG and health activities including HIV/AIDS prevention and control to facilitate community empowerment and partnership.

d. Key Implementing Partners

Implementation of the strategy will be done primarily through the NGO sector. Strengthening partnerships with the MOH, and County Health Teams will be continued and closer linkages will be made with the County Health Teams in support of decentralization efforts. The key international NGOs (Africare, World Vision, International Rescue Committee, and Save the Children) will continue to actively engage local NGO partners in the development and delivery of selective primary health care services. International NGOs will be encouraged to support not only the local NGOs but to also strengthen linkages with village health committees and encourage the development of such committees in areas where they are non-existent.

In addition, partnerships will include linkages with other segments of civil society—teachers, farmers, transport drivers, indigenous networks, the media and the private sector as appropriate. USAID/Liberia will continue its collaboration with key UN agencies, such as UNFPA, WHO, and UNICEF among others.

e. Illustrative Activities

IR.1. Increased access to selective PHC services

- Revolving Drug fund established
- Train clinic and outreach staff in PHC service delivery including HIV/AIDS prevention and control
- MOU with UNFPA to supply condoms to target counties
- Physical upgrading of selected county clinics including water and sanitation
- Train traditional midwives and community health workers as change agents including HIV/AIDS prevention and control

IR.2. Increased demand for selective PHC services

- Train providers in IEC, counseling and communication for MCH, IMCI, HIV/AIDS
- Facilitate the establishment of Youth Clubs for HIV/AIDS prevention and control
- Conduct training in community on group and conflict management and management of PHC services and HIV/AIDS prevention and control
- Facilitate the establishment of community health and development committees and Women's Health Group at village level
- Establish links with Family Health AIDS (FHA) cross-border condom campaign for truckers & Commercial Sex Workers (CSWs)

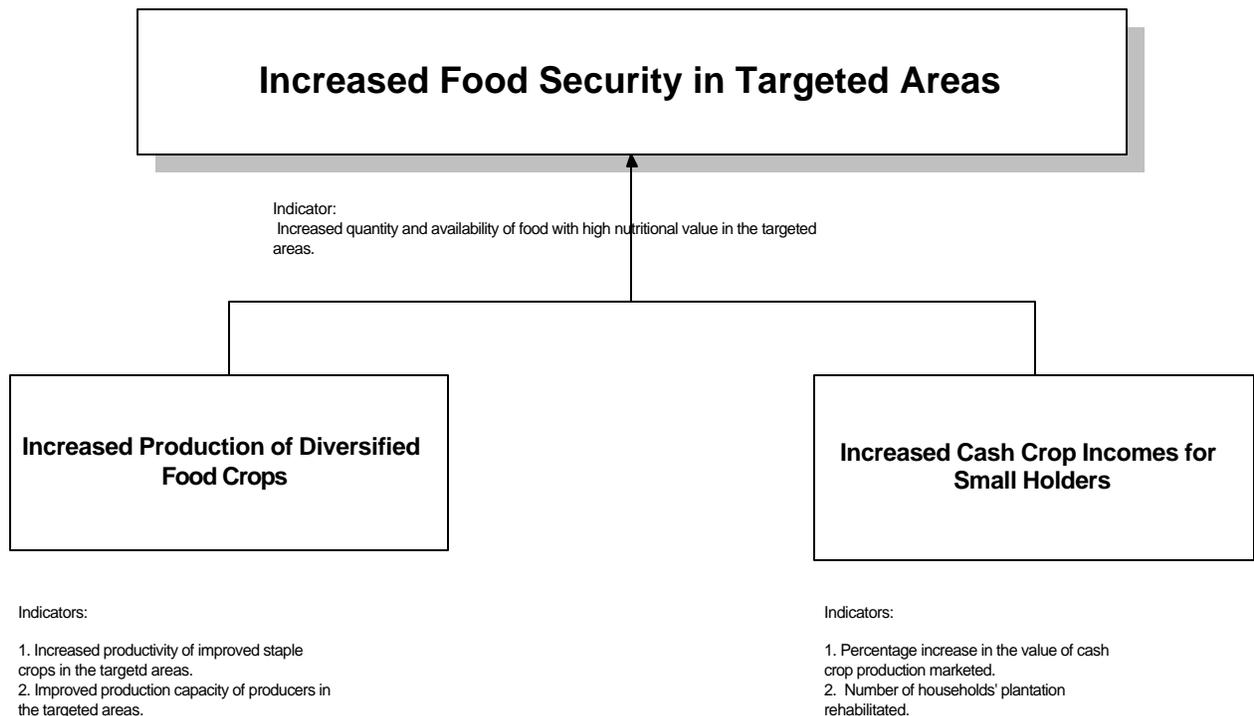
IR.3. Improved quality of selective PHC services

- Update training curriculum and job aids for community health workers including TBAs
- Update in-service training materials for middle level health workers
- Train clinic staff in basic logistics and rational drug use
- Train community health workers in recording and reporting of activities
- Secure and replenish drugs, condoms and TBA delivery kits
- Support for the establishment of a contingency stock of EPR medicines and supplies at the national and regional level

2. Special Objective 2: Increased food security in targeted areas.

Program activities under this SpO will increase the availability of food and increase access to food through increased production and income. The strategy continues the basic program of the Transition Strategy I in seeking to increase in productivity and improve the quality of life. Doing so will contribute to the Mission's goal of promoting the engagement of civil society in a successful transition toward improved social, economic, and political conditions in Liberia. The Strategy will also support US national interests by helping to alleviate food insecurity and promote effective food utilization. This will be achieved by increasing the production and availability of diversified food crops and improving the marketing and distribution local food products.

Agriculture Special Objective



a. Agricultural Sector Overview

Of Liberia's estimated population of 2.6 million, 55% lives in the rural areas, and 70 % of the total labor force works in the agricultural sector. Total land area is 9.8 million hectares, while total arable land is estimated at 4.6 million hectares, with abundant water and other natural resources. Before the civil war began in December 1989, only about 634,000 hectares of the arable land were cultivated—mainly with rice and cassava, the two staple foods of Liberia—but Liberians had other employment options, such as

mining, logging and rubber plantation work. The potential for increasing agricultural production is, therefore, vast.

The traditional smallholder farms dominate the agricultural sector. These use very low levels of technology and production inputs and employ “slash and burn” cultivation methods in the uplands to maintain productivity. The small-farm sector comprises some 200,000 farm households, averaging 1.2 hectare in size producing mainly rice and cassava. If the traditional small-farmer population were disaggregated into food-crop smallholders and food-and-cash-crop smallholders, the former would have a per capita income of about US\$12.50, and the latter, about US\$25.00, based on the average values of their respective annual crops.

The Liberian civil war of the 1990s destroyed much of the Liberian economy, including agriculture, and adversely affected food security for Liberia's population. Approximately 750,000 Liberians were internally displaced by fighting, with about 450,000 refugees fleeing into surrounding countries. Even before civil strife began in 1990, farmers produced only 65 percent of Liberia's domestic food requirement. By 1993, total food production had dropped to 30 percent of the 1986–90 prewar average, and rice production had declined to 20 percent of that average. However, according to the FAO, by 1999, paddy rice production had increased to 85 percent, and cassava to 96 percent, of their 1986–90 averages.

b. Constraints

Liberia is barely at the beginning stage of agricultural transformation, the process by which the agrarian economy is transformed into a diversified and productive economy, dominated by value-added processing, manufacturing and related services, and declining employment in agriculture. Low levels of productivity, limited growth of off-farm employment, weak governance, the lack of human and institutional capital and relatively high population growth further hinders development. Another problem has been the distorting effects of the Cold War on the priorities of donors and the ready availability of food aid, which has made Liberia somewhat donor-dependent.

The prospects for growth in the agricultural sector will depend on the extent to which political, social and economic stability can be re-established and maintained through good and equitable governance. Also important are the promotion and enforcement of the rule of law and the re-establishment of social and economic institutional structures and arrangements. Liberia has ample arable land and abundant rainfall, as well as an adequate, though unskilled, labor force. However, the agricultural sector needs to have the institutional capacity and contract enforcement mechanisms for producers and distribution agents to access financial and technical resources. To be successful in mitigating the food security and other problems facing the newly resettled people in the rural areas, USAID and other donors would have to assist the GOL to establish some of the enabling conditions. Donor assistance would:

- strengthen the legal institutions for the enforcement of contracts
- strengthen the rural infrastructure, including markets, roads and bridges, and training institutions
- strengthen communications capacity through the improvement of institutional arrangements, such as community-based organizations, and associations.
- Provide basic agricultural extension and support services to the producer.

- Given the limited resources provided by this USAID program, this SpO will focus on two main constraints: 1) lack of agricultural production support through non-governmental extension education services, and 2) limited capacity of community-based organizations in providing associated agriculture support to the small producers.

c. SpO 2

The objectives of this SpO are improved food security for the targeted beneficiaries and increased economic well being of the micro and small farmers and agribusinesses. These results are consistent with the need for improved food self-sufficiency and self-reliance (food security) as well as helping to lay the basis for Liberia's future economic growth.

IR.1. - Increased Production of Diversified Food Crops. This IR is at the core of addressing the problem of food security for a population that is still in the process of resettling after seven years of civil war and which must face recurring incidences of political instability. It addresses food availability in the context of subsistence—the ability of the people to produce at least enough food to sustain life. This IR, therefore, addresses agricultural production in terms of capacity to increase the quantity and quality of staple food crops (rice, cassava and other tubers). New varieties will be multiplied and distributed to farmers to improve both production and nutritional content, and new technologies and practices will be put in place to improve capacity for increased production and value added (fortified) processed foods. With expected increase in productivity under the proposed strategy, farmers and other agricultural producers will need increased capacity for making food available in the right quantity, time and place.

IR.2. - Increased Cash-Crop Incomes for Small Holders: This IR seeks to rehabilitate and revitalize the cash crop industry (rubber, coffee and cocoa), which was abandoned following the civil war. The dismantling of the Liberia Produce Marketing Corporation (LPMC), which provided production, processing and marketing support leaves Liberia with no proven marketing and distribution support system. Therefore, there is a need to support input and output marketing systems to reduce the high production costs and other support constraints that impede production. Producers at the farm level are plagued by spoilage and waste of their produce, as well as high transaction and transportation costs, while consumers in some areas do not have adequate access to either inputs or outputs. This will require low-level storage and processing facilities as well as market outlets to lower costs, add value and increase incomes. Also, producers need credit facilities to improve technical and management capacities to effectively address problems of production and marketing. Farmer groups and producer organizations could help reduce costs and increase income. Emphasis will be placed on specific cash-crop commodities that hold the most potential vis-à-vis the world market situation (i.e. for the moment world cocoa prices are depressed), therefore, more attention will be placed on coffee.

d. Key Implementing Partners

Implementation of this SpO will be primarily through the international PVOs (World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, and Lutheran World Service) and local NGOs and associations as a continuation of the programs of Transition Strategy I. The key international PVOs will be encouraged to actively engage local NGO partners in the development and delivery of a wide range of agricultural extension services, work with local producers associations in developing creative marketing, transport, and distribution

solutions, as well as collaborate with agribusiness entities in the promotion of value-added activities.

e. Illustrative Activities

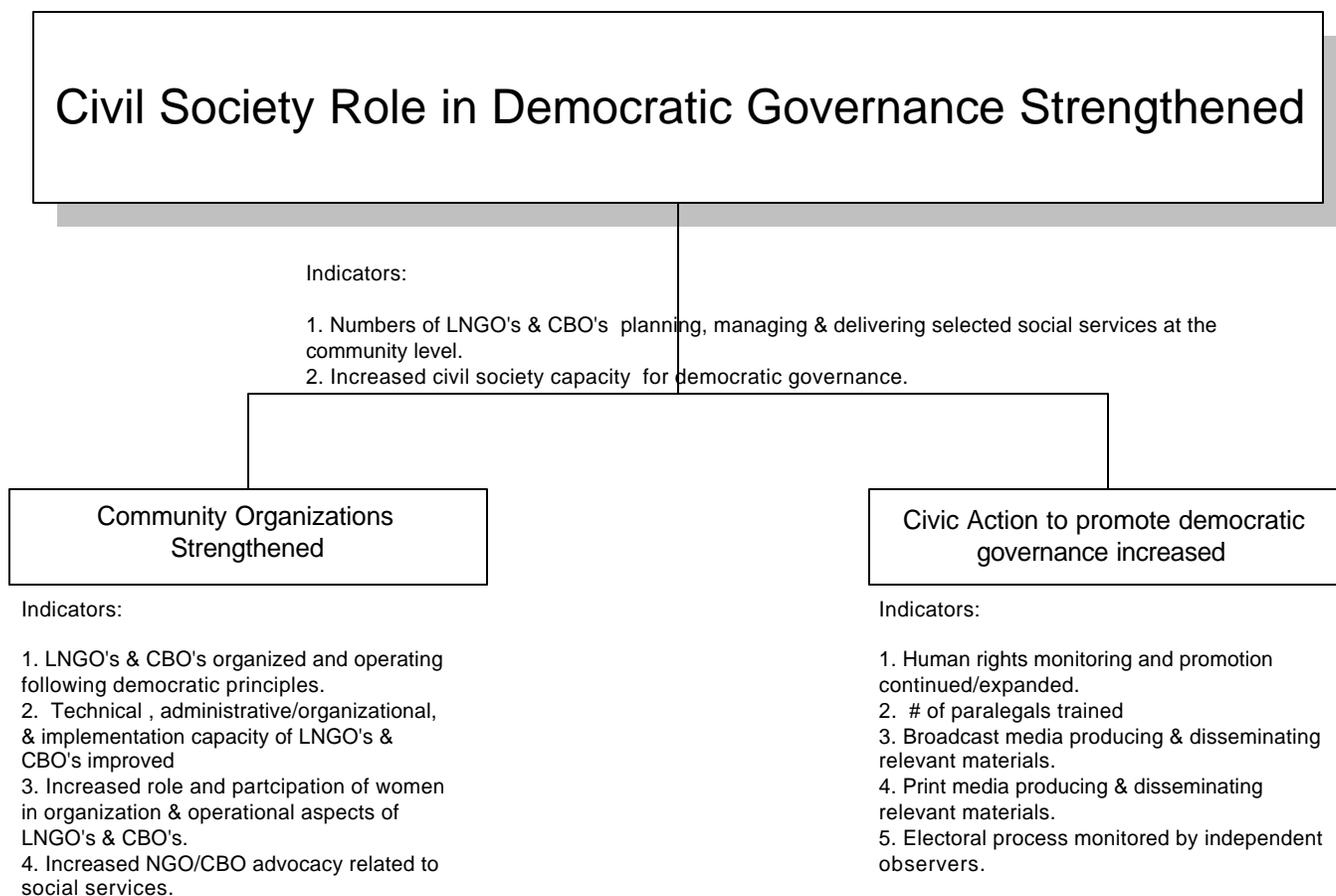
IR.1. Increased production of diversified food crops

- Multiply, adopt and distribute seeds
- Adopt improved farming practices for roots and tubers
- Develop linkages and networks for input supply
- Provide technical assistance in organizational development
- Provide technical assistance in on-farm storage capacity and processing
- Multiply, adopt and distribute seed

IR.2. Increased cash crop incomes for small holders

- Produce and replant seedlings (coffee, cocoa, and rubber).
- Provide technical assistance in introducing new varieties
- Provide technical assistance in establishing linkages between farm producers and input and output market agents
- Provide technical assistance in developing and accessing financial services
- Provide technical assistance to support post-harvest activities

Democratic Governance Special Objective



3. Special Objective 3: Increased role of civil society in democratic governance

Liberians are coping with a stalled transition to democracy that is unlikely to improve significantly between now and 2003. As experience has demonstrated in neighboring countries (most notably Nigeria), the engagement and development of civil society's voice and role in decision-making and governance - by building on the LINGO/CBO social service delivery platform - can preposition the citizenry to respond rapidly to democratic reform opportunities.

a. Overview of the DG Sector

After seven years of civil war, Liberia successfully conducted presidential and general elections in 1997. Given its history of military/dictatorial rule over the past 20 years, Liberia faces substantial challenges in institutionalizing its democracy. The country does not have a tradition of political tolerance, clear separation of powers among the three branches of government, respect for the rights of independent political parties, and an informed and active electorate. The Government of President Charles Taylor, which assumed the Presidency in August 1997, has exhibited all of the weaknesses Liberia's past experienced. The Executive Branch has exerted significant influence over the Judiciary and Legislative Branches. The Executive Branch has not been tolerant of real opposition and direct criticism of the Government and President Taylor. Individuals who criticize the Government often find themselves harassed, threatened, and faced with possible treason charges. The Human Rights Commission is not operational and the Elections Commission is chronically under-funded and unable to effectively carry out its duties of organizing and overseeing local and national elections. Both the Judiciary and the Legislature suffer from inadequate funds, and untrained and poorly educated staff and members.

b. Constraints

The activities supported under the 1997 - 2000 Transition Strategy facilitated the national dialogue on democracy and governance issues, strengthened the elections process, helped to inform the electorate, and improved local capacity to monitor human rights incidents. The need for continued democracy and governance work is critical. Particularly in light of the Brooke sanctions' prohibitions against assistance to the government, USAID proposes to support civil society's voice and civil society strengthening more generally. However, the prospects for further USAID democracy and governance funding is in question, in part, due to Congress' less-than-enthusiastic support (Congressional holds placed on \$1.2 million of FY 1999 DG funds severely slowed progress). Assuming future funds are made available, there are significant prospects for strengthening the print and electronic media, informing the electorate, promoting decentralization, and sensitizing the population about their rights and responsibilities. USAID assistance will take advantage of the narrow political opening that the Government has tolerated and will assist Liberia to meet minimal standards of democratic governance to keep the slow pace of momentum from stalling completely.

c. SpO 3 & Linkage to Health and Agriculture SpO's

The overarching rationale in linking DG to the other sectors (SpOs 1 & 2) is to generate improvements in health care and agricultural production while developing a shared vision of basic community and national values. The linkage aims to strengthen democratic political culture by linking DG practices to issues that are relevant to people's everyday lives such as improved food security and access to affordable quality health care. Promoting DG principles such as participation and advocacy at the local level through these issues serves the dual objectives of empowering people to improve their quality of life, and giving them opportunities to interact with their government and hold it accountable. Due to the lack of tolerance for dissenting opinion by the Taylor regime, DG activities in this Transition Strategy stand the best chance of encouraging political reform by situating them within other sectors, and giving them a low profile. In addition to working with the LNGOs involved in the delivery of community social services, more overt activities such as paralegal training, human rights monitoring, and support to the broadcast media will be maintained to support forces for change and to keep political space open.

d. Key Implementing Partners

Two "sets" of partners will be associated with implementation of this SpO. Community Organization Strengthening (IR.1) will take place primarily through the key partners associated with the Health and Agriculture SpOs (Africare, World Vision, SCF, IRC, CRS, LWS, etc.). These international PVOs will represent the conduit through which civil society strengthening will take place at the local level with their respective LNGOs and CBOs.

Another set of partners will be represented by those not involved directly in the delivery of health and agriculture services. Examples of these possible partners include the various local Human Rights monitoring and reporting organizations, such as the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC), the Association of Female Liberian Lawyers (AFEL), and the Center for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE). Support and assistance will also be provided to the broadcasting and print media. Partners may include Radio Veritas, Talking Drum Studio, and the Press Union of Liberia.

e. Illustrative Activities

IR.I. Community Organizations Strengthened

- Develop and strengthen producer associations
- Encourage participant-directed activities
- Co-locate human rights monitors and paralegals in AG-targeted areas
- Provide training and capacity-building to AG NGOs and CBOs
- Establish a micro-credit bank such as the VITABank in Benin for small AG loans
- Transform the successful National Seeds and Tools Committee from an INGO- to a LNGO-based effort (previously implemented by WV, LWS, and CRS with support from OFDA, FFP, EU, and FAO)
- Increase capacity of LNGOs to implement the small holder food crop and cash crop production (previously supported by Phelps Stokes Funds and Opportunity Industrialization Center (OIC))

IR.2. Civic Action to Promote Democratic Governance Increased

- Monitor human rights and promote through paralegal training (partners may include the JPC, CEDE, and AFEL)
- Support to the broadcast and performing arts media. Partners may include Talking Drum Studio, Flomo Dance Theatre, Radio Veritas.
- Support the print media. Partners may include the Press Union of Liberia (PUL)
- Support political party strengthening

III. Selected Issues

A. Other Donors

The deteriorating political situation coupled with the GOL's implicit involvement in the Sierra Leone conflict has resulted in increasing alienation from the international community. This has manifested itself in a significant decrease of donor engagement in the country. The European Union (EU) is Liberia's largest donor, followed by the United States, which provides one third of the total assistance provided to Liberia. The two largest donors accounted for 90% of the \$220 million pledged to Liberia for FY 1998 and FY 1999 periods at the April 1998 donor conference in Paris. Coordination with the EU has been exceptionally close and can be seen with the geographic coverage of development programs. For the most part, the EU has provided coverage in southern and eastern Liberia, with USAID covering the northern counties (with the exception of Lofa County for security reasons). This division of effort extends to both the agricultural and health programs throughout the country.

In the agriculture sector, there has been close collaboration with the EU and other partners in the Seeds and Tools program. While this collaboration is expected to continue under this transition program the EU has placed its overall agriculture program on hold and is in the process of developing a new agricultural strategy. The African Development Bank and the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC) are also exploring possibilities for future engagement.

In health, the EU has been supporting community-based programs in the southeast as well as supporting the national Essential Drug Program. Continued support for this program, especially pharmaceuticals, however, is under review. Other significant actors in the health arena include UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO.

In DG, the UNDP has sponsored a series of good governance workshops in collaboration with the Executive Branch. Its plan involves a DG needs assessment of nine agencies of government to develop a national framework for good governance. UNDP does not have funds to implement the recommendations, but will rely on other donors. The Dutch and Swedish governments provided some funding to Star Radio, a USAID-funded radio station. The Dutch have provided 100% funding for Talking Drum Studio. They now provide one-third of the needed funding at \$250,000; the Swiss provided \$150,000; and the Canadians \$100,000. USAID may contribute to the anticipated shortfall.

Other bilateral and multilateral donors include Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Taiwan, the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

B. PL-480

Uncertainty surrounds the future food aid program in Liberia. The 17-month extension of Transition Strategy I (covering FY 1999 - 2000) provided for a reduced PL-480 program as the program transitioned from emergency rehabilitation in FY 1999 to non-emergency general relief in FY 2000. The 2001 Budget Justification indicates a planned level of \$4.4 million of Title II Food Aid for Liberia. Preliminary discussions with BHR/FFP indicate a large degree of skepticism on the part of the Food for Peace Office that the climate in Liberia is not conducive to food aid development assistance. USAID Liberia, along with its cooperating sponsors, believes that there is a positive and productive role for PL-480 in support of food security related activities in SpO 2. Discussions will continue with BHR/FFP on this issue.

C. Coordination with the West Africa Regional Program (WARP)

The WARP is gearing-up for the first year of implementation of this regional program, which includes regional initiatives in HIV/AIDS, food security, and conflict mitigation. As planning begins for this new program many opportunities for coordination and support to the Liberia Transition II program are possible. Preliminary discussions have been initiated in the area of HIV/AIDS. Under the WARP health SO, a coordinated plan of regional training activities in HIV/AIDS for local service delivery providers is being considered. Other possible joint activities include civil society strengthening programs, networking among civil society organizations for monitoring and reporting on local conflicts, and human rights monitoring and reporting. Cross-boarder trade issues, micro-enterprise support, training for women marketing groups, and assistance in related areas of gender-focused entrepreneurial support programs are additional possibilities that will be investigated. USAID/Liberia is represented on the WARP Governing Board, and technical staff will participate in regional planning workshops that will program WARP resources and support efforts to complement and assist in-country programs that have region-wide implications.

D. Gender

The USAID Liberia Transition Strategy II will optimize the use of its resources in the areas of health, democracy and governance, and food security, building on the gains realized during Transition I. The nature of the activities proposed in this Strategic Plan is highly synergistic. Efforts in one area will also foster growth and development in other areas, such as using agriculture and health projects to foster experience with democratic processes, or to foster healthy behavior through some of the efforts in food security. Along with this, the Strategic Plan targets civil society and the NGO sector as a way to contribute to the country's recovery, and to enhance the capacity of Liberians to influence their country's destiny and to better their lives.

The above considerations provide an optimal setting for an integrated gender perspective in USAID's sponsored activities that will help empower women and achieve a balance between men and women in the roles they perform and positions they hold in society. To

that end, the Mission will ensure that women's roles, as well as the balance between the genders be kept in mind by the International NGOs that are program implementers, as well as by the Liberian NGOs, and CBOs.

In this regard, care will be taken in training programs, distribution of resources, access to participation, selection of positions on boards and other leadership positions, that women are given an equal opportunity to participate, or that they are targeted specifically. For this, the staff of the INGOs, as well as that of the LNGOs will receive training in gender analysis and participatory methodologies, and the work at the community level will take place using a participatory methodology with a gender perspective. Oxfam-UK and ACTION-AID have excellent training manuals and programs that deal with these issues which will be expanded to the other Liberian cooperating agencies.

The Mission will also ensure that it will support efforts in areas to help women overcome structural obstacles, such as those engaged in by the AFEL to change the inheritance laws, or traumatic experiences, such as the violence and abuse suffered by many women and young girls as an effect of the war and the dislocation of civil society.

E. HIV/AIDS

USAID/Liberia joins the Agency, USG, and the international community in identifying the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS as critical to Africa's long-term development prospects. Liberia, like other African countries, has seen a steady increase in its HIV/AIDS infection rate from 4.5 percent in 1998 to 8.2 percent in 1999, nearly a 100 percent increase, representing as much as 230,000 infected individuals. Failure to devote adequate resources to educate the public, procure condoms, and support the medical infrastructure will allow HIV/AIDS to continue to spread. If left unchecked, HIV/AIDS will negate all efforts to rehabilitate the nation's social and productive sectors. USAID/Liberia succeeded in programming \$500,000 per year for HIV/AIDS in FY 2001 and FY 2002. However, this modest earmark has been reduced and transferred to the regional Family Health and AIDS project. The Bureau should reconsider its decision to reduced HIV/AIDS funding for Liberia. In addition considerations should be given to increasing the annual funding level to at least \$1 million.

F. Environmental Concerns:

USAID/Liberia is concerned about the damage to the environment and rain forest, resulting from massive timber clear-cutting, which is sanctioned by the Government of Liberia. It is estimated that up to 5 million acres of timber concessions have been granted to foreign companies, with the Oriental Timber Company from Malaysia being the most active to date. There is no credible policy or plan for replacing the timber that has been cut and there is fear that the current approach to cutting timber will produce significant soil erosion and environmental degradation. USAID has paid careful attention to environmental concerns in preparing and approving Initial Environmental Evaluations for several agricultural activities and has taken steps to protect the environment. However, the larger issue of addressing degradation to the rain forest is outside of the Mission's resources and manageable interest. The US Embassy also follows the timber cutting issue and is looking for ways to positively affect policies of the Liberian Government.

G. Security Concerns:

Liberia remains an unstable country. There have been frequent major security incidents since Charles Taylor came to power in August 1997. These incidents have ranged from an attack on the US Embassy, rebel incursions in northern Liberia, theft of 1200 tons of food aid with the heavy involvement of Government security agents, multiple human rights violations, and intimidation of the press. Over the past two years the US Embassy has had two evacuations of US personnel. The result has been that the US Embassy operates as a non-dependent, danger-pay post and that USAID and other donors have withdrawn from several counties, including Lofa and Grand Cape Mount. It is expected that the insecurity and volatility will continue. The country as a whole seems relatively stable but the insecurity, along with corruption, limits investments and opportunities for economic growth. USAID's capacity to operate in Liberia will continue to depend on the level of security in the nation. This situation should be monitored in conjunction with the US Embassy and other donors to determine the appropriate level, type, and geographic focus of assistance activities.

IV. Resource Requirements