

USAID LIBERIA COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE: Synopsis

BACKGROUND

DAI's Liberia Community Infrastructure Program (LCIP) was established as the US government's leading partner in the international effort for the Reintegration and Reconstruction (RR) of Liberia, as outlined in the 2003 Ghana Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The program was initiated as a national effort supporting the reintegration of ex-combatants and other war-affected groups into their respective communities. Its main focus was to keep potential spoilers of the peace process occupied during a critical transitional phase in the country's modern history and also to provide opportunities for ex-combatants and non combatants to work together. The LCIP also focused on the economic and social rehabilitation of communities and the renovation of community structures, in order to draw former combatants and war affected persons back to rural and peri-urban areas. Project activities included agriculture, education, public work projects, vocational training, and social counseling.

At the start of the program it was agreed with all the stakeholders that the LCIP would work in the counties where the greater numbers of ex-combatants were most likely to be or wished to return.¹ As a result, the LCIP implemented activities in eight of Liberia's 15 counties – Grand Gedeh, Nimba, Bong, Lofa, Gbarpolu, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, and Montserrado (minimal inputs were also carried out in Margibi and Grand Bass but were not areas of focus). Initially, LCIP's target was to reintegrate 10,000 ex-combatants; however it rapidly became clear that LCIP could handle an increased number and the target was increased to 18,500 ex-combatants..

The workplan for LCIP is organized around two components that were managed together. Component 1 focused on USAID-funded that supported the reintegration of ex-combatants (XCs) and other war-affected groups into their respective communities. Component 1 began in March 2004 and effectively ended in June 2006. Component 2 added a second objective to LCIP in support of the new elected Government of Liberia's "150 Days Action Plan" for recovery and economic development. Component 2 also includes the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID) funded grant activities continuing the economic and social rehabilitation of ex-combatants and other war affected populations in targeted areas of the country. Component 2 is scheduled to end January 31, 2008 (DfID-funded activities ended in June 2007).

LCIP II SOW AND THE OBJECTIVES - RESULTS TO BE ACHIEVED

The objective of LCIP is to provide for the social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants, returnees and other war affected persons in both urban and rural areas of Liberia. To achieve this objective, the program focused on achieving the following expected results:

1. Peace process and good governance enhanced
2. Economic and social conditions exist at the community level to facilitate reintegration and rehabilitation of infrastructure
3. Increased formal and non-formal learning opportunities

¹ The USAID LCIP program's key international stakeholders were the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR) and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

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The program translated these results into three associated components as follows:

- **Employment Generation** – this was the central effort to create jobs and employment opportunities through reconstruction activities for ex-combatants and others.
- **Formal and non-formal education** – the LCIP used its reconstruction component to create or enhance access to formal school and accelerated learning programs, associated on-the-job training opportunities, vocational and skills training.
- **Psychosocial Counseling and Reconciliation** – this component includes community-based counseling and reconciliation activities conducted in conjunction with employment programs as well as public awareness and reconciliation services. A sports program, in particular soccer, for all participants and communities was a key psychosocial activity to engage communities and build peace between ex-combatants and war-affected persons.

DAI implementation methodology: Integrating economic with psycho-social rehabilitation based on rehabilitating community infrastructure. Where an exclusive focus on either economic or psycho-social rehabilitation would have found some success, the impact of just one approach would be limited to the short-term and stands no chance of being sustained. Economic reintegration alone might result in generating immediate income for ex-combatants and/or war-affected populations, but it could also maintain command structures, fail to provide needed social and coping skills, and could lead to violence due to any unexpected events. Psycho-social reintegration alone might result in dealing with the trauma and developing social and positive coping skills for ex-combatants and war-affected populations, but would not provide these vulnerable groups with the skills to generate income.

By integrating both economic and psycho-social rehabilitation, vulnerable populations receive life skills that result in sustaining the transformation of Liberians into productive and employed citizens. As a result, violence is mitigated, economic growth is jump-started, and community infrastructure is rebuilt.

Meeting the needs of war-affected populations: Because an exclusive focus on ex-combatants would send the wrong signals to other war-affected populations within Liberia (including the perception that the ex-combatants were being rewarded for fighting by being able to participate in income generating activities where other Liberians were not), LCIP embedded other war-affected populations within its programming. This serves as a platform for rebuilding linkages between the ex-combatants and community groups, as well as for meeting the needs of both groups simultaneously.

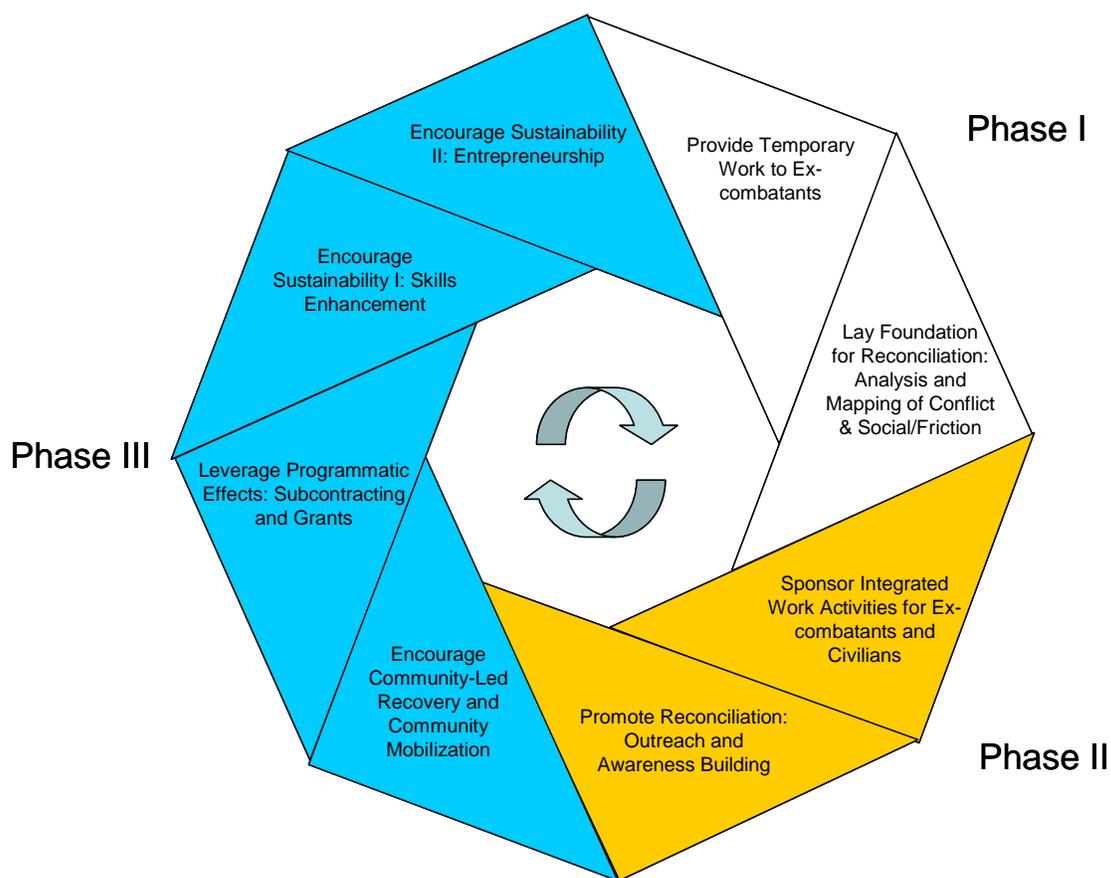
Rehabilitating community infrastructure, such as schools, clinics, roads, housing, cultural centers, and agricultural lands provides the foundation for both the economic as well as the psycho-social programming. Thus, teams of ex-combatants and other war-affected populations provide the unskilled and semi-skilled labor to rebuild community-identified priority infrastructure. This includes utilizing ex-combatants who have participated in LCIP vocational training in providing masonry skills to build a well, or in providing labor to clean a road, or even providing carpentry skills to build a roof over a house for an elderly family taking care of multiple grandchildren who have lost their parents. The rehabilitation of such infrastructure

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provides a visible and critical demonstration of the benefits of peace and security, as well as the commitment of ex-combatants (and other war-affected groups) to the transformation of Liberia.

Transforming ex-combatants and other war affected persons into Liberian citizens: After 14 years of intensive and intercine fighting, most Liberian combatants lacked the life skills and other resources that are necessary for gainful employment. Through the LCIP efforts, ex-combatants participated in a highly structured phased process to reinsert them into Liberian society. This phased process included:

Figure 1: The Cycle of Economic and Social Reintegration for LCIP



Phase I: Works programs with an exclusive focus on ex-combatants.

Ex-combatants were engaged in quick impact activities such as clearing roads, cleaning drainage areas, painting public buildings, and clearing agricultural lands. For each day of labor, the ex-combatants were paid a stipend of \$2.00 per day, according to Liberian laws for minimum wage. Each work brigade included psycho-social counselors, who provided psycho-social counseling during lunch breaks in order to teach life skills, conflict mitigation, and to address immediate needs of participant psychological trauma.

Phase II: Works programs which included ex-combatants and other war affected populations.

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Activities were expanded to include both quick impact activities described in Phase I, and rehabilitation of roads, community infrastructure (e.g., houses, community centers, clinics, schools, wells)

Utilizing the local private sector to create employment in post conflict situations:

Program objective A: Keep ex-combatants and other war affected persons busy through works activities.

Commonly, program implementers will work with international and local NGOs to manage activities because:

- Relatively inexpensive costs to implement
- Employs large numbers of war affected persons
- Provides many opportunities and activities focused on process of rehabilitation
- Completion of the rehabilitation of infrastructure or other public works activity is a low priority

Program objective B: Keep ex-combatants busy through works activities, and complete the infrastructure activities within a relatively short period of time.

In this case, working with the local private sector results in:

- Completed public or other works product.
- Increased employment opportunities for the ex-combatants.
- Builds capacity of local firms
- Builds capacity of government counterparts
- More expensive
- Smaller numbers of target population engaged at one time

Private sector engagement through LCIP:

- Standard procedures for bidding, award, and construction.
- Used local firms and resources (where possible) for rehabilitation of roads, schools, administration buildings, and bridges
- Increased the number of laborers as the work required.
- Issued sub-contracts not grants.
- Sub-contracts stipulated employment clauses.

The end result:

- Critically needed infrastructure has been rehabilitated.
- Accountability is improved.
- Sense of pride is installed in the ex-combatants, other laborers, and local firms.
- Efficiency is improved.
- Foundation for sustainable economic growth strengthened.

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Phase III: Skills and knowledge enhancement, integrating ex-combatants into communities through:

- Skills training – during this phase ex-combatants and other war affected persons were able to participate in vocational or other skills training. This typically included carpentry, blacksmithing, ceramics, cobbling, tailoring, masonry, hairdressing, soap-making, baking, etc. This vocational training continued for up to 8 months, during which time the students received a small stipend (\$1.00 per day) and lunch. Throughout the program, the students benefit from psycho-social counseling. At the end of the vocational training, the graduates received tool kits which included the materials they needed in order to apply their new trade. Many participants sold their kits for immediate cash, while others used the kits to gain employment either with existing enterprises or by setting up their own micro-enterprise.
- Apprenticeship program – during this phase, ex-combatants and war affected persons received basic skills training while on-the-job. This apprenticeship program matches each participant to a paired master craftsman and trainer. Working for the master craftsman, ex-combatants receive training in how to run a successful business, continued psycho-social counseling, and hands-on practice in their chosen trade. Often, ex-combatants who have received vocation training in masonry and carpentry build the workshop for the apprenticeship program. Many participants have remained with the master craftsmen (approximately 40% of graduates surveyed). Some apprentices have joined forces and formed their own business (approximately 25% of graduates surveyed). Other apprentices are expected to have found other opportunities with existing firms (estimates unknown), while others have hopefully found additional training or vocational opportunities to expand their skills.

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Employment generation: Activities supporting employment included: Roads and bridges rehabilitation, Renovation of administrative buildings, Schools renovation, Rehabilitation of health centers, Agriculture and agribusiness activities, Micro-enterprise development, and Environmental sanitation/drainage. By June 2007, a total of 5.4 million person days of employment was accomplished through all project activities.
- Support to Micro-enterprise development: At least 1,032 micro-enterprises and other private sector firms were engaged over the course of LCIP. This figure includes both individual firms that existed prior to LCIP engagement, shops rehabilitated for master craftsmen, and those businesses established by apprentices that graduated from project activities.
- Skills training: Around 14,726 people were engaged in some form of vocational or on-the-job training, including apprentices.
- Total participants: Over 40,500 Liberians – ex-combatants and other war affected people have participated in LCIP activities funded by USAID and DfID.