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Sida Decentralised Evaluation

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With Ian Christoplos and
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Review of the Swedish civil society support in Liberia

Final Report

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The views and interpretations expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AfT	Agenda for Transformation
CB	Capacity Building
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CCI	Cross-Cutting Issues
CS	Civil Society
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSSA	Civil Society and Social Accountability
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DPO	Disabled Peoples Organisations
EU	European Union
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GoL	Government of Liberia
GoS	Government of Sweden
HD	Human Development
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IPFMRP	Integrated Public Financial Management Reform Project
ITP	International Training Programmes
KtK	Kvinna till Kvinna
LACE	Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment
LCC	Liberia Council of Churches
LCL	Lutheran Church in Liberia
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LIBA	Liberian Business Association
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MC	Mercy Corps
MoF	Ministry of Finance
NARDA	New Africa Research and Development Agency
NCD	National Commission on Disabilities
NCSL	National Civil Society Council of Liberia
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
NUOD	National Union of Organizations of the Disabled

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

OD	Organisational development
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PFM	Public Financial Management
PLWD	People Living with Disabilities
PSG	Peace-building and State-building Goals
SEK	Swedish Krona
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SSR	Security Sector Reform
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States Dollar
WASH	Water And Sanitation and Hygiene
WONGOSOL	Women's NGO Secretariat of Liberia
WPP	Women's Political Participation

Preface

This is a Review of the Swedish civil society support in Liberia. The Embassy of Sweden in Liberia commissioned Indevelop to undertake the evaluation through Sida's Framework Agreement for Reviews, Evaluations and Advisory services on Results Frameworks. The main objectives of the review were to: a) perform an assessment of the current Swedish bilateral civil society support in Liberia, and b) present recommendations on guidelines for the future Swedish civil society support in Liberia.

The review was undertaken between August – November 2013 by the independent evaluation team, which consisted of:

- Ms. Annica Holmberg as Team Leader, a member of Indevelop's Core Team of professional evaluators
- Mr. Varney A. Yengbeh, Jr., as National Evaluator

Indevelop's Project Manager for the assignment was Jessica Rothman, who was responsible for coordination and management of the evaluation process. Ian Christoplos provided external quality assurance to the reports and methodology. Sida's Programme Officer, Frida Gabrielsson, managed the evaluation from the Embassy.

Executive Summary

The evaluation assesses the relevance of the Swedish civil society support in relation to the Swedish development cooperation strategy and the Democratic Culture programme in Liberia, the Swedish policy for support to the civil society and the Liberian development strategy Agenda for Transformation. Four international civil society organisations (CSOs) are currently direct partners to the Embassy of Sweden and their projects, implemented together with Liberian CSOs, are the focus of the evaluation. The Swedish partner organisations are Kvinna till Kvinna, Search for Common Ground, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and Mercy Corps.

A broad range of stakeholders, representing the international and national civil society, the donor community and governmental actors, have been consulted on their views of the possibilities and constraints for civil society to contribute to a democratic development in post-conflict Liberia. Special attention has been paid to the ability of civil society to embrace a gender perspective, a human rights-based approach, anti-corruption commitments and conflict sensitivity in their work. Discussions on the enabling environment for civil society and the coordination between civil society actors have likewise been central to the study.

Swedish cooperation with the four partner organisations is assessed to be aligned with Swedish, Liberian and international civil society strategies to a great extent. The cooperation focuses on the much-needed capacity building of Liberian civil society and covers a good mix of locally- and nationally-based organisations that work with relevant and prioritised groups of rights-holders. The evaluation team finds, however, that the Swedish support could require a more comprehensive human rights-based approach (HRBA) that gives priority to the direct voice and influence of rights holders at grassroots and community levels. The support could also increase the support to gender equality initiatives that focus on the root causes of discrimination against women and girls in Liberian society.

The evaluators recommend that the Embassy of Sweden place greater emphasis on gender and HRBA in partner dialogue and encourage the four CSO partners to further develop the application of gender perspective and HRBA in their projects and in their support to local partners. Requirements of reporting on the progress of increased civil society space and meaningful and influential participation of rights-holders would also allow the Embassy to monitor the outcomes of the application of the approach.

It is also recommended that the Embassy share information with the CSO partners on Swedish initiatives that involve civic engagement and different roles for civil society. This would not only allow the partner CSOs to monitor the results of projects that are said to involve civil society but would also seek synergies with these initiatives.

The report also gives recommendations for future civil society support and the new Swedish result strategy. The civil society support could be guided, partly, by the following principles and priorities:

- Primarily support CSOs in their own right.
- Provide long-term and medium-term financial support to direct partners and sub-grantees.
- Support the development and implementation of long-term strategic plans of Liberian CSOs.
- Allow new models of support in small-scale initiatives, identifying areas and issues where people organise collective actions to defend their rights and increase their awareness and knowledge.
- All projects, including those that primarily target service provision with the purpose to leverage engagement, should part from a HRBA and partners should report on how they implement the approach in their own work.
- Given the severe gender discrimination and poor status of sexual and reproductive rights in Liberia, projects with clear gender equality goals and projects that promote sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) should be given priority.
- Issues on natural resource management, land and large-scale land acquisitions (and potentially related conflicts) should have a stronger place in civil society support.
- Partner with civil society actors:
 - that strive to increase the voice and influence of rights-holder within the CSOs, i.e. develop mandate and representativeness;
 - with strong constituencies at local level (working together with rights-holders);
 - include grass-roots mobilisation and organisation;
 - that give priority to the building of capacities of civil society actors at county and district levels; and
 - with relevant anti-corruption policies and strategies and a strong commitment to fighting corruption of all kind.

1 Introduction

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to assess the Swedish support to civil society (CS) in Liberia. The current Swedish development cooperation strategy for Liberia (July 2008 – June 2013, extended to June 2014) is focused on two main areas: (i) democratic governance and human rights and (ii) agricultural development and business, including regional and international trade. The Embassy of Sweden developed a concept note in 2012 on democratic culture concerning part of the support to civil society organisations (CSOs). This evaluation is an attempt to follow-up strategies outlined in the concept note.

The Swedish CSO policy *Pluralism*¹ is also relevant to the study. It is in relation to the cooperation strategy, concept note and the CSO policy that the support to four international CSOs and the Liberian partners is assessed.

The previously-mentioned Swedish steering documents and the civil society support are also analysed in relation to the recommendations from OECD/DAC donor support to civil society, the Agenda for Transformation (AfT) 2012-2017, which is Liberia's medium-term economic growth and development strategy, and the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States.²

The current Swedish bilateral civil society support in Liberia goes to four international CSOs: Kvinna till Kvinna (KtK); Search for Common Ground (SFCG), National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and Mercy Corps (MC). The latter two CSOs received project support in 2013, while the KtK project was initiated in 2011 and SFCG started in 2012. Total support to the four projects is almost 137 MSEK.³

This report also provides a number of recommendations for the new Swedish country strategy for Liberia, the so-called result strategy for the period 2014 – 2018. The recommendations have mainly been developed around the following areas, identified in the Terms of Reference (ToR): strategic areas and the most important processes where civil society in Liberia can and should play a crucial role; support to civil society by other donors and existing channels of support to local CSOs; the potential added value of Swedish support; and suggestions of guiding principles regarding e.g. the objectives of the Swedish support to civil society in Liberia, organisation and support modalities, criteria for choice of partners (intermediaries and national) and focus thematic areas/sectors.

The evaluation team comprises two evaluators: one international and one Liberian. The assessment was carried out in Liberia during September and October 2013.

¹ Pluralism, Policy for support to civil society in developing countries within Swedish development cooperation, Government Offices of Sweden, 2009

² The New Deal is part of the outcome from the high level meeting on Aid Effectiveness held in Busan 2011.

³ KtK: TSEK 49 600 (5 year agreement); NDI: TSEK 42 (3 year agreement); MC TSEK 14 000 (1 year agreement).372 (3 year agreement); SFCG: TSEK 31 000.

1.2 METHOD

Two principal methods have been used in the assessment: a desk study of central documents and semi-structured interviews with a broad range of key informants (stakeholders and non-stakeholders) in Liberia. The desk study included key steering documents, overall analyses of the development and situation of human rights, democracy and the status of citizens' social engagement in Liberia, as well as relevant programme documents of on-going support in the Swedish portfolio. The interviews were undertaken with governmental institutions, UN bodies, international donors, Sida in Stockholm and the Embassy of Sweden in Monrovia, CSOs and networks at the national and county levels, the four direct CSO partners to the Embassy of Sweden and a selection of their local partner organisations.

The semi-structured interviews were held with one to three respondents per organisation and were guided by a questionnaire that was developed prior to the data collection phase (*see appendix 4*). The evaluation team conducted more than 50 interviews⁴ in Monrovia, Montserrado County; Buchanan, Grand Bassa County; and Gbarnga, Bong County and in Stockholm.

The four CSO's partnerships with local organisations currently work in 10 out of 15 counties. Taking the time frame of the assignment into account, it was determined that 3 counties could be covered by the evaluation team. Because international organisations and Liberian civil society groups are highly concentrated in the capital city of Monrovia in Montserrado County, this county was naturally chosen as the first place for this assessment. Grand Bassa and Bong Counties were selected from four selection criteria: strategic/key partners to the international partner CSOs; on-going project support and/or capacity building initiatives; accessibility (roads and distance from Monrovia); and availability of the local partners.

The four direct partners were first interviewed separately, and subsequently met with the evaluators in a workshop in Monrovia aimed at exploring challenges and opportunities for the Liberian civil society from a rights-based perspective, as well as validating the preliminary findings of the assessment.

Information in reports and responses from different stakeholders has been triangulated through the different interviews throughout the data collection phase. One example is perspectives on the National Civil Society Council of Liberia (NCSL), where the information given by the governmental informants has been compared with data given by national and county leaders of the council. Different members of the council have also given their reflections on the council, many times without the evaluators having to pose direct questions. Another example is information on the space and the leadership within youth organisations of young women and girls. Different responses from independent informants have been compared. Preliminary findings from the interviews were also validated with the four partner CSOs as well as affirmed with one national network NGO, New Africa Research and Development Agency (NARDA), which has nearly three decades of experience working with international, national and community-based organisations across Liberia.

⁴ Sixty-seven (67) respondents: 31 women and 36 men.

In this report, CSO is being used as a general term for all kinds of civil society actors, including national civil society platforms and secretariats, trade unions, community-based organisations (CBOs), faith-based organisations and other types of organisations labelled as NGOs.⁵

1.2.1 Approaches

This study has been guided by four overall approaches:

1. *Gender perspective*: Primarily assessing how and if a gender perspective is used in the work of the organisations and institutions interviewed⁶, and how this influences their analysis of strategic areas of work. In most cases the evaluation team has avoided posing questions that are too obviously gender related and has preferred to listen to what is said, how it is said and what is not said in relation to gender, the situation and position of women, gender rights abuses, males involvement in gender equality, etc.
2. *Human rights-based approach (HRBA)*: The respondents have been asked to explain how their work methods and objectives relate to the four dimensions of HRBA prioritised by Sweden; i.e. accountability, access to information and transparency, participation and non-discrimination. In most cases the evaluators have used indirect questions related to the four dimensions rather than direct questions on each specific dimension. The relations between duty-bearers and rights-holders have been explored and special attention has been paid to how the interviewed CSOs relate to grassroots and community-based rights-holders when they are neither members of the organisation nor an evident target group of their work. Questions on the existence of active and meaningful participation and local rights-holders' ability to influence the agendas of the CSOs have also permeated throughout the interviews.
3. *Conflict sensitive approach*: The CSO informants have been asked to clarify, as far as possible, who the organisation represents, who is behind the initiatives they work with, and their vision and mission as civil society actors. The evaluation team has paid particular attention to issues of mandate and legitimacy in relation to the rights-holders.
4. *Evidence-based advocacy and research approach*: The evaluation team made some effort to assess the extent to which civil society actors carry out their advocacy based on evidence-based research and findings.⁷

1.2.2 The Scope of the review

Apart from the already-mentioned aspects of the scope of the assessment, the current and potential linkages and areas of cooperation between civil society support and other contributions by the Embassy of Sweden have also been considered in the analysis:

⁵ The concept NGO is also widely used in Liberia as a general term for civil society actors, but often refers to international and national professionalised organisations that are often based in Monrovia. NGO appears as a concept in this report when referring to consulted documentations and national policies.

⁶ With a particular focus on the four CSO partners to the Embassy of Sweden and their local partners.

⁷ With a few exceptions, nearly all CSOs have very limited capacities to conduct research. There was no evidence that the four partners to the Embassy of Sweden are collaborating with local partners to change this situation at the moment.

- Specifically considering the New Deal approach, Public Financial Management Reform, Decentralisation Reform, Land Reform, Support to Development of Markets and Value Chains in Agriculture in Liberia, International Finance Corporation, the Joint Programme on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and the Security Sector Reform;
- The extent to which the current areas of civil society cooperation complement other current and relevant development cooperation programmes by the Embassy;
- Potential positive and negative trends in terms of prioritised civil society sectors in Liberia, financing, characteristics of partner organisations (“stronger” national organisations or “weaker” regional or local organisations) etc.;
- The extent to which the current support corresponds with the needs and priorities of national partners, considering, for example, support modality (project vs. core support), support to long-term capacity development vs. service provision, areas of capacity development, balance between (cost for) capacity development and funds forwarded to national partners.

1.2.3 Limitations

The Liberian context is challenging when it comes to planning and confirming meetings with key stakeholders. This is mainly due to weak infrastructure and difficulties in accessing actualised directories. Some of the interviews had to be confirmed many times and/or rescheduled. This hindered the team from planning some joint meetings.⁸

Flexibility and improvisation, including help from third parties, had to be used to enable interviews with some of the key stakeholders. Having said that, the assessment could still be carried out with a large number of respondents, and almost all stakeholders made themselves available for an interview.

The interviews have been made with available respondents. To a great extent, they have been the most relevant and strategic persons to interview for this review. It has not been possible to select additional respondents in the same organisation (with the purpose to secure different perspectives), nor has the team been able to steer towards the representation of, for example, a certain age, sex or groups with less voice or influence in the institutions. The assessment is mainly based on the voices of formal leaders with employment, or some form of remuneration, within the organisations and institutions. All of them generally have strong backgrounds in CSOs at the national, county and district levels.

The evaluation did not include any visits to on-going projects or participation in activities implemented by the local partner organisations. It was therefore not possible to observe implementation techniques, meeting dynamics, gendered relations within the organisations, or how HRBA is, or is not, practiced. The assessment relies, to a great extent, on responses in the interviews, written reports and other documentation.

The civil society support in Liberia was initiated quite recently and in different years with the four CSOs: KtK in 2011; SFCG in 2012, while NDI and Mercy Corps just started their programmes in 2013. This had consequences for the overall assessment of the civil society support. The evaluation team has, to a large extent, relied on how project focus

⁸ The initial plan was to organise joint meetings or workshops with different actors during the visits to Bong and Grand Bassa counties. This idea had to be abandoned due to the difficulty of accessing respondents in good time before the field visits. We generally had to arrange meetings / interviews through local contacts on the ground to expedite the process.

and objectives are expressed in project documents and in-depth interviews. In the case of KtK, progress reports were also available and it was possible to obtain direct information on the cooperation from a selection of local partners. This was, in part, also possible for the SFCG project. For the MC and NDI projects, the evaluation only relies on how focus areas and implementation strategies are presented. There was no implementation to follow up.

It is important to note that the study is an evaluation and not a mapping of the Liberian civil society or the donor support to civil society. The scope of the evaluation allowed interviews with a limited number of civil society actors in 3 out of 15 counties. The sample can only be considered to be representative in relation to the Swedish civil society support.⁹ The focus of the interviews was the relevance of the current Swedish support and it was not a comparative analysis of the areas of work or activities of the CSOs. Discussions with the donor community focused on their perception of Liberian civil society and how donors support the different roles of the CSOs.

The evaluation was also expected to discuss the New Deal approach. Most respondents in Liberia had no comments or gave very little and vague information. The conclusions are therefore limited to an overall analysis of the evaluators and are not based on any in-depth or informed discussions with the different stakeholders.

Furthermore, in a post-conflict country the role of CSOs, be it positive or negative, is central to addressing root causes of conflict. The evaluation team has had a basic working assumption that the application of HRBA and a gender perspective should largely contribute to conflict reduction. But the evaluation team also recognise that transparency can lay bare simmering conflicts between different groups of rights holders. The evaluators judge that there would have been a clear value in applying a “do no harm” frame of analysis in this evaluation, but time and resources did not permit the use of this methodology in a rigorous manner. Where conflict-related issues were encountered in the evaluation process, these are duly noted, but the evaluation team recognise that this issue would benefit from more in-depth analysis.

1.3 DISPOSITION OF THE REPORT

This introductory chapter is followed by a presentation of Liberian and Swedish strategies for the civil society support and an overview of the objectives of the four supported projects. Chapter 3 presents the findings of the review and provides a brief analysis of the situation and position of the Liberian civil society. Chapter 4 relates to the linkages between other Swedish support and civil society. Conclusions on the relevance of the current Swedish civil society support are given in Chapter 5 and, finally, the recommendations for on-going support and the future Swedish result strategy for Liberia are found in the last chapter of the report.

⁹ Two partner organisations to the Embassy of Sweden recently produced overviews of the status of the Liberian civil society and the relationship between citizens and civil society organisations; a Civil Society Landscape Assessment by SFCG (February 2013) and a Baseline Assessment for the NDI programme (June 2013). These two studies are based on a more comprehensive civil society analysis and could be regarded as different forms of civil society mappings.

2 Liberian and Swedish Civil Society Policies

2.1 LIBERIAN GOVERNMENT'S CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGIES

The Agenda for Transformation (AfT), Liberia's current five-year medium-term economic growth and development strategy from 2012 to 2017, highlights the role of CSOs as agents of change in practically all critical national processes. The AfT has been strategically aligned with the national vision: Liberia Rising 2030, which is intended to transform Liberia into a middle income country by the year 2030. The Government of Liberia (GoL) states that a broad range of actors in Liberian society, including CSOs, youth groups, religious groups, government agencies, political parties, private sector and development partners, were engaged and consulted during the process developing the AfT. Furthermore, the GoL held a comprehensive participatory process across the country in order to promote a national consensus on a shared vision of national development. Accordingly, the contributions of key stakeholders including, civil society and the private sector, were solicited and incorporated.¹⁰

During this assessment, the majority of CSO respondents clearly articulated a different view on civil society participation. Their experience was that civil society actors had very limited involvement in the process from the beginning. Of great significance is the fact that the GoL has made commitments toward civil society. First and foremost, the AfT clearly states that “this strategy recognises the importance of the private sector and civil society and that coordination among government and various actors are critical if Liberia is to achieve its development goals.”¹¹ Second, the GoL will engage civil society and all partners in the most critical transformation of the country's history, from a fragile post-war state to a more stable, unified nation with a vibrant future.¹² This entails, among other things, an active role for civil society in the dialogue between political actors and social groups. Third, representatives of key CSOs and the private sector will serve as members of the Liberia Development Alliance, which is a steering committee that is responsible for the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the AfT implementation at the national level.¹³

The CSOs are seen as key in civic education, in civic oversight, including in monitoring of concessions,¹⁴ in increasing the participation of, for example, women and youth, in creating awareness on rights-based perspectives, and in the coordination with the government. As a collective actor, CSOs are expected to provide and facilitate “relevant information that involves the role of CSOs in the implementation of the AfT

¹⁰ Republic of Liberia Agenda for Transformation: Steps for Liberia Rising 2013. p.31

¹¹ Ibid. p.35

¹² Ibid. p.46

¹³ Ibid. p. 154.

¹⁴ That is “CSO monitoring of concession agreements, mineral revenues and regulatory compliance for environment and worker safety.” AfT.

and achievement of the relevant outcome indicators. Representatives from CSOs will also participate actively in the AfT National Steering Committee, the AfT Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Steering, and the M&E Working Group”. The CSOs are, for example, mentioned in relation to:

Table 1 Perspectives on the role of civil society in *Agenda for Transformation*

The development of the security sector enhancing peace and security and the forestry and mining sectors; transformation of the economic sector including the area of energy policy;	Nation-building and decentralisation: policy development, review of legislation, increasing citizen’s access to public policy issues; capacity building for political and civic engagement, particularly young people;
Education (CSOs focusing on early childhood development and infrastructure development) and social protection where CSOs are expected to contribute to the improvement of services, provide input in the review of the legislation on social protection;	Public sector modernisation and reform: increase community monitoring, contributing to the strengthening anti-corruption ¹⁵ , transparency and accountability of the public and private sectors and the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act (2010);
Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) where CSOs are to play a role in hygiene education and in advocating for resources to the sector;	Enhanced governance: “Strengthen strategic networks and coalitions of CSOs to work together with government to promote enhanced transparency and accountability, communication, and public information [...]”
Human development - capacity building in all sectors: providing responsive and effective skills and capacity training programmes as well as community awareness raising programmes, strengthening of civil society and community leaders, including the establishing of coalitions and networks is mentioned under human development in order to monitor and enhance the quality of human development programmes; On capacity building on cross-cutting issues (CCI) “Establishing and strengthening coalitions and networks of CSOs at national and local levels which could work together to address key CCIs (e.g., youth and women empowerment issues; human rights and links to security	Cross-cutting issues: Gender equality: support women’s political participation and to strengthen for example rural women’s socio-economic status and possibilities and in agriculture farmers associations and cooperatives have a role to play; Child protection: promote awareness on child rights; People living with disabilities (PLWD): design legal, education, health, economic and socio-cultural programmes to meet the needs of PLWDs; youth empowerment: building capacity of existing youth organisations to ensure that they adopt an inclusive and democratic approach; environment: create awareness and develop baseline data; HIV: awareness raising and coalition building with other stakeholders; human rights: training of

¹⁵ “Education and training of key CSO and community groups will build awareness and motivation for local collective action to hold the government and private sector accountable for corruption”, AfT.

services; environmental degradation issues, especially in the economic sectors of energy, forestry, mining, agriculture; joint formulation, implementation and monitoring of key CCI policies and supporting programmes; public expenditure tracking surveys)."	actors within the judiciary systems, community awareness-raising.
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The Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs has developed a NGO policy regulating registration, accreditation and other formalities of the NGOs. The Governance Commission has a draft CSO policy that was developed in collaboration with civil society actors and with the support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The evaluation team learned that there are plans to merge the two documents together. Without access to the documents, the evaluators were told by civil society respondents that they knew about the content, that there were no further restrictions or limitations on the space or roles of CSOs, and that they assumed that the policy would be received positively by civil society.

2.2 SWEDISH STRATEGIES

The current overall Swedish development objective is to create the conditions for poor women and men to improve their living conditions. All Swedish development cooperation should furthermore part from the rights perspective and the perspective of people living in poverty. The Government of Sweden (GoS) has identified three thematic priorities; gender equality and the role of women in development, democracy and human rights, and environment and climate.

The current Swedish bilateral country strategy for Liberia (2008-2013) is, on an overall level, aligned with the Liberian Government's Agenda for Transformation focusing on areas that are also coherent with the Swedish priorities for its development cooperation. The table below summarises the overall objectives and priorities of the current Swedish Country Strategy for Liberia:

Table 2 Swedish Country Strategy for Liberia

...to strengthen peace, respect for human rights, democratic governance and the effective implementation of Liberia's poverty reduction strategy
<p>All support will be based on the principle of strengthening peace and promoting security and will be guided by an awareness of conflict risks and be conflict-sensitive.</p> <p>The safeguarding of human rights – political and civic rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights – will be given attention in all parts of the cooperation. Support will be designed on the basis of a rights perspective.</p> <p>The promotion of gender equality between women and men and boys and girls will run through the cooperation. The support is to play a strategic role in promoting women's and girls' rights, focusing on women's and girls' security, and will work in an integrated manner for the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The support will create conditions for women to participate in decision-making processes on the same basis as men.</p>

Cooperation areas in the strategy

<p>(i) democratic governance and human rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger, more effective, democratically governed and more transparent institutions in national government public administration, including the police. • A stronger decentralisation process, including greater local participation and influence in political processes. • Greater participation of women in political processes and structures • Implementation of a process for ownership and user rights. 	<p>(ii) agricultural development and business, including regional and international trade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More productive and income-generating employment levels for poor women and men, mainly in agriculture • Improved conditions for women's enterprise and participation in business • Increased business activities and trade, by improving the business and investment climate.
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The Swedish policy for civil society is relevant for this study, since the focus is on current and future support to the development and strengthening of Liberian civil society. The overall objective of *Pluralism* is “a vibrant and pluralistic civil society in developing countries that contributes effectively, using a rights-based approach, to reducing poverty in all its dimensions”. It further states that:

- The application of the principles of participation, non-discrimination, openness and transparency, and accountability mean that Sweden will support independent CSOs in developing countries, whose working methods mean that the people concerned living in poverty have, or are gradually acquiring, knowledge and awareness of their rights and the capacity to claim these rights both individually and collectively.
- Sweden will promote representative, legitimate and independent civil society actors in developing countries that, based on their role as collective voices and organisers of services, contribute to reducing poverty.
- Sweden will pay special attention to the potential of civil society in developing countries to:
 - create opportunities for organisation and create channels, including meeting places for collaboration, through which individuals and groups who are poor and discriminated against can make their voices heard,
 - raise demands for the realisation of their human rights and influence the development of society,
 - act as proposers of ideas and watchdogs of those in power, in general terms, and particularly under authoritarian regimes,
 - act as a counterweight to, and force for, democratisation vis-à-vis the state,
 - offer liberal adult education to strengthen the capacity of individuals and groups who are poor and discriminated against to change their lives,
 - organise and carry out services of benefit to the community.
- In *conflict and post-conflict situations*, civil society actors play a particularly important role. In its support, Sweden will give priority to organisations and networks that uphold standards and attitudes for peaceful coexistence, and that potentially or currently have the scope to influence the situation in a peaceful

direction. They can play a crucial and constructive role through early detection of signs of negative development trends, making it possible to initiate conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution or peace-building initiatives, for example. The implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (on the full and equal participation of women in this process) is to permeate all support to civil society in such situations. CBOs or women's networks that are active in the local area are to be given particular attention.

Also relevant for the Swedish support to Liberian actors is the increased Swedish attention to the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV), focusing on the agency and empowerment of women and girls, their bodily integrity, and the importance of involving men and boys in taking a stand against violence.¹⁶ This implies that the Swedish result strategies that highlight GBV should increasingly support GBV prevention efforts and link them to work that relates to sexual and reproductive health and rights, women's political participation in peace and reconciliation processes, and, for example, in innovative economic programmes that include GBV as part of both the programme and the risk analysis.

As mentioned above, the Embassy of Sweden developed a concept note in March 2012 on democratic culture concerning support to a number of already-identified CSOs. The paper takes departure from the CSO policy *Pluralism* and the country strategy for Liberia and proposes an emphasis is “to be put on **contributing to the democratic culture** – i. e. meeting places, alternative ideas, advocacy, accountability, public opinion and sharing of information, in line with the Swedish policy quoted above. The contributions are to connect democratic dialogue between local and central levels.”¹⁷ The working paper further states that combining “service delivery with the work for a democratic culture” is a way to leverage engagement.¹⁸

2.3 INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY STRATEGIES

OECD/DAC recommendations¹⁹ to its members concerning civil society support emphasises the importance of supporting CSOs in their role as independent actors and promoting an enabling environment for civil society actors. This is also relevant to the way donors are funding CSOs, and DAC recommends the use of mix of funding mechanisms including support to the development of democratic structures and long-term core funding.²⁰ Another recommendation to the DAC members is to regularly engage in direct dialogue with local civil society, including those outside the main cities and with smaller CSOs. DAC also encourages the CSOs to address issues concerning their own

¹⁶ Sidas verksamhetsriktning med arbetet att motverka könsrelaterat våld 2013-2015, Sida, 2013-02-07

¹⁷ Democratic Culture Programme in Liberia 2012-2017, Internal Working Paper, Embassy of Sweden, 7 of March 2012, p.5

¹⁸ Ibid, p.6

¹⁹ Partnering with Civil Society, 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews, OECD 2012

²⁰ The possibility to provide core support was discussed with some of the donors present in Liberia. It seemed that they had little experience of this. The EU representative did not support the idea of “budget support”.

accountability and to follow the Istanbul principles²¹ for the effectiveness agenda. The recent OECD publication *Gender and Statebuilding in Fragile and Conflict-affected States*²² stresses the need for a stronger gender perspective in the international engagement in fragile states and recommends, among other things, the fostering of “linkages with local women’s organisations and grassroots networks ensuring that they are able to access funding and programme opportunities, including by establishing quick-disbursing, smaller-scale funding streams that are accessible to community-based and grassroots organisations.”²³ The study further recommends that the New Deal approach provide an opportunity to strengthen the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and supporting resolutions.

The European Union has a rather broad civil society support in Liberia²⁴. EU has several direct agreements with Liberian CSOs. As a member of EU and a contributor to the EU aid budget, the EU civil society policy is relevant to Sweden. A communication in 2012 from the European Commission²⁵ states that there are three priorities for EU support: to enhance efforts to promote a conducive environment for CSOs in partner countries; to promote a meaningful and structured participation of CSOs in domestic policies of partner countries, in the EU programming cycle and in international processes; and to increase local CSOs’ capacity to more effectively perform their roles as independent development actors. EU also stresses the need for capacity development of local CSOs, giving particular consideration to constituency building and representativeness and providing apt funding to local needs.²⁶ The communication also highlights the role of CSOs as important players in fostering peace and in conflict resolution, particularly in peace-building, conflict prevention and state-building.

2.4 FOUR INTERNATIONAL CSO PARTNERS

Sweden has four direct agreements with international civil society organisations in Liberia, the Swedish Kvinna till Kvinna (KtK) and the US based organisations Search for Common Ground (SFCG), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and Mercy Corps (MC).

All four CSOs implement their projects through local partners.²⁷ Three of them focus specifically on strengthening different capacities and the development of Liberian counterparts. KtK cooperates with nine women’s organisations and networks at national

²¹ The 8 Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness are a set of mutually shared values guiding the development work of CSOs worldwide, Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, www.cso-effectiveness.org

²² Conflict and Fragility, *Gender and Statebuilding in Fragile and Conflict-affected States*, The Development Assistant Committee: Enabling Effective Development, OECD, 2013

²³ Ibid, p. 64

²⁴ EU currently supports 13 CSO projects of a total amount of € 3,529,232, 5 with Liberian CSOs and 8 with international CSOs present in Liberia.

²⁵ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe’s engagement with Civil Society in external relations Brussels, 12.9.2012 COM(2012) 492 final

²⁶ The funding modalities may include for example projects, programme funding, direct award of grants, pool funding, follow-up grants, core-funding, co-financing,

²⁷ A list of the Liberian partner organisations are presented in appendix 3.

and local levels, focusing on “empowering women to take control of their lives; strengthening of women’s capacity in aspects of decision-making both on a personal and on a political level; improvement of the security situation for women to act in the public space; and increased freedom of expression.”²⁸ The KtK programme has been running since 2011. SFCG has worked since 2012, together with six partner organisations, on focusing on natural resource governance, election monitoring and reform, decentralisation and security sector reform. NDI has recently selected four local partners (plus one partner to be determined) and initiated the programme in 2013 with a focus on political organisation, legislative advocacy and other forms of policy advocacy. Mercy Corps also started their project in 2013 and works through one implementing partner in one county, focusing on skills training and creating job opportunities for young Liberians.

Table 3: Objectives and expected result of the supported projects²⁹

KtK	Overall objective of the KtK Project: Contribute to democratic development and a sustainable peace by strengthening women’s position and the respect for women’s human rights in a society affected by war.				
	Targeted actors in the Liberian women’s movement have gone through organisational development, and as a consequence they and their target group have greater capacity and possibility to participate in and affect the progress of Liberian society. (KtK will) support women’s organisations working within two areas; Decision making, participation and women’s human rights, including SRHR and Peace and security, including SGBV:				
	The targeted organisations have achieved autonomous management with democratic leadership, transparent decision-making and elected Board of Directors.	The targeted organisations have set up economical systems that function for proper economic governing.	The targeted organisations have set up logistic systems that function for running the daily work of the organisation, and are comprehensible to all parties involved in the organisation.	The targeted organisations have created a forum for cooperation, also including rural organisations.	The targeted organisations have greater capacity to gain access to decision-making bodies.
SFCG	Overall objective of the SFCG project: improved performance of civil society organisations to contribute to a sustained democratic culture that protects human rights and promotes citizens participation in decision-making processes.				
	Increased programmatic capacity of CSOs and CBOs in engaging the state on governance and development	Increased institutional capacity of CSOs and CBOs for sustained and constructive engagement with	Increased networking and collaboration amongst CSOs and CBOs at national, county and district levels.	Increased interaction between citizens’ organisations and state institutions at the national, county and district levels.	

²⁸ Women’s empowerment programme in Liberia 2011-2013, Application

²⁹ The texts in the table are taken from the project documents of the four organisations.

	issues.	the state.		
	The demand side for better governance among citizens is increased around targeted reform processes. Communication between citizens and state institutions is increased on key development policies. Targeted CSOs have increased <u>institutional</u> capacity to achieve their aims and purpose over a period of time.			
	Strengthen networks between CBOs and CSOs, enhance effective and efficient <u>pro-grammatic</u> capacity including advocacy and results-based interventions and reporting.	Civil society engages cohesively during different governance phases including electoral, decentralisation and constitutional review and amendment process.	Government recognises the unique contributions of CSOs to the nation's development and governance processes.	
NDI	Goal of the NDI project: To further strengthen Liberia's fledgling democracy by increasing greater interactions between citizens, and the legislature and other public institutions.			
	Citizens' political organising and increased legislative advocacy.		Legislature creates more opportunities for citizen access.	
	CSOs ability to identify strategic entry points within the legislative process increased.	CSO leaders and activists' skills and capacity to organise and conduct citizen-centred legislative advocacy campaigns increased.	Dialogue between CSOs and legislators on public policy issues and legislation is increased.	NDI CSO partners provide information to Liberian citizens on activities of the legislature throughout the legislative session.
MC	Objective of the MC project: To prepare unemployed youths to enter the employment market or launch their own small business ventures.			
	Prepare highly vulnerable youth for the employment market by developing self-confidence and resiliency through sports clubs and cash-for-work activities. a. Organise 1,200 vulnerable youth into 30 sports clubs. b. Engage 1,200 vulnerable youth to perform waste management and recycling through cash-for-work.	Increase youth's business skills and vocational aptitude through apprenticeships and business skills training. a. Engage 500 employment-ready youth in on-the-job training as apprentices with local businesses. b. Train 1,700 youth in job searching techniques and business skills.	Improve national partners' capacity to deliver and manage youth employment programmes. a. Deliver 10 programming and programme support capacity building sessions to each of four (4) national partners.	

The international CSOs support or will support their Liberian partners through the following support modalities:

Table 4 Current support modalities to Liberian partner organisations³⁰

Financial support: sub-grants	Capacity building (CB) and/or organisational development (OD)	Other forms of support
KTK Project support to all nine partners and institutional support to one partner.	Thematic and advocacy CB to all partners, joint trainings to the partner group and other CSO, including UN and international CSOs. OD focusing on internal democracy, management systems and resource mobilisation.	Network initiatives, incl. international exchanges. <i>Other support:</i> participation in ITP ³¹ courses.
SFCG Year 1: Pilot project support to six partners on CB and OD. (Request for proposals was used). Memorandum of Understanding with 33 community radio stations.	CB on monitoring and evaluation, including baseline tools, tailored CB plans to each partner, support to CB around advocacy strategies, communication strategies and community work. Collaboration the Association of Liberian Community Radios (ALICOR);	Action research tool for research around the four thematic priorities. The research will include field based research, policy review, literature review and engagement with major policy makers by the partners.
NDI Project support to 4 + 1 partners: advocacy parliamentary monitoring and radio.	CB introductory workshops; Technical assistance to legislative advocacy campaigns; activity mapping sessions; strategic planning;	Meeting spaces with legislators and public officials including partners of the other CSO partner of the Embassy of Sweden.
MC One year project support to one implementing partner, project to be implemented Monrovia and Buchanan.	CB to the partner Liberian Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE); CB to the Liberian Business Association (LIBA), and numerous Technical and Vocational Education and Training institutions	Research to identify which life and psychosocial factors improve youth's ability to confront the rigours of entering the employment market or launching a small business.

³⁰ It should be noted that sub-grant decisions had just recently been made, or were still in process, during the evaluation for the two partner organisations within the Democratic Culture Programme of the Embassy of Sweden.

³¹ International Training Programmes (ITP); thematic courses commissioned by Sida with multi-country participants.

3 Civil society in Liberia

3.1 UNDERSTANDING CIVIL SOCIETY

*Civil society is a ubiquitous term used in Liberia that **draws no distinction between the myriad types of CSOs** (service delivery, humanitarian, human rights reporting etc.) and the various missions, methods and the roles they play.³²*

The study revealed a rather big gap between different interpretations of what civil society is. Donors apply a slightly different understanding of the boundaries between civil society and other actors in the society. The Swedish CSO-policy *Pluralism* defines civil society as ‘an arena, distinct from the state, the market and the individual household, created by individuals, groups and organisations acting together to promote common interests.’ The policy further states that “Civil society organisations are characterised by the fact that they are self-governed, based on voluntary participation and, to various degrees, independent of the state, local authorities and the market; they conduct their activities without profit-making interests, often based on common values.”³³

The Governance Commission defines civil society as: the “space between the household and the government.”³⁴ Some of the consulted civil society actors understood civil society to be the very institutions of the formal and registered CSOs, while community members and citizens in general were not seen as part of civil society. Part of this perspective can be explained by the fact that there are few social movements, most Liberian civil society organisations and community-based organisations are generally established, owned and operated by a few strong individuals and they have no *real* members.³⁵ Traditional and informal forms of organisations are also not seen as an important segment of Liberian civil society.³⁶

The data collection confirmed, to a large extent, the analysis of the status of the civil society made by the Embassy of Sweden and the four CSO partners in their project-related documents. The Liberian civil society struggles with many internal and external challenges. The current environment is assessed as open, where individuals can speak up, but it is still not enabling enough.³⁷ The implementation of the Freedom of Information Act is very limited according to most of the civil society respondents. Although the Independent Information Commission has been set up, huge challenges still remain to make this law operational and fully functional in terms of increasing citizens’ access to information in a timely manner.

There is one clear trend of efforts within civil society to coordinate and regulate the different actors, in order to increase transparency, accountability within civil society but

³² NDI Baseline Assessment for Building Citizen Centered Political Engagement, Liberia, 2013, p.6

³³ *Pluralism*, Policy for support to civil society in developing countries within Swedish development cooperation, Government Offices of Sweden, 2009

³⁴ Interview with Governance Commissioner, Monrovia, September 2013.

³⁵ Only trade unions and faith based organisations were mentioned to have members.

³⁶ Liberian chieftaincy respondents confirmed this finding during interviews at the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

³⁷ CIVICUS places Liberia on the 88th place in their Enabling Environment Index that covers 109 countries, September 2013.

also to avoid duplication and lost lessons learned. The coordination mechanisms include several layers of networking between national, county and district levels. The increased interest in civil society coordination was, however, not perceived by the evaluators as an attempt to build common strategies or to strengthen the collective voice of rights-holders, but more an issue of self-regulation,³⁸ to avoid too many parallel similar projects as well as an effort to consolidate smaller CSOs around thematic areas.

The relation with the national government and local authorities was depicted as cordial and good by almost all civil society respondents, but they stated that the role of claiming accountability of the duty-bearers is seldom welcomed. Specific cases were mentioned concerning negative reactions when CSOs have gone public with their criticism or have mobilised larger groups protesting against concession agreements. This implies the need for discussions between civil society and duty-bearers on the role of CSOs and their engagement in issues related to conflict.

There are serious obstacles to the achievement of a vibrant, pluralistic, inclusive and democratic civil society. The lack of a clear mandate, sufficient representativeness and strategies on how to strengthen the collective voice of rights-holders among the civil society actors constitute real challenges. Access to information and means of communication is extremely limited for both the urban poor and most rural populations, which further hampers them from collectively mobilising and participating in broader civil society space, governance and democratisation of the country.

The different civil society actors compete on a rather limited and donor driven arena for mostly small project- or activity-oriented funds. This competition, the establishment of many new CSOs that do not seek coordination with other civil society actors, and the lack of knowledge of what other actors actually do and achieve, create an atmosphere of mistrust. According to the interviewed representative from the Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL),³⁹ individuals try to promote their entities at the expense of others. The lack of coordination and/or consolidation of activities was also highlighted as a major challenge by the same respondent. LCL also informed the evaluation team that donors and other international NGOs do not usually want to support faith-based organisations, since there is a perception that they are only going to cater to their members at the expense of the broader community.⁴⁰ The issue of who the different civil society actors represent and how they include different groups in their work was something that was raised by many other stakeholders and continues to be one of the core issues for Liberian civil society to debate. This is especially true as Liberian civil society actors continue to seek support from donors like Sweden in the future.

The challenge of representativeness of many Liberian CSOs is particularly serious in relation to rural populations. The concentration of the most vocal and influential CSOs in Monrovia gives urban citizens, at least in theory, a major opportunity to connect to and follow the work of civil society. CSOs based in smaller cities and towns do coordinate

³⁸ In particular to challenge so called sign-board NGOs without any social constituencies funded only to attract international donor funding, but also to challenge organisations with poor track records.

³⁹ LCL works currently with four international partners including the Church of Sweden, DanChurchAid, etc. The LCL does its work in the country behind the scene outside of the media. Lutheran Development Service is the arm of the LCL that does development in local communities around Bong, Lofa and Nimba Counties.

⁴⁰ The LCL raised a major concern about a recent statement by a government official that the Liberia Council of Churches (LCC) has failed Liberians by doing nothing to find remedies to current social happenings. LCC and LCL leaderships have publically rejected her claim by emphasising that they are working behind the scenes to deal with societal ills.

with the Monrovia-based civil society through meetings and seminars in the capital. This was assessed to be mainly urban-to-urban civil society coordination, with few truly rural actors involved. The direct county-to-county coordination between civil society actors was described as practically non-existent by the county-based CSOs. The civil society interaction tends to go through Monrovia and Montserrado County. The opportunities of the county-based urban and semi-urban CSOs to have strong and mutual relations with the communities in the districts are limited. The lack of infrastructure is partly the reason, but how these organisations emerged, as more urban-centred actors going to the communities rather than being built by rural rights-holders, is also relevant. The gap between rural organisations and urban CSOs dominates most areas of work and sectors where civil society is involved.⁴¹ County-based and rural-based CSOs are usually represented by a few individual leaders at meetings in Monrovia that may or may not bring accurate information back to the communities they represent. This presents a huge challenge for the involvement of rural populations and local communities.

Traditional authorities and religious leaders have further concerns related to the gap between urban civil society and the broader population.⁴² Traditional authorities claimed that indigenous people are the legitimate owners of the land in Liberia. The chiefs therefore emphasised that genuine development cannot take place in the country without the involvement of traditional authorities and indigenous people. According to them, their own sons and daughters, in both the government and civil society, tend to forget about them and ignore their abilities to contribute to the development of Liberia. Given the centrality of land to conflict, this could have major implications on the extent to which urban CSOs can play a positive role in relation to future conflicts.

The AfT stresses the positive role of traditional chiefs in conflict management, in particular in regard to land and civil disputes, but also highlight the need to clearly define the scope of the traditional system and to reduce conflicts between the formal justice and the traditional systems.⁴³ Another aspect is that the traditional system is not gender sensitive. Respondents from women CSOs claimed that the legal systems do not work if people cannot pay. So the majority of people turn to traditional methods, even though the traditional justice systems sometimes compromise the rights of women and girls.

According to Joseph Ayee, there is no disagreement over the role of traditional authorities in local governance and development. A traditional chief is the leader of his people. Despite the decline of chieftaincy as an institution, traditional authorities still command great influence in their areas of jurisdiction.⁴⁴ According to an unpublished study commissioned in 2012 by the Governance Commission, entitled *Roles of Traditional Chiefs in a Decentralised Governance System in Liberia*: "at present, the

⁴¹ The evaluation did not include any stakeholders from the agricultural sector. It is probable that the farmers' organisations show a slightly different picture. One example of a stronger connection between rural and urban civil society actors was the organisation around natural resources and land rights (interviews with Save My Future Foundation, NARDA and Civil Society Council in Buchanan).

⁴² The evaluation had an opportunity to interview six traditional leaders at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Over fifty traditional chiefs and tribal governors had gathered at the Ministry in order to participate in a welcoming ceremony of the president on her return to the country from a foreign trip on October 9, 2013.

⁴³ Agenda for Transformation, p. 47-48

⁴⁴ Joseph Ayee, Traditional Leadership and Local Governance in Africa: The Ghanaian Experience, Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ghana at Legon (Paper presented at the Fourth National Annual Local Governance Conference on the theme: "Traditional Leadership and Local Governance in a Democratic South Africa: Quo Vadis" held from 30-31 July 2007 at the Southern Sun – Elangeni, Durban).

ultimate challenge facing Liberia is to account for the proper place of traditional chieftaincy in a decentralised governance system within the context of changing times for generations of today and tomorrow.” Most chiefs in Liberia are not educated and the chiefs observed that “because we are not educated our own sons and daughters in both the government and civil society can leave us out without considering our views for the development of the county.” It was further observed that development must be approved by traditional people in rural communities. The chiefs stated that: “Unfortunately, when civil society organisations go into our chieftdom or district they do not fully inform us.” The lack of accurate and timely information was said to be the biggest problem.

3.1.1 Civil society support modalities

The desk-study revealed highly concentrated support to a smaller donor-driven group of Monrovia-based CSOs. This was found to be coherent with the picture that the different stakeholders gave in the interviews. The analyses made by the four partner organisations in applications, reports and base-line studies are valid sources of information and the evaluators do not have anything specifically new to add to their descriptions of the funding landscape of civil society actors. The relationship to the donor community goes through international CSOs in almost all cases and the strategy to build local capacity, so that Liberian organisations can eventually have direct partnerships with donors, is a strategy that has been used before, during and after the conflict. Liberian civil society organisations, regardless of their size, location and origin, are very donor driven overall and give priority to pursuing funding in order to survive as institutions. Few civil society actors have long-term support that enables a focus on strategic and visionary planning. Funds are project and activity specific, seldom more than 12 months, and core funding is extremely rare.

Networks and platforms have difficulties in raising funds and, when they do get funding, there is a risk that they become more of independent project implementing bodies rather than serving their members and the network. A limited number of networks, such as WONGOSOL (Women’s NGO Secretariat of Liberia), have gained trust among donors, and the support that the secretariat receives from KtK includes support to develop the service for the members. This kind of support was, however, quite rare; though some donors have started to look into the possibility of sharing costs for key functions in partner organisations with many donors.⁴⁵

3.2 RELEVANCE

3.2.1 Assessment of the current support

The agreements with SFCG and NDI fall under the democratic culture programme in the Swedish development strategy. Both of these contributions are assessed to be highly relevant examples of how civil society projects can support local organisations in developing their capacities and different roles as collective actors. They are relevant to the country strategy and the CSO policy, and their projects are coherent with the strategy outlined in the concept paper for the Democratic Culture Programme.

KtK became a partner due to the focus on gender, women’s political participation and role in peace building processes. Even though it is not mentioned in the concept paper, the

⁴⁵ IREX mentioned for example strategies on co-funding of M&E staff.

evaluators assessed the support to be relevant to the democratic culture programme as well as to the CSO policy and the country strategy. KtK has clear objectives on building capacities of their partner organisations and to support strategic movement development.

The cooperation with Mercy Corps and their local partner, Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE), falls under a different logic. This one-year project addresses the needs for skills training and job creating activities for young people and falls under the second area of the country strategy, i.e. *agricultural development and business, including regional and international trade*. LACE was created by law as a government agency with a primary focus on community empowerment and quality service delivery at local levels. As such, LACE is the kind of institution that will not develop into a body of organised people strategising on their collective voice.⁴⁶ The project does not necessarily involve capacity building of civil society actors. The Swedish partnership with Mercy Corps, however, harbours opportunities to work directly with civil society groups representing young people, as well as empowering them through life skills and employment opportunities. This, in turn, will bring improved benefits to the direct rights-holders; as Table 5 indicates, the project is not assessed to be relevant from the perspective of the civil society strategy.

Table 5 Assessing relevance of projects and local partnerships within the projects

Partner project	AfT	Country strategy	Demo- cratic culture	CSO policy	Representing rights-holders	Gender	HRBA	Anti- corrup*	Conflict sensitivity
KtK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly	Yes	Partly	Yes	Yes
SFCG	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly	Weak	Partly	Yes	Yes
NDI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly	Weak	Partly	Yes	Yes
MC	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Weak	Partly	Yes	Yes

*Anti-corruption relates to risk-management within project and capacity building on financial management

3.2.2 Gender perspective

The evaluation team noted, in the inception of this assessment, the risk of not having a comprehensive understanding of gender inequalities and the root causes of discrimination of women in the Liberian society. There seems to be a duplication of certain areas among the actors that actually address gender discrimination, in particular women's political participation (WPP) and sexual gender-based violence (SGBV). The data collection showed few examples of actors that simultaneously work with different gender aspects, or that address the root causes of women's lack of resources and power.⁴⁷ The gender equality agenda of the women's movement tends to give priority to WPP and a focus on women rather than gender relations.

The level of gender awareness among most governmental institutions and civil society actors, including many women's organisations is assessed by the evaluation team to be rather weak. It was difficult to go beyond the list of different forms of discrimination

⁴⁶ LACE is direct partner to the World Bank and does not share the experiences of most of the other local partners in having great difficulties to find direct donor funding.

⁴⁷ Several of the Liberian Women CSO partners to the four international CSOs do have a multiple approach to women's rights and address different forms of discrimination. The interviewed stakeholders, however, did not exemplify this.

against girls and women and the need for women to be involved in different political processes; there were hardly any respondents that discussed the interconnection between the different challenges to gender equality or raised the issue of men's role and engagement in advancing women's rights. Apart from individual examples of male staff in women's organisations, the evaluators were not given any examples of addressing men as a group in initiatives focusing on awareness raising, behavioural change or challenging traditional views on the need for sensitivity to gender concerns and gender mainstreaming.

From a gender perspective, it is worrying that so few actors seem to focus on living conditions of grassroots women, their opportunities to achieve economic empowerment and enjoy sexual and reproductive rights and a life without violence, and have access to basic health care and education. There is a risk of an overly short-sighted focus on women in politics without considering how the women that gain political and organisational positions can maintain and expand their influence within Liberian society.

KtK already states, in their programme proposal (2011), that there is a risk that other gender equality issues than SGBV (focusing on rape) and the implementation of Resolution 1325 could be neglected,⁴⁸ particularly at a practical level. The evaluation revealed that this risk still prevails.

The gender desk-study commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden in 2013 gives an overview of the broad spectra of different forms of gender discrimination and gender biased power relations. Most of the issues brought up in the study are also mentioned in Liberia's AfT as areas of concern.⁴⁹ However, the desk-study does not indicate if there are any areas that would deserve particular attention for Swedish support.

The evaluation team assesses the KtK project to be strategic in its approach of long-term support to women's organisations, with the aim to develop, rebuild, re-think gender strategies for the future. The evaluation has found that the level of gender awareness in the other three partner organisations⁵⁰ is insufficient and that a consensus is lacking regarding what would constitute a strategic approach within each programme to advance women's rights and challenge gender norms from both short-term and medium-term perspectives. The gender perspective in the project documents is limited to "gender balance" among staff and the representation of women and, in some cases, the risk of specific forms of gender-based discrimination. The projects have no explicit gender equality objectives. The selection criteria for partner organisations do not require gender awareness or gender commitments. There are no definitions of what gender means (and it seems that gender is interpreted as meaning women rather than a relational concept of a social and cultural construction), nor does it appear that choice of issues has been influenced by their importance for gender equality goals.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Women's empowerment programme in Liberia, Application, 2011-2013, SIDA/Liberia, The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation also Assessment Memo, Unit Liberia and Sierra Leone, May 26, 2011, Sida

⁴⁹ Though the alarming human rights situation of LGBT-person and the criminalisation of same sex relations is not at all mentioned.

⁵⁰ This only applies on the representation of the organisations in Liberia, we have not assessed the HQ to the organisations.

⁵¹ Mercy Corps has a rights-based *Vision for Change* and adopted a gender policy in 2012: "Mercy Corps developed a gender policy to confirm and communicate that gender equity is essential to our mission and Vision for Change; to establish goals and principles for ensuring that gender equity is addressed consistently in our programmes and organisational culture; and to provide guidance on implementing our commitment to gender equity." www.mercycorps.org; SFCG has a clear focus on people's participation and a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and it states among other things that it "implies making the concerns and the experiences of women and men as an integral part of the identification, design, implementation,

Gender mainstreaming and specific gender objectives were not included in the project proposal to the Democratic Culture Programme and did not include any reference to Swedish gender policies. The Embassy of Sweden states that the dialogue on the proposals resulted in a gender expert in the final budget of the SFCG project and a revised results matrix in the NDI project, making specific reference to integration of gender. It is, however, still unclear to the evaluators if the planned, or already provided, support to internal democratic organisational development addresses patriarchal power relations and what are considered to be the “important core issues” to work with.

It is further observed that some CSOs and their local partners have realised their shortcomings concerning a proper gender perspective. As such, the evaluation team was informed that some deliberate efforts are being made internally to employ more women as staff⁵² within the various organisations. Although this is welcome, it is certainly insufficient in terms of reaching direct beneficiaries and local communities with overall programme interventions and impact in the medium- and long-term.

3.2.3 Risk management and prevention of corruption

Corruption still remains rampant in all sectors of Liberian society. Deeply entrenched patronage networks work together to undermine possible reforms aimed at addressing systematic and endemic corruption. Transparency and accountability must therefore be at the forefront of support to civil society. The evaluation found linkages to other areas of civil society support. With support from the World Bank, Sweden, International Development Association and African Development Bank, the Liberia Integrated Public Financial Management Reform Project (IPFMRP) was designed to support the GoL in improving budget coverage, fiscal policy management, financial control and oversight of public finances of the country. The IPFMRP has five components. The first component is improved budget planning processes, coverage and credibility. The second component is strengthening the legal framework, budget execution, accounting and reporting of the Project Financial Management. The third component has to do with revenue mobilisation and administration. The fourth component is enhancing transparency and accountability, and the fifth component is programme governance and project management.

According to the *Non-state Actors Sub-grant Management Manual (2013)*⁵³, the objective of the Civil Society and Social Accountability (CSSA) sub-component of the IPFMRP is to strengthen the capacity of non-state actors as watchdogs in ensuring transparency and accountability in the use of public funds. The aim is to share information with the public through engagement with non-state actors. Consistent with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act (2010), the CSSA will provide funding as a small grants programme for: Analysis and monitoring of the national and local budget at the various stage of budget preparation, approval and execution cycles; Support for advocacy activities and dissemination of information on all aspects of PFM at

monitoring and evaluation of programmes”.

www.sfcg.org/programmes/ilt/gender_mainstreaming_strategy.pdf; NDI has specific programmes for Women’s Political Participation but no specific gender policy or gender mainstreaming strategy available at their website.

⁵² Aiming at improved gender balance rather than securing a gender perspective.

⁵³ Government of Liberia, 2013. Non-State Actors Sub-grant Management Manual: A Practical Manual For Non-State Actors’ (NSAs) Grants Management Programme in Liberia.

the national and local government levels; and Media training for journalists on covering budget and spending matters.

The Liberian Government, through the Ministry of Finance (MoF), has allocated a total of USD 380,000 for this purpose. The available grants will range from a minimum of less than USD 5,000 to a maximum of USD 20,000 for a period of three months to one year depending on the nature of a particular project proposal.

The MoF has the responsibility to manage and oversee the granting process, which is aimed at ensuring that each grant recipient adheres to their implementation plan.

The evaluation revealed that a small number of key CSOs have already decided that they will not participate in this scheme because of their distrust of MoF. There is a perception that MoF cannot lead a fair and transparent process; however, they also recognise that some civil society actors will go after this money. Needless to say, it still remains unclear how much impact this investment will make on the overall fight against corruption in the public sector. Because the Embassy of Sweden has a proven track record as a great champion of critical reforms in the country, the evaluation team views the current situation as a unique opportunity and an entry point to serve as an effective convener between the GoL and civil society actors.

Furthermore, the evaluation team deliberately discussed the extent to which the current Swedish support addresses and prevents corruption with the four main CSOs and their local partners. Though the key CSOs recognised that corruption is a major concern for the Embassy of Sweden, the evaluation found no evidence of a comprehensive anti-corruption initiative. At present, they are undertaking concerted efforts in incorporating anti-corruption measures in their work, as a part of engagement with local partner organisations. The determinants of the underlying factors of anti-corruption are two-fold: the first factor is focused specifically on establishing a proper financial management system and financial reporting monthly as per guidelines and standards from the Embassy of Sweden. The second is to build the capacity of local partners and transfer essential financial management skills to them. These efforts are specifically focused on integrating anti-corruption practices in order to be in compliance with Swedish standards and regulations. The standards must be as transparent as much as possible. Some local partners have already established financial management systems and want to carry out service contracts for service providers.

The evaluation team could not independently verify this information. Whatever the case is, the evaluation found that setting up financial management systems and reporting, alone, is not comprehensive enough for fighting against corruption within Liberian society. County authorities and civil society actors at the country and district levels provided insight in terms of anti-corruption measures in this regard. Four practical suggestions were made as follows: first and foremost, the selection criteria of local partners must be improved to reduce the risks of individuals selecting organisations based on vested interests in certain organisations and geographic areas. This is currently a major challenge and risk. External assessors would be needed to mitigate this risk in the future. Second, civil society actors also recognise the need for them to be held accountable for their own actions by sharing sources of funding, programme budgets and expenditures with local communities and authorities. Bong County authorities have already introduced a template for CSOs to be able to report such critical information. Only 6 of 30 civil society groups in the county have responded positively, while over 24 CSOs have not

responded at all. Third, civil society groups are also under increasing pressure to demonstrate success by engaging local authorities and their communities. Most respondents advanced an idea to engage local communities and their people in the monitoring and evaluation of programme interventions. Fourth, it was also suggested that smaller CSOs could receive small pilot grants, which could be subsequently increased based on performance indicators. Despite these constructive suggestions, the evaluators' overall assessment is that there is no evidence that any CSO partner has developed either a clear anti-corruption policy or anti-corruption strategies as part of the current civil society support. There was also no capacity building effort which could be expected to lead to more coherent anti-corruption approaches.

Liberia lacks a national integrity system. In recognition of this huge challenge, the GoL recently launched and commissioned a National Integrity Forum, which comprises the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission and other oversight public institutions, civil society, the media and the private sector aimed at designing and formulating a national integrity framework for collaboration in combating corruption in Liberia.

The National Integrity Forum provides an entry point and opportunity for civil society actors to complement the current GoL's anti-corruption initiative. The evaluation revealed that CSOs and local authorities want key donors like Sweden to assist them with technical support to be more transparent and accountable.⁵⁴ This process will involve the development of a national anti-corruption policy, the training of integrity assurance officers and anti-corruption competitiveness evaluation for civil society actors and CBOs. This will hopefully encourage civil society actors to be self-regulating and policing in the fight against corruption in the country.⁵⁵

3.2.4 Human rights-based approach

Practically all respondents confirmed that civil society struggles with challenges similar to those of the governmental institutions, such as: lack of transparency in decision-making process and obstacles to access of information, lack of an accountability culture and weak systems and mechanisms that do not allow claims on responsibility of leaders and decision-makers. The absence of strong linkages with the constituencies and no influence over policy decisions or choice of strategies among members/citizens is another challenge that civil society shares with the government.

The Liberian context is indeed difficult when it comes to the application of HRBA. Many times, the representatives of organised people only represent a small group of individuals and lack a clear mandate from the communities that they aim to support. The data collection yielded numerous statements from respondents describing the Liberian CSOs, in general, as being an elite that is disengaged from the "people on the ground". It is then difficult to talk about active and meaningful participation, how the organisations are voicing the interests of the communities from people's own perspectives, or even about how information flows from the CSOs to the communities and back. Since HRBA is essentially about practicing what you preach, this is a core area of concern for any civil society support in Liberia. To have a real impact on the government's policy formulation

⁵⁴ Integrity is an important aspect of addressing the roots of conflict and such a support would be coherent not only with the Swedish approach to anti-corruption but also its conflict sensitive strategy.

⁵⁵ A classic example involves procurement processes and minimising the use of NGO vehicles for personal benefit by civil society actors, which could be practical ways of instilling discipline in Liberian civil society while, at the same time, maximising benefits to all beneficiaries or rights holders at all levels.

and implementation, civil society actors would need to improve their capacity to function as a channel for collective action. The role of the civil society to monitor the performance of the governmental institutions and to claim accountability, but also to be a constructive partner in the development process, depend on how well the CSOs can reflect the different realities and living conditions of Liberian rights-holders.

The evaluation found that most civil society actors lack the capacity to carry out independent research or evidence-based analyses. There are no policy think tanks in the country with which they could collaborate. This has greatly diminished the ability of civil society to advocate and present evidence-based findings and recommendations to the government and Liberian society at large.

None of the four CSOs uses a full HRBA in their projects, but all have different components that relate to the principles. They are all assessed to have the capacities to apply and promote the HRBA in the implementation of the projects to a greater extent. One finding is that they do not perceive that they are expected to report on how they implement the HRBA principles. Much of the focus in the dialogue with the Embassy of Sweden has been around financial management and how to achieve results. According to the four CSO partners the result discussions have not had focus on HRBA outcomes.

The principle that was most apparent in the discussion with the stakeholders was that of transparency and access to information. Many actors work for increased openness and to inform rights-holders that they are entitled to information on a broad range of national and local processes. Many consulted CSOs highlighted the difficulties in making the law on Freedom of Information work and the need to develop both knowledge and greater understanding among duty-bearers regarding their responsibilities to share information on budgets, programme expenditures, agreements, action plans and others.

Likewise, many respondents discussed the issue of accountability. All interviewed CSOs who are members of the National Civil Society Council of Liberia highlighted the need of addressing accountability issues within and between CSOs to be credible and legitimate watchdogs. This was also something that was brought up by consulted duty-bearers and the donor community.

Though most interviewees acknowledge the need for increased participation at different levels, few discussed strategies on how to strengthen the different forms of local organisations and how communities could take collective action. Rights-holders were defined as beneficiaries and, as such, were mostly depicted as recipients of trainings, awareness-raising activities and likewise. The agency of local people was only really “visible” and/or referred to in four areas in the interviews, community-based women fighting sexual and gender-based violence especially rape and serious domestic violence and physical abuse as well as protests and actions related to the concessions, land grabbing and natural resource management. This would suggest that there is certain capacity related to participation in areas with direct relevance to addressing conflict.

Of particular significance was the recent unrest over land disputes between UK-based Equatorial Palm Oil and residents of Jogbahn Clan, District #4, Grand Bassa County.⁵⁶ Tension was high. The government responded by deploying armed security in the area. During our assessment, the evaluation team observed that about 75 rural inhabitants from

⁵⁶ Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) issued a press statement in support of residents in affected communities. It called on the Government of Liberia and Equatorial Palm Oil to immediately cease land survey in District #4, Grand Bassa County. SDI is a local partner to Search for Common Ground.

the affected communities marched on Buchanan City to present a statement to the county authorities. Civil society actors described a similar situation with Sime Derby in Bomi County as well as mining in Bong Mines, Bong County.

At present, civil society groups are not actively involved in any form of social mobilisation at the grassroots level, except for small rural populations struggling to protect their rights due to concessions in their areas. This was confirmed by a range of consulted stakeholders and is something that the four partnering CSOs highlight in their contextual analyses. Broader Liberian society appears disinterested in issues related to rights to control natural resources and thereby watches from the sideline; this is mostly due to limited access to information in a credible, reliable and timely manner. Given the importance of equitably resolving these issues and avoiding a return to conflict, this lack of interest outside of the affected communities is cause for significant concern.

Further, civil society actors often cited the County Development Fund and Social Development Fund as classic examples of sharing benefits to the local communities and the people in Liberia, but the overall experience in the country has been problematic so far. Legislative caucuses and county authorities make key decisions about these funds without the full participation and involvement of the majority of women, youth and traditional authorities. It is important to note that these groups are historically disadvantaged. As a result, they will be further marginalised if they do not fully understand how the funds are disbursed and utilised. For instance, most poor parents and their children depend on these funding sources to provide scholarships for their university and high school education. Widespread dissatisfaction still remains amongst youths in this regard, which could be presumed to contribute to future conflicts if proper action is not taken to address the situation.

Nearly all CSO respondents agreed on the huge challenge of organising and mobilising rural populations at the grassroots level. Logistics was identified as a major challenge for organisations at the county and district levels.

Attention to the issue of non-discrimination is far from satisfactory. Though most respondents assured that, for example, people living with disabilities were active in civil society networks, the evaluation team found few examples of an active inclusive approach that addresses social power relations leading to discrimination. The four CSO partners did not give any example of the active non-discriminatory methods that they or their partners use to challenge discriminatory attitudes and behaviour within civil society and/or to secure that marginalised individuals or groups can take active part in their organisation and in the activities they implement. The overall challenge of – *at all* – having meaningful and influential participation of rights-holders is still big. The lack of inclusive methods to challenge discriminatory practices against women and girls, stigmatised groups such as LGBT persons or people living with HIV, and to ensure the accessibility of meeting places within the civil society space exist for the CSOs as it does for society at large.

Young women leaders expressed the need to not only focus on gender discrimination within youth organisation but also age discrimination of girls *and* boys in adult CSOs. The marginalisation of young people in the labour market and the difficulties of access to, particularly, higher education for the young population were mentioned by adult civil society respondents; but they did not raise the role that civil society could play to create space and influence and relevant experiences for girls and boys.

The leadership of the National Commission on Disabilities (NCD) confirmed that limited civil society space has been created for people living with disabilities to champion and advocate for their own rights at the national and sub-national levels. Organisational structures have been set up to foster the rights of vulnerable groups.⁵⁷ The assessment revealed that the chances are very slim for Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs) to obtain support from donors. Without asking direct questions, these respondents were quick to point out that the donor community rarely trusts people living with disabilities to manage their financial resources. They, however, recognised that there are generally unfair assumptions about their physical impairments as well as capacity constraints. In 2011, the National Union of Organizations of the Disabled (NUOD) was awarded funding by the European Union for the electoral process through a call for proposal. The issue of fairness was also raised in terms of physical infrastructure and policies to create an enabling environment for them. From a gender perspective, DPOs are generally controlled by males even though this is not necessarily the case in national organisations.

More importantly, physically challenged respondents expressed great disappointment that none of their organisations that cater to people living with disabilities were considered as local partners in the current civil society support by either any of the four main CSOs nor by the Embassy of Sweden directly. The evaluation team strongly believes that this should not be seen as a criticism, but rather as a great entry point for the consideration of a critical segment of civil society in the future.

The fact that Liberian society is an extremely hostile environment for LGBT persons and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was only mentioned by a handful of respondents. Given the very sensitive nature of advocating for LGBT rights, this was not surprising. It is assessed to be very difficult for civil society actors to openly work with methods that promote LGBT rights in the society at large and within civil society. It appears to be insufficient awareness that no contributions supported by Sweden can exclude people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and that when possible a clear stand against homophobic attitudes should be taken.

3.2.5 Enabling influence of marginalised rights-holders

Though not explicitly one of the questions in the ToR, the evaluators here opt to reflect on the gap between vocal civil society actors and grassroots forms of organisation.

A major challenge is the non-existing infrastructure in many parts of the country and the difficulties to reach many counties, districts and local communities. The isolation of certain areas tends to lead to a growing gap between marginalised communities and those that get attention from the government, donors, civil society initiatives or the private sector.

There are initiatives that focus on community-based groups directly and that support these groups and associations with small grants and/or activities whose purpose is to

⁵⁷ The National Union of Organizations of the Disabled serves as an umbrella organisation for people living with disabilities nationwide. NUOD comprises twenty-five Disabled Peoples Organizations. Each DPO is organised to support different causes for different groups of disabled persons in their local communities. NCD works in close collaboration with NUOD as the platform for coordination and networking for all DPOs across the country, while NCD also provides subsidies to DPOs from the government as well as support from donors. The NCD is currently undertaking support initiatives in Bong, Margibi, Montserrado and Nimba Counties while new programmes are being launched in Grand Gedeh, Maryland and River Gee Counties. Regional offices provide educational support for children with disabilities, health care, restoring eye sight, and livelihood activities such as seedlings for agriculture.

strengthen mobilisation and organisation at local levels. But these initiatives seem to be isolated activities that fail to connect local organisations at community or district levels with other civil society actors on the country or national level. Programmes that focus on movement building or basic associative knowledge and development were not mentioned by the civil society respondents. Only the trade unions were mentioned as a social movement with memberships at different levels. Civil society networks and platforms do not support their member organisations to grow in numbers nor develop more democratic and inclusive forms of organisation.

The focus on capacity building within the projects of the four partner organisations to the Embassy of Sweden does not highlight basic institutional democratic development and grassroots/member mobilisation. The partner organisations do not appear to be implementing activities that are intended to increase the number of members or form new groups that could evolve into formal organisations or members of existing civil society platforms. It is, however, important to note that the project design is still under development for some of the supported projects.

The assessment did not include interviews with farmers associations or cooperatives, nor was it possible to visit villages to discuss existing forms of organisation at the village level. Only one respondent mentioned traditional forms of organisation as one way for people to organise themselves to address social and cultural issues. Consulted CSOs at county level do work with different groups at the district level, but the evaluators did not understand this work to be part of an approach to build or reconnect the organisations' constituencies, but rather as activities to inform, train or reach community members with different services.

According to the *Directory of Civil Society Organisations* published in November 2012 by the Governance Commission and CSOs, the number of registered CSOs is high; there are approximately 1,452 CSOs across 15 counties throughout the country. However, many respondents, most of them from civil society itself, claimed that many of these organisations do not have physical offices or any active activities, but are only a "sign-board". Regardless of the actual number of registered organisations, the most interesting aspect is not explained by the directory, i.e., how many Liberians are directly or indirectly organised through these civil society organisations.

The baseline study performed by NDI states that citizen participation "seems largely [be] based upon specific individual events that may be taking place (i.e., town hall meetings) rather than sustained engagement".

Swedish development cooperation emphasises the perspective of the poor and all support should either aim to strengthen the voice and influence of women and men, girls and boys living in poverty. The absence of grassroots participation within most CSOs is undermining the perspectives of the poor. There is a lack of clarity concerning how and if civil society is strategising towards a stronger and real participation of people experiencing the consequences of discrimination and the deprivation of their human rights. The Embassy of Sweden has expressed concerns about how to support such social organisation but, to our understanding, it has not yet identified mechanisms for such support.

4 Linkages with other Swedish support

The assessment also includes an overview of possible linkages and areas of cooperation between the different sector-specific portfolios at the Embassy of Sweden. Per a request by the Embassy of Sweden, linkages to civil society are highlighted in some of the on-going projects and, when relevant, relate them to the projects of the current civil society support. It should be noted that the linkages listed here are inevitably somewhat speculative, as a comprehensive analysis of these projects was not possible. The suggestions given here are only referred to on a general level in the last chapter and are not repeated in the recommendations.

Support to the Land Commission UN Habitat, (February 2011- December 2013)

Given the importance that land rights and land reforms have in Liberia, particularly in relation to conflict, this project is indeed linked to the civil society space and the ability of civil society to voice the rights and claims of rural populations. The project mentions the role of international and national organisations, but it was not possible to assess the forms or level of interaction and coordination with the civil society.

- It would be relevant to follow up on how the Land Commission is engaging in civil society dialogue at national, county and district levels.
- Support to monitor the work of the Land Commission could be given to SFCG and NDI partners working with natural resource management.
- Special attention could be paid to how HRBA and attention to gender equality could be used to assess the impact of changing land governance on conflicts over resources.

Financial Management Reform Project (March 2012 – June 2016)

The aim of the programme is divided into four components, of which the last one relates to transparency and accountability. During data collection, the team heard of some initiatives by network organisations around monitoring and budget tracking. Most likely, there are similar projects concerning the capacity of civil society to follow financial flows.

The open budget principle and ongoing financial management reform can increase access to information about budget processes but, to our understanding, this has not been fully realised so far. One key CSO respondent suggested the need for an open expenditure initiative so that civil society actors can track and monitor public procurement and expenditure processes. According to the CSO respondents, access to information is limited despite the Freedom of Information Act. The act is a very important piece of legislation aimed at increasing citizens' access to information, thereby promoting accountability and transparency. Equally challenging is the low literacy on how to understand budgets and how budget processes function.

- The Integrated Public Financial Management Reform Project could be complemented by direct capacity building to support CSOs to develop their

understanding of financial systems and budget processes as well as monitoring techniques that are applicable at national, county and district levels. Also, coordination around lessons learned and what challenges civil society has identified with regard to public financial management is relevant and could be a possible area to look into further. The CSO partners to the Embassy of Sweden could be consulted on what actors could provide such support.

Support to development of markets and value chains in agriculture in Liberia (preliminary October 2012 – September 2017)

Since this programme is under development there could be great potential in linking civil society support to smallholder farmers and their associations, as well as to associations of other actors in the value chains being supported. It would be relevant to investigate if and how the supported associations perceive themselves to be part of civil society as a basis for seeing how they could benefit from and contribute to broader civil society learning.

- Relations with civil society organisations, with experience in supporting mobilisation among farmers and organisational development of farmers' associations to strengthen their voice in dealing with other actors in value chains, could open up synergies between this project and the Swedish civil society support.
- Presuming that these organisations have a stronger membership base than other Liberian NGOs, there could be two-way learning between these more commercially oriented organisations and civil society in general.
- Development of value chains will inevitably lead to changes in access and use of land and other natural resources. A conflict sensitive approach, drawing on the voice of these organisations, representing smallholders and small-scale entrepreneurs, will be essential.

Joint Programme on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (May 2009- December 2013)

This is indeed an important programme for civil society, since it deals with some of the most impeding factors for women's societal empowerment and engagement. The evaluators did not receive specific information on how civil society is participating in the programme (other than as a service provider in some centres attending to rape survivors) and did not understand if women's organisations have any role in monitoring. The evaluation team was informed that there is more work "on the ground" and that there is work with "NGO structures."

It is not clear if the second phase of this programme has been able to broaden the concept of SGBV as planned to also include aspects such as early and forced marriages and female genital mutilation (FGM). This was, however, one of the few examples where men's engagement was mentioned as a deliberate strategy to decrease gender discrimination.

- The different methods and strategies used in the programme would be interesting to share with women's organisations and other CSOs working on SGBV. The outcomes from the efforts to work with one-stop centres, the work with journalists and the network of traditional and religious leaders against SGBV would also be worth discussing with the four partnering CSOs and their local partners. The KtK project already has clear linkages to the SGBV project and KtK; and its partners

would most probably benefit from the lessons learned in the SGBV project but also provide relevant input to what could be a next step for the initiative.

- Given the priority that Sweden is giving to GBV prevention, lessons learnt from this project in regard to civil society engagement in prevention work, including male involvement, are highly relevant for future support.

Security Sector Reform (SSR) (2010-2013)

The respondents that commented on the justice system highlighted the difficulties of accessing the system, partly because every step in the process involves costs, and that most people instead prefer to go to the traditional justice system. This has large implications for addressing conflicts through the rule of law and access to justice; women's rights, in particular, tend to be compromised in the traditional system. UNDP mentioned that, for example, SFCG provides legal awareness-raising among CBOs.

Sida's assessment memo⁵⁸ states that local ownership at all levels of Liberian society is a primary concern and asks what role CSOs have in this. Likewise, the dialogue between the Liberian government and civil society/grassroots representatives of the population was identified as a key area between Sweden and the UNDP/GoL.

Also relevant in this context is the progress of another programme; the *Democratic Policing in Liberia- Forensics*, and whether the programme has shown any results in increasing people's knowledge on their rights, of the law and of the functioning of the legal system. This was foreseen to take place through programme communication and information activities in the programme.

- The implementation of the SSR has great relevance for how social and legal conflicts are being addressed by local authorities and the police. The support to the civil society's claims for accountability regarding the security reform is strategic. Given that there is sufficient knowledge within the security system of the right of civil society to monitor and use complaint mechanisms, this will contribute to reduced conflict.
- The report on the indicator improvement of the security situation for women to act in the public space in KtK's programme could be relevant to follow up on. KtK and its partner organisations could also be active in monitoring the results of the SSR programme, considering the long experiences KtK has of giving capacity building to actors in the sector, and the knowledge of the partner organisations on how the security situation develops "on the ground". Also, the partner organisations to SFCG that work on Security sector reform could be relevant to link to a parallel follow-up to the SSR programme.

The *Decentralisation reform project* is still under discussion. The very nature of the programme deals with power relations between national and sub-national levels and should take into account how citizens can exert influence over the process and secure that existing levels of accountability and transparency on behalf of the duty-bearers improve. The outcomes of these processes may have profound implications for addressing the roots of conflict.

⁵⁸ Assessment memo: Support to the UNDP Justice and Security Trust Fund in Liberia – 2010-2013. 23 November, 2010, Konflikt/Liberia/Sierra Leone, Sida.

This programme could definitely generate opportunities to engage civil society throughout the programme process, as a dialogue partner on the success of the different stages of the reform, through securing that different civil society actors have access to information concerning the process and serve as channels to specific sectors and to organised citizens in general, and by providing capacity building to civil servants on their roles and responsibilities towards citizens and civil society actors. If appropriate skills can be mobilised among the international CSO partners, “do not harm” analysis could be applied to understanding how decentralisation processes may impact the future landscape of conflict risk.

There could be various entry points in this process for the partnering international CSO and their Liberian partners. There are several local partners that work, in particular, on decentralisation and local democracy and they would be relevant actors to involve should the project be approved. The Embassy has the opportunity to serve as a linking agent and share information on the supported reform to its CSO partners and maintain a close dialogue with the Governance Commission on how civil society is engaged.

4.1 THE NEW DEAL

The Busan outcome document launched the New Deal approach to international engagement in so-called fragile states.⁵⁹ The approach has five Peace-building and State-building Goals (PSG) for fragile states to focus on in order to reinforce their resilience.⁶⁰ The Government of Liberia, through the Ministry of Finance, is partnering with the international donors of USA and Sweden in the implementation of the approach.

Liberia was selected as a pilot country in 2011 for a project aimed at enhancing the quality and availability of data on donor funding to peace-building activities. The process has been somewhat delayed, but a Fragility Assessment and corresponding indicators have been developed; and the GoL recently took⁶¹ the decision to develop a New Deal Compact which will set the priorities for the five goals. This will involve coordination with different stakeholders, including civil society.

An online tool, a New Deal Dashboard, on donors’ peace-building support has also been launched by the Ministry of Finance’s Aid Management Unit, in collaboration with UNDP. According to the UN in Liberia, it will allow “customising how the data is organised, generating information on places, regions and types of peace-building projects being implemented in Liberia. It will also provide the Government of Liberia with information needed to make decisions for future peace building initiatives.”⁶²

Civil society representatives participated in the development of the Strategic Roadmap for National Healing and Reconciliation (2012-2030) and take part in the New Deal Task Force. The evaluation team did not get any specific data on who these civil society actors are or what parts of the civil society they represent.

⁵⁹ www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/busanpartnership.htm; www.newdeal4peace.org/

⁶⁰ PSG 1: Legitimate Politics: Foster Inclusive Political Settlements and Conflict Resolution; PSG 2: Security: Establish and Strengthen People’s Security; PSG 3: Justice: Address Injustices and Increase People’s Access to Justice; PSG 4: Economic Foundations: Generate Employment and Improve Livelihoods, and, PSG 5: Revenue and Services: Manage Revenue and Building Capacity for Accurate and Fair Service Delivery.

⁶¹ October 4, 2013 according to information given by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

⁶² Liberia launches system to track peacebuilding projects, Friday 28 September 2013, www.unliberia.org.

5 Conclusions

5.1 ALIGNMENT WITH THE CURRENT STRATEGY

On a general level the evaluators conclude that the current support is broadly relevant in relation to Liberian policies and strategies, the Swedish country strategy and that three of the assessed partnerships are relevant to the Swedish CSO policy. There are areas that are not addressed, or lack sufficient attention, that could be strategic for, and coherent with, Swedish support.

Civil society support is not only congruent with the objectives stated in the Agenda for Transformation and the identified needs of building capacities of citizens and their organisations. The multiple roles of civil society and the number of areas of intervention all imply a rather comprehensive support to civil society.

5.1.1 Clarity on what civil society Sweden is supporting

Given the unclear and mixed interpretations in Liberia on what the civil society is, should or could be, donors have been insufficiently explicit in their partnership strategies and in what they mean by civil society support. Also, partners, regardless of whether they are the government, the UN, or international or domestic CSOs, need to define what forms of popular organisations they refer to when they say that they support or work with civil society. Considering the commitment Sweden has made to the rights-based perspective and the enabling of people's collective voice, all Swedish support that involves civil society must be clearly based on the principles of HRBA. This implies that the promotion of transparency, accountability, participation and non-discrimination should be objectives for both civil society development and societal processes at large.

As a result of the different conceptions of civil society, there is a risk that the Swedish support does not reach actors who have a strong commitment to enlarge and deepen the influence of the direct rights-holders in rural, peri-urban and urban communities. The vague definition of CSOs opens up for support that, foremost, strengthens already vocal individuals and small groups rather than building structures and arenas for collective action.

The overview of the current support does not give a clear picture of what kind of civil society development the Swedish support is expected to contribute to. This is particularly true for the indirect support to civic engagement, CSO involvement and CSO and government dialogue in bilateral projects with the GoL and/or UN bodies. It is also partly true for the ongoing support which uses four CSOs as intermediaries and capacity builders.

The project implemented by LACE, with Mercy Corps as a formal partner, is not coherent with a strategy that focuses on the development of civil society capacities. The mere fact that the agreement partner is an international CSO is not enough to place the contribution within civil society support. The project can be relevant for other objectives, but the fact that the support was included in this assessment is an example of the ambiguous use of the concept civil society by the Embassy of Sweden.

The evaluators have had difficulty discerning Sweden's overall theory of change for civil society in the Liberian context. There is broad consensus among civil society actors themselves, and among donors and the governmental institutions, on the need to give priority to the capacity building of CSOs. Capacity building is also that which Swedish civil society policy highlights as one of the most strategic approaches in contributing to a vibrant and pluralistic civil society that is able to serve its members and claim accountability of the duty-bearers. However, this requires certain types of capacity development. Considerable resources are currently being invested in organisations for technical skills, project and financial management, etc., without securing if they also have a commitment to develop their democratic structures and culture.

The evaluators understand that Sweden wants to see civil society in Liberia growing into a more inclusive, participatory and representative arena in which rights-holders can engage directly rather than only through spokesmen at central positions and in central locations. However, there is insufficient clarity regarding what this profound change will require in terms of support priorities and modalities.

5.1.2 Building movements or experts on monitoring?

The role of civil society in monitoring the performance of the duty-bearers is essential in the HRBA and in the Swedish policy. Advocacy-targeting governmental policies often require expert organisations, due to the nature of the work (since it involves high-level political contacts and demands preparedness and negotiation skills). The same is also true for much of the monitoring of the implementation of political commitments. To follow-up on decision-making at national, county and district levels, the reform process or budget-tracking requires specific capacities, but also sufficient human and financial resources.

The Swedish strategy to support civil society so that they, to a certain extent, can function as a counterweight and/or complement to the large support to Governmental processes is potentially appropriate. If the CSOs are to fulfil a monitoring role in relation to large bilateral initiatives, they will need long-term financial and technical support that allows their institutions to grow and develop their analytical capacities. The size of the actual Swedish support to civil society is not proportionate to the task and the challenges of the monitoring activities. Another challenge is that the support to civil society actors and to the government is not coordinated in such a way that enables the CSOs to monitor the actions of the GoL, or to develop systems and use the monitoring mechanisms that are already in place. The lack of infrastructure for communication and transportation, absence of functioning institutions that can provide necessary information and insufficiently trained civil servants are some of the challenges that require extra human and financial resources in order to make real monitoring of the duty-bearers' performance possible.

Even if the resources to the expert organisations increase and certain CSOs improve their ability to fulfil the role of watchdogs, the issue of mandate and inclusive approach is still unresolved. A donor like Sweden (committed to HRBA, perspectives of the poor, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), to mention some areas that Sweden champions) needs to support CSOs, both in their capacity to claim accountability and their ability to voice the demands of rights-holders. It is also important to address how credibility and legitimacy can be gained through broader participation and influence by different rights-holders outside the group of key persons and the staff of the CSOs.

It appears that the Embassy/Sida is more focused on the financial management and control environment than in developing the legitimacy and mandate of the CSOs, including their space and opportunities for collective action in relation to the authorities. The conclusion is that capacities for developing social movements and basic associative development, based on democratic culture and standards have not fully been in focus.

Rural and traditional forms of organisation seem to be overlooked by most actors in Liberia, including Sweden. Given the roots of the conflict in rural areas, this challenge is particularly notable. However, the growing focus of the portfolio on land, decentralisation, and market-oriented agricultural development involves opportunities to overcome the prevailing urban bias.

5.1.3 Gender equality

The evaluation revealed that the gender perspective could have been more central in the development of three of the current initiatives; i.e., in the context analysis, choices and design of methods and partner selection criteria. However valid the projects might be from other perspectives, the lack of gender mainstreaming and gender equality objectives is likely to diminish the effectiveness and the sustainability of the outcomes of the individual projects.

The evaluation team believes that this can be corrected to a certain extent by giving gender analysis and gender monitoring greater attention in the dialogue on the on-going partnership, both between the four CSOs and the Embassy of Sweden and between the individual partnering CSOs and their local partners. The four international CSOs have policies, strategies and methods that can be used and further contextualised to the Liberian realities.

The evaluation team further stresses the importance of continuing to focus on the root causes that impede women from playing a more active role in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of Liberian society. Sweden has a strong mandate from its national constituencies to focus on progressive, comprehensive and inclusive gender strategies that address some of the more contested and controversial human rights of women and girls, as well as of LGBT persons. Sweden is already contributing to the very relevant focus on SGBV and could further strengthen on-going support, and/or consider new initiatives to embrace an even more pronounced approach to SRHR.⁶³ The increased focus of Sweden to support the prevention of GBV is highly relevant and opens up for the possibility to support actors that challenge traditional gender norms and seek to involve boys and men in the work to strengthen gender equality and address limiting and destructive expressions of masculinity. Liberian women and girls need to be a part of a vivid and democratic development of Liberian civil society. To be able to do that, the fundamental sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls need to be secured and respected. Women's economic empowerment depends partly on their role in local economies and development of small-scale agriculture and business, and their access to skills training and job opportunities. Women's economic agency cannot reach its full potential without an explicit commitment to their fundamental rights and a life without violence.

⁶³ Sweden currently supports maternal health and sexual and reproductive health services in Liberia through the Global Fund H4+. The initiative includes six African countries, among them Liberia, and aims to decrease preventable maternal, newborns, and child deaths. The fund does however not address sexual and/or reproductive rights in particular.

The strong focus on women's political participation has somewhat distracted women's organisations from also addressing basic enabling conditions for reaching and maintaining power. Women are only, of course, just like men, entitled to hold political and decision-making positions from a democratic perspective. While WPP is an essential element in any gender equality strategy, women's political empowerment also needs to be accompanied by an agenda of voicing and securing women's rights. The Swedish support to the area of WPP could benefit from support to the articulation of a Liberian feminist agenda.

The focus on GBV is strong; comprehensive gender equality support would benefit an equally strong commitment to issues like SRHR, women's economic empowerment, girl's and women's level of education, women's real space in social and political processes and settings. Sweden could contribute to a greater focus on these areas.

The evaluation team also concludes that the initiative that KtK and other organisations are taking to recall that the 10-point Liberian Women's Manifesto that was promulgated by women's organisations in 2006 is a strategic approach to visualise that the women's movement had earlier been able to develop common strategies and gender equality goals.⁶⁴

5.1.4 Rights perspective and the perspective of the people living in poverty

The evaluators conclude that, though human rights and democratic processes are in focus in most of Sweden's support, the human rights-based approach has not been fully used. The conditions for a pronounced HRBA have not been clear in the partner dialogue and in the assessments of proposals made by Sida and the Embassy of Sweden.⁶⁵

All four CSOs have different components that relate to the principles of HRBA but could still further develop the application of the approach. This is an area that would benefit from greater attention from the Embassy of Sweden, since the assumption in the Swedish steering documents is that the lack of a human rights-based approach will have negative consequences for the inclusion of conflict sensitivity and the effectiveness and sustainability of the Swedish support. A more developed discussion on *how* to implement a rights-based approach in the different partnerships would most definitely benefit the rights-holders that Sweden intends to strengthen.

The focus in HRBA on active, meaningful and influential participation of the rights-holders poses high demands on parting from the realities and demands of people being exposed to discrimination and poverty. While it was clear that all four partnering CSOs focus on different driving forces behind poverty and exclusion, the real representation of poor communities could be further strengthened. It is essential that the poverty perspective is not only referred to as an overall goal (e.g. decrease or end poverty), but permeates throughout local partner project implementation.

The evaluation team is aware of the difficulties in Liberia in providing direct civil society support to people living in poverty, and still conclude that the poverty perspective risks being undermined by too many chains of cooperating and implementing civil society actors who do not represent the rights-holders. An inclusive poverty perspective parts from the direct voices and interests of people living in poverty.

⁶⁴ Liberian Women's Manifesto, A call to action, 2006

⁶⁵ Some assessments have been made by Sida HQ while others are made by the Embassy.

5.1.5 Sweden's added value as a donor to civil society

Sweden has extensive experience with supporting social movement building and grassroots mobilisation. Sweden has a clear commitment to strengthening civil society, as an actor in its own right, and the Swedish policies provide a clear mandate to focus on the development of rights-holders' organisations. As a donor, this gives Sweden great flexibility to provide support for associative and institutional development to locally-based organisations.

The Democratic Culture Programme has opted to support Liberian civil society through different international CSOs as intermediaries. This support modality is probably not only fairly effective, but also the most feasible given the limited resources at the Embassy of Sweden for civil society support.

Sweden has a strong commitment to human rights and democracy, which stems from a holistic and rights-based approach to development. This enables Sweden to place high expectations on their partners, whether they represent governmental institutions, civil society, research institutions, private sector or international institutions and organisations, and when it comes to implementing the principles of the human rights-based approach.

The commitment to gender equality and the rights of women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, is equally explicit and supported by a broad popular and parliamentary constituency in Sweden. This gives Sweden a unique position to support organisations that defend socially and culturally contested rights and that promote progressive and inclusive strategies for human rights for all women and men, boys and girls, regardless of their age, civil status, origin, ethnicity, religion, education, bodily or intellectual abilities, social and economic status, gender identities or sexual orientation.

5.2 TRENDS IN CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT

The evaluators found that the current Swedish support to civil society focuses on many of the same issues and approaches as other donors. Three of the international partners already play a central role as intermediaries between donors and Liberian civil society, a role that has been enhanced by the Swedish support. They are relevant and capable partners. The evaluation shows that the Embassy of Sweden has not, so far, given priority to innovative projects or to high risk contributions (as for example testing pilots, financing initiatives in remote/isolated counties or districts that lead to high costs for staff and transportation, or in supporting projects that focus on highly contested rights). Such risk aversion may have adverse implications for a focus on conflict-prone areas and therefore detract from a focus on the objectives of the country strategy.

The tendency of the donor community to only provide short-term project support to Liberian civil society has many contributing factors. There are high risks of mismanagement and corruption due to low technical capacities, and lack of transparent, functional and democratic decision-making structures. It is also true that most organisations do not represent their members or allow these members to have real influence. But it is also true that while donors continue to impose relatively higher demands on technical skills and systems on the civil society than on governmental institutions, CSOs will continue to have difficulties to grow into strong movements with stable institutional structures. The funding allows the organisations to organise activities

and to take part in trainings, but gives limited opportunity to develop long-term strategies, broader funding structures and address issues of sustainability.

5.3 COORDINATING DIFFERENT SUPPORT

All projects in other sectors could have relevant entry points for the engagement of civil society actors, either providing space for CSOs as actors in their own right, or approaching CSOs as resources to build capacities among duty-bearers and rights-holders.

The evaluators conclude that it would be strategic to enable a deeper understanding of the roles of civil society among public officials and decision-makers (duty-bearers at different levels) within programmes supporting governmental processes and structures. This is something that Sweden could contribute to. This would involve an awareness of the meaning of access to information, openness and transparency in practice and could also include support to monitoring mechanisms (the development, the application or the information on them).

The evaluators find the support for decentralisation reform (if the project is approved), land reforms, public financial management reform, as well as the focus on market and value-chain development to be of particular interest for strengthening local empowerment and people's collective action at grassroots level, as well as for addressing conflict. There is a potential risk of worsening the situation of people's rights and local influence if civil society is not considered in these processes. Support to local farmers' associations (existing or development of these kinds of CBOs) and other rural organisations have proven to be vital in other parts of Africa for the defence of interests of smallholder farmers in land reform processes and during large foreign investment in agriculture and forestry.⁶⁶

5.3.1 The New Deal

It was difficult to assess what is actually happening with the donors and GoL coordination around the five Peace-building and State-building Goals. Few references were made to the New Deal during the interviews. The data collection did not allow the evaluators to draw any conclusions about how the approach is influencing the donor strategies; or what role civil society is playing in the New Deal Task Force; the stakeholders simply did not develop any thoughts on this. The Strategic Roadmap for National Healing and Reconciliation (2012-2030) was not mentioned and it was not clear how civil society is involved in its implementation.

The approach has been criticised elsewhere by civil society actors for not giving civil society a meaningful and active role in Fragility Assessments, strategy and development design, and monitoring,⁶⁷ Experiences from other New Deal Compact processes, e.g. the case of Somalia, show that there is a risk for a government and donor driven process in which civil society actors are not involved.

⁶⁶ A relevant example is the Swedish support to civil society development in Niassa, Mozambique, where large forestry investments have taken place. Farmer's associations in coordination with other CSOs have been able to monitor and report on large scale land acquisitions and lack of compliance of companies and local authorities in relation to local/social development funds.

⁶⁷ CONCORD response to the EC Communication on Civil Society Organisations in Development Cooperation, October 2012.

It is highly relevant that Liberian CSOs that work on the rights of marginalised people and communities promoting conflict sensitive social change, including gender equality, are accounted for in the coordination of the approach and in the development of the priorities for the New Deal Compact in Liberia.

5.4 LESSONS LEARNT

This chapter concludes by once more highlighting areas that is assessed to be critical for Liberian civil society to become real channels of collective voices and mobilisers of collective actions:

1. The already-initiated discussion within civil society on transparency and accountability will be crucial in order to gain greater legitimacy in relation to citizens and duty-bearers at different levels. The different forms of existing civil society networks and platforms need to carefully look into how they can support their members to strengthen the democratic structures for participation and decision-making.
2. Civil society organisations need to be proactive in accessing donor support for processes that ensure representation of rights-holders at different organisational levels and that enable stronger linkages between people's organisation at village, town, district, county and national levels.
3. The legitimacy of civil society as a collective voice also depends on reliable and evidence-based data on the situation of people's living conditions, access to services, security and rights as citizens. Tangible support is needed to foster strategic advancement and collaboration between CSO and national and regional research institutions.
4. CSOs need to be proactive in searching for donor support for the development of long-term strategies/visions for their institutions, including space to develop initiatives for resource mobilisation and productive projects that will decrease the dependency on a few donors and contribute to increasing their sustainability.
5. Increased representative and rights-based civil society participation is vital, not least in introducing efforts to address risks of conflict, in: Forestry; agricultural sector and land reform; Decentralisation reform; Security sector and justice system reforms, including programmes aiming to increase access to justice and security for human rights defender and monitoring of the public and traditional systems; monitoring public health and education services with focus on women's and girls' access to services, their sexual and reproductive rights as well as young people's access to comprehensive sexuality education and protection from harmful traditional practices.
6. Finally, a pooled donor-funding mechanism to support Liberian civil society at the national, county and district levels could be a strategic step to increase the transparency on what funds are available and to diversify the group that accesses the international civil society funds. Such a pooled fund should have clear management guidelines put in place so that the funds can be made available in a competitive, transparent and accountable manner. All civil society actors embraced this as a means to support long-term capacity building and sustainability.

6 Recommendations

1. The Embassy of Sweden is recommended to place greater emphasis on gender and HRBA in the partner dialogue and encourage more clear gender equality objectives and more developed strategies for change that involve increased voice, participation and non-discrimination of marginalised rights-holders. In line with this, the Embassy of Sweden is recommended to:
 - a. Provide dialogue space with the CSO partners on the Swedish policies related to HRBA and gender equality, including the thematic priority areas of the gender policy.
 - b. Encourage KtK, SFCG and NDI to further develop the application of HRBA in their projects and in their support to local partners;
 - c. Encourage SFCG, NDI and MC to discuss with their local partners how a gender perspective could be further promoted in planned activities, in the design of trainings and in the different actions for networking and lobbying. Consider using KtK's expertise in the Democratic Culture Programme.
 - d. The Embassy should, as a donor, require reports on the progress of increased civil society space and meaningful and influential participation of rights-holders in all its support (including projects implemented by UN and the Government of Liberia).
2. Share information internally at the Embassy on portfolios that involve civil society directly or indirectly, in order to identify overlaps, synergies and areas for deepened dialogue with implementing partners.
3. Share information with the CSO partners on Swedish initiatives that involve civic engagement and different roles for civil society, including as service providers,⁶⁸ and in addressing conflict.
4. Clearly define what civil society support is, to avoid misconceptions and unclear or incorrect expectations. The Mercy Corps project is not categorised as specific civil society support in Sida's database PLUS; it falls under sector support to education. The rationale to include the project in the evaluation has been unclear.
5. When supporting civil society to enhance their role as a watchdog of the implementation of bilateral programmes funded by Sweden, the human and financial resources required to monitor large-scale programmes in a context such as Liberia need to be carefully considered. The lack of functional institutions and the difficulties of accessing information require that the funding is considerably large and long-term.

Sweden's added value as a donor to civil society actors, has lead us to give the following recommendations for the development of Swedish development cooperation with Liberia:

1. Sweden should continue to partner with civil society actors in their own right and continue to enhance the importance of civil society support in addressing issues of

⁶⁸ For example, the CSO one-stop clinic or CSO providing trainings to civil servants.

accountability and transparency, inclusive and non-discriminatory approaches to local development and reform processes, the need to monitor human rights abuses and promote poor people's perspective on development.

2. Sweden should give priority to modalities that enable long-term financial support that not only involves the building of technical capacities, but also strategy and policy development as well as institutional development, i.e. building of constituencies, member influence and stronger democratic structures. This could include direct support to organisations that already have experience of direct donor relationship (e.g., EU grantees) and core support to a limited number of Liberian CSOs (through direct agreements or through intermediaries). Also, Sweden should consider coordination with other donors supporting civil society and the possibility to create a pooled civil society support fund that would allow direct support to Liberian civil society organisations at district, county and national levels.
3. Sweden should support projects and civil society organisations that have a clear human rights-based approach, with relevant strategies and methods on how to secure active participation, non-discrimination and increased awareness of the benefits of associative and institutional building.
4. Sweden should increase its support to civil society partners with a strong commitment to promote gender equality and SRHR.
 - a. It is also important to continue to promote a broader understanding of sexual and gender-based violence and encourage a stronger commitment within the donor community to address the root causes of SGBV. The increased focus by Sweden on the prevention of GBV is strategic and it is recommended that the Embassy of Sweden to seek partners that have a holistic approach to the drivers behind gender-based violence and the capacity to also involve men and boys in the prevention work.
 - b. Sweden should support CSOs with the capacity to articulate strategies and initiatives that challenge the root causes behind unequal gendered power relations and discrimination based on gender identities and sexual orientation.
5. The GoL has expressed strong commitments to civic engagement in different developing processes and reforms identified in the AfT. The Swedish support to civil society should give priority to building the capacities of civil society actors at county and district levels. This will contribute to the ability of organised rights-holders to follow-up on the proper implementation and monitoring of the AfT.
6. Sweden should try new models of support in small-scale initiatives, identifying areas and issues where people organise collective actions to defend their rights and increase their awareness and knowledge, considering for example:
 - a. support to organisations at district and community levels within existing CSO platforms and networks;
 - b. taking a calculated risk to pilot support towards a few targeted civil society organisations (with relatively good representation of direct members/community rights-holders), giving support to inclusive and democratic organisational development, through incremental core support and/or seed funding. County civil society groups can work and coordinate project activities of small organisations at the district level. Special attention

- needs to be given to civil society actors with a proven track record of programming interventions and financial management;
- c. direct project support implemented by grassroots forms of organisations, focusing on farmers' associations or communities involved in protecting land rights, mobilising against misuse of concessions, or similar. Consider the possibility to open up to support to smaller CSOs, preferably through one funding mechanism.
7. Civil society support could benefit from a civil society liaison function at the Embassy, with responsibility to identify and follow up on the different civil society components in Swedish support in other portfolios. Such a function would help the Embassy to visualise possible synergies between the various forms of interaction with civil society and enable the staff responsible for the agreement with CSOs to further support civil society when specific opportunities for change arise in relation to democratic, conflict and social processes. Information on the commitment to different projects with UN bodies and GoL for civic engagement and coordination with civil society actors could also be given to the Embassy's CSO partners. This would enable partnering CSOs to monitor the degree of civil society engagement in other interventions supported by Sweden and also validate the impact of such an engagement.
 8. Focus is needed on some of the larger programmes supporting the GoL and identify specific processes in which civil society can play a role and be a dialogue partner, e.g. in joint capacity building initiatives in the decentralisation process; in security sector or SGBV projects using the experiences of women and SRHR organisation to promote a broader approach and understanding of sexual violence beyond just rape.
 - a. Also consider specific support to increase the understanding among public officials of the different roles of civil society and their capacity to engage with civil society actors.
 - b. The Embassy of Sweden could also contribute to bridge the gap between traditional leaders and civil society in Liberia, for example by organising a workshop on the roles of civil society.
 9. Issues of natural resource management, land and large-scale land acquisitions (and potentially related conflicts) should have a stronger place in civil society support. The lack of interest in these issues outside the communities is cause for significant concern. The Embassy of Sweden should explore the possibility of supporting civil society initiatives that monitor the compliance of the concession agreements (both on behalf of the private sector and the Government) and land rights of rural people. Coherence with support to value chain development and decentralisation will be essential.
 10. Finally, deep-rooted corruption still remains a major challenge for Liberian society at all levels. Liberian civil society is not an exception. Just setting financial management systems and financial reporting to donors is not enough. Civil society actors must therefore be self-policing and regulating in the fight against corruption. Sweden should support projects and civil society organisations that have a clear anti-corruption initiative, with relevant anti-corruption policies and strategies in the fight against corruption in the country.

7 Annexes

ANNEX 1 – CONSULTED DOCUMENTS

Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, Busan, Republic of Korea, 29 November-1 December, 2011

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- In-depth Assessment of Kvinna till Kvinna's Programme for Liberia "Women's empowerment programme in Liberia" for the period 2011-2015, Assessment Memo, Unit Liberia and Sierra Leone, Sida, May 26, 2011
- Women's Empowerment Programme in Liberia, Beslut om insats, Konflikt/Team Lib/Sle, Sida, 2011-07-01
- Women's empowerment programme in Liberia, Application, 2011-2013, SIDA/Liberia, The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation
- Women's Empowerment Programme in Liberia, Inception Phase Report Sida Contribution No: 52090033, Revised 3rd February 2012
- Women's Empowerment Programme in Liberia. Annual Results Progress Report 2011, Sida Contribution No: 52090033, 11th May 2012, including appendixes

Search for Common Ground:

- Strengthening the Capacity of Civil Society to Promote Sustainable Governance, Programme Proposal, Search for Common Ground, Liberia
- Strengthening capacity of civil society organisations to promote sustainable governance in Liberia 2012-2015, Search for Common Ground's First Progress Report, Report period: November 2012 – April 2013
- Quality Assurance Committee: Strengthening capacity of civil society organisations to promote sustainable governance in Liberia 2012-2015, Minutes, Embassy of Sweden, 2012-07-19
- Appraisal of Intervention, Strengthening capacity of civil society organisations to promote sustainable governance in Liberia 2012-2015, Embassy of Sweden, 2012-10-08
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- Liberia: Building Citizens Centered Political Engagement, Revised Application, November 18, 2012, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)
- Year 1 Workplan, February 1, 2013 to January 31, 2014, Building Citizens Centered Political Engagement, NDI
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Support to the Land Commission, Project document, UN-HABITAT, December 2010

ANNEX 2 – INSTITUTIONS AND PERSONS CONSULTED

67 key informants (31 women and 36 men)

LAST Name	First Name	Sex	Position	Organisation	Location
ATTIDIGAH	Nellie	F	Programme Officer	Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia	Monrovia
BJÄLLERSTEDT	Jöran	M	Ambassador, Senior Advisor	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden	Stockholm
BLOH	Oscar	M	Country Director	Search for Common Ground	Monrovia
BOIMA	Fallah S.	M	President	National Union of Organizations for the Disabled	Monrovia
BORBOR	Grace S.	F	Animator	Women's Rights Watch	Buchanan, Grand Bassa County
BRYANT	Matthew Z.	M	Chairman, Planning	Bassa Youth Caucus	Buchanan, Grand Bassa County
BURKE	Bill	M	Chief of Party	IREX	Monrovia
CANDAN	Zuleika	F	Field Representative	Kvinna till Kvinna	Monrovia
COOPER	Hon. Etweda A.	F	Superintendent, Grand Bassa County	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Buchanan, Grand Bassa County
DANS	Per	M	Counsellor, Senior Programme Manager for Private Sector Development & Trade	Embassy of Sweden	Monrovia
DENNIS	Ricardia Biado	F	Executive Director	National Commission on Disabilities	Monrovia
DIKENAH	Musu Kasselie	F	Program Officer	Kvinna till Kvinna	Monrovia
DU	Thomas	M	Program Officer	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs	Monrovia
FAHNBULLEH	Louise J.	F	Democracy and Governance Specialist	United States Agency for International Development	Monrovia
FORD-WILSON	Naomi	F	Secretary General	Lutheran Church in Liberia	Monrovia
FREEMAN	Onike	F	Project Coordinator	Search for Common Ground	Monrovia

GABRIELSSON	Frida	F	National Programme Officer for Democratic Governance and Human Rights	Embassy of Sweden	Monrovia
GADKARI	Monica	F	Country Director	Women's Campaign International	Monrovia
GOLAKAI	Nessie	F	Assistant Resident Representative / Governance	United Nations Development Programme	Monrovia
GRAY	Lyn	F	Senior Civil Society Specialist	IREX	Monrovia
GREAVES	Frances R. Diegh	F	Former chair of the Civil Society Council, former executive director of WONGOSOL and Executive Director of VOFI	Voice of the Voiceless International	Monrovia
HUGGINS	Allison	F	Country Director	Mercy Corps	Monrovia
JARWOLO	Eddie	M	Executive Director	National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections	Monrovia
JACKSON	David	M	Chairman	Youth Action for Development	Buchanan, Grand Bassa County
JANGAR	Hon. Joseph B.	M	Assistant Minister for Culture and Custom	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Monrovia
Jansson Landin	Susanne	F	Programme manager	Dept. for Conflict and Post-conflict, Sida	Stockholm
JENKINS	Keturah	F	Administrative Assistant	Association of Evangelicals of Liberia	Buchanan, Grand Bassa County
JERBO	C. Wesseh	M	Coordinator	Women in Peacebuilding Network	Buchanan, Grand Bassa County
KAMARA	Ma Lovofa	F	Operations	Traditional Women United for Peace	Brewerville, Montserrado County
KARNGA	Martha F.	F	Executive Director	Bassa Women Development Association	Buchanan, Grand Bassa County
KELLY	Munah	F	Programme Officer	Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia	Monrovia
KENNEDY	Jallah	M	National Programme Officer	Embassy of Sweden	Monrovia
KIAWU	Annette M.	F	Deputy Minister for Research and Technical Services	Ministry of Gender and Development	Monrovia
KOLALO	Anthony S.	M	Program Officer	National Youth Movement for	Monrovia

				Transparent Elections	
KOLLIE	Rev. Abraham	M	Chair	Civil Society Focus Group	Buchanan, Grand Bassa County
KONYON	Francis S.	M	Program Manager	Center for Justice and Peace Studies	Gbarnga, Bong County
KWENAH	James	M	Administrator	Institute for Democracy, Governance and Development	Buchanan, Grand Bassa County
LAWRENCE	Charles	M	National Programme Officer	Embassy of Sweden	Monrovia
MANRIQUE DE LARA	Carlos Battaglini	M	Natural Resources and Civil society Programme Manager	Delegation of the European Union to Liberia	Monrovia
MCCUTCHEAN	Aubrey	M	Resident Senior Director	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs	Monrovia
MAKOR	James C. D.	M	Executive Director	Save My Future Foundation	Monrovia
MANNBERG	Susanne	F	Field Representative	Kvinna till Kvinna (KtK)	Monrovia
MANLEY	Stephen S.	M	Senior Policy Analyst / Programme Manager	Governance Commission	Monrovia
MATHEWS	Lancedell	M	Executive Director	New Africa Research and Development Agency	Monrovia
MOBERH	Henrik	M	Second Secretary	Embassy of Sweden	Monrovia
MULBAH	Hon. Elizabeth Sele	F	Commissioner for Civic Engagement, National Identity and Vision	Governance Commission	Monrovia
MULBAH	Stephen J.	M	Executive Director	Rural Empowerment Foundation	Gbarnga, Bong County
NAH	Thomas Doe	M	Executive Director	Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia	Monrovia
PLATVOET	Leo	M	Program Officer	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs	Monrovia
REEVES	Cllr. P. Tapleh	F	President	Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia	Monrovia
ROSSI	Flore	F	Project Officer	Embassy of France	Monrovia
RUHOMAKI	Marja	F	Programme Officer Democracy and Human Rights	Embassy of Sweden	Monrovia

SACKIE	Prutus	M	Human Rights	United Nations Mission in Liberia	Monrovia
SANKAITUAH	Joseph Jimmy	M	Program Manager	Search for Common Ground	Monrovia
SAYEE	James Pay	M	Paramount Chief	Ministry of Internal Affairs	River Gee County
SEATON	Gondai K.	M	Acting Executive Director	Bong Youth Association	Gbarnga, Bong County
SHERIFF	Hon. Anthony Boakai	M	Development Superintendent , Bong County	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Gbarnga, Bong County
SIAKOR	Franklin Obed	M	Former Senator	Bong County	Gbarnga, Bong County
SIAKOR	Slias K.	M	Lead Campaigner	Sustainable Development Institute	Monrovia
SIEH	Mama Torma	F	Executive Director	Traditional Women United for Peace	Brewerville, Montserrado County
TARNUE	Benjamin	M	Executive Director	National Coalition of Civil Society Organizations of Liberia	Monrovia
TOOMANN	Dorothy K.	F	Executive Director	Development Education Network – Liberia	Gbarnga, Bong County
TWEA	Stella	F	Gender Advisor	United Nations Population Fund	Monrovia
VILLE	Isatu	F	Vice President	Federation of Liberian Youth	Monrovia
WEAH	Michael	M	SGBV Programme Associate	United Nations Population Fund	Monrovia
WEAH-WEAH, III	S. Aaron	M	Project Officer/Focal Person for SIDA Project	National Youth Movement for Transparent Elections	Monrovia
WODAJO	Tizeta	F	Democracy & Governance Officer	United States Agency for International Development	Monrovia

ANNEX 3 – LIBERIAN PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Name of partner organisation		Location	Project abstract
Kvinna till kvinna	AFELL	Bomi, Bong, Grand Bassa Counties	Support for establishment of legal offices. Follow up the enactment of the DV-law.
	LIWEN	Monrovia, Montserrado County	The project is expected to yield the following results: Support 200 women will have increased understanding of Model-law (rights and responsibilities as HIV/AIDS person) and drug adherence. Positive women will have received dignified care towards the middle and end of life. Women will have been able to live more freely in their communities.
	MARWOPNET	Voinjama, Lofa County	Through community dialogue the project aims to increase knowledge of international covenants and human rights documents in seven communities around Voinjama, Lofa County. The dialogues will help to empower women to stand up for their rights in the community, thereby reducing the prevalence of gender based violence and increasing their use of non-violent conflict resolution methods. They will also teach women of their right in regards to passing the border with their merchandise to reduce their vulnerability at the hands of border guards. Additionally the project aims to strengthen previously trained border monitors to be able to report Early Warning Signs in the border area and report to relevant authorities.
	SEWODA	Maryland, Grand Kru, River Gee Counties	Rule of Law, knowledge of women human rights. Working in Maryland, Grand Kru and River Gee. Working in 62 communities
	WANEP/WIPNET	Bomi, Montserrado, Margibi, Grand Bassa Counties	Empower women and men in four targeted communities, in Bomi, Montserrado, Margibi and Grand Bassa Counties, to increase women's participation in community forums, and to increase awareness on gender based violence in order to reduce women's rights violations.
	WONGOSOL	Monrovia, Montserrado County	Institutional support will include developing the management of the office and to develop a long-term (5 years) strategic plan.
	WORIWA	Buchanan, Grand Bassa County	Reduce domestic violence and the exploitation of women through establishing effective mechanisms (CRC) in 11 communities in Buchanan, Grand Bassa. DV awareness raising in Grand Bassa
	WPWHDO	West Point, Monrovia, Montserrado County	The Adult literacy, conflict resolution and mediation project seek to improve the status of women, through education and conflict resolution at the community level for a sustainable and friendly environment. Working in West Point
	LIFLEA	Monrovia, Montserrado County	Establishment of a secretariat for LIFLEA and monitor gender based discrimination and sexual harassment within the Liberian Law Enforcement agencies.
Search for Common Ground	Sustainable Development Institute (SDI)	Monrovia, Montserrado County	Natural resource management working with the three local partner organisations: CJPS, BAWODA and SEARCH
	National Youth Movement for Transparent	Monrovia, Montserrado County	Decentralisation working with the three local partner organisations: CJPS, BAWODA and SEARCH

National Democratic Institute	Elections (NAYMOTE)		
	Security Sector Reform Working Group (SSRWG)	Monrovia, Montserrado County	Security sector reform working with the three local partner organisation: CJPS, BAWODA and SEARCH
	Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS)	Gbarnga, Bong County	Accountability, natural resource management, decentralisation, and security sector reform
	Bassa Women Development Association (BAWODA)	Grand Bassa County	Accountability, natural resource management, decentralisation, and security sector reform
	Special Emergency to Restore Children's Hope (SEARCH)	Sanniquellie, Nimba County	Accountability, natural resource management, decentralisation, and security sector reform
	CSO Consortium on Natural Resource Management (NRM)	Gbarpolu, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Montserrado and Nimba Counties	Sustainable natural resource management, revenue usage and community rights to participate
	Liberia CSOs' Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Network (WASH)	Bomi, Gbarpolu, Grand Kru, Margibi, Maryland, Montserrado and River Cess Counties	Basic needs and basic rights of water, sanitation and hygiene
	Southeastern Women Development Association (SEWODA)	Grand Kru, Maryland and River Gee Counties	Women's development and human rights
	Liberia Media for Democratic Initiatives (LMDI)	Nationwide	A radio programme known as <i>Legislative Spotlight</i> will be broadcasted on commercial and community radio stations nationwide
	To be determined (TBD)	Nationwide	A legislative monitoring organisation to distribute legislative monitoring reports nationwide
Mercy Corps	Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE)	Monrovia, Montserrado County and Buchanan, Grand Bassa County	Partner implementing cash-for-work component of the programme

ANNEX 4 – QUESTIONNAIRE

Category of respondent	Focus of the interview	Set of questions (themes) from the generic guidelines
Governmental institutions/ministries	Future national development strategies Coordination with the civil society (CS) Perspectives on the roles of civil society Prioritised <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • areas of work for CSOs (issues) • geographical areas • rights-holders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sectors not getting attention • Urban vs. rural situation • Local and/or national processes of importance that do not get ODA support • Predicted gaps (donors/actors pulling out, programme ending)
UN agencies	Future strategies/focus areas of different UN bodies (focus on what MDGs, positions in relation to ICPD, CSW, CRC, SDGs) Coordination with the civil society (CS) Views on the Liberian CS Mapping the major back-donors to UN civil society funds in Liberia	
Donors	Mapping development programmes addressed to or channelled through CS Funding mechanisms to civil society in place Donor coordination and harmonisation in regard to supports to CS Paris-Busan agenda – New Deal Views on the Liberian civil society (Strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, good examples) Anti-Corruption initiatives	Enabling environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General situation - Key challenges Windows of opportunity for civil society's engagement and participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local processes of change in motion (with or without ODA support)
INGOs (International Non-Governmental Organisations)	Enabling environment for CSO Istanbul principles/Paris-Busan agenda Views on the Liberian civil society (Strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, good examples) Support modalities – innovative modalities Focus areas and rights-holders in focus Trends CSO as service providers and/or collective voice/advocates Anti-Corruption initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights not getting attention • Not prioritised rights-holders Enabling environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General situation - Specific situation defending specific rights - Registered positive changes - Key challenges Windows of opportunity for civil society's engagement and participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local processes of change in motion (with or without ODA support)
Local authorities and duty-bearers	Relations with civil society (Coordination/Cooperation, service providers, trouble makers, etc.) Views on local organisation/people's mobilisation on rights/development issues Experience of being monitored by CSOs	
National and locally based civil society organisations	Enabling environment Characteristics of civil society Strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Liberian CS Donor relationships Funding trends (what is possible to get funds for)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights not getting attention • Not prioritised rights-holders Enabling environment (for social mobilisation, people's participation in development processes and civil society organisations) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General situation - Specific situation defending specific rights - Registered positive changes
Local partners to	As above but with particular focus on the 4 CSOs	

KtK, SFCG, MC and NDI	Information on Sida funded projects (progress, challenges, views on the support modalities, innovative or traditional support, possibilities for the future)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key challenges <p>Windows of opportunity for civil society's engagement and participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local processes of change in motion (with or without ODA support) - National processes of change in motion (with or without ODA support) - Regional processes of interest - Policy changes - Public opinion on specific issues - New forms of cooperation/relations - Support from new actors - Coordination with governmental development programmes - Coordination with donor funded programme's implemented by other actors <p>(Power) relations/dynamics national and international civil society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relations international and national civil society actors - Division of roles between international and national/local CSOs - INGOs as partner and donors - experiences - Trends: supported sectors, issues in focus, kind of support; promoting service delivery/implementer of GoL policies/social mobilisation and networking/advocacy, or other - Direct/indirect access to donors <p>Liberian civil society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CS Coordination - CS coordination with other sectors and actors (private actors, government, UN, etc) - Trends: supported sectors, issues in focus, kind of support; promoting service delivery/implementer of GoL policies/social mobilisation and networking/advocacy, or other - Strengths and weaknesses as organisations; thematic/geographical/rights-holder groups related representation/representativeness, legitimacy, mandate, - Advocates/voicing rights and local needs; - The service delivery role: are experiences used in evidence based advocacy work, campaigns, awareness raising, sharing of experiences with other actors, etc? - How civil society discuss and address corruption risks. - The approach to CSO respondents (in particular) will be guided by conflict sensitivity taking into consideration <i>who</i> the organisation actually represent, <i>who</i> is behind the initiative, <i>what</i> does the organisation stand for, <i>what</i> is their mandate and <i>how</i> is legitimacy gained in relation to the rights-holders addressed in their work.
KtK, SFCG, Mercy Corps and NDI	Relation with Sweden as back-donor Level of interaction with the Embassy and the other CSOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rights not getting attention - Not prioritised rights-holders - Partner relationships, including dialogue

	<p>Views on the Swedish support</p> <p>Strategies for organisational and capacity development of partners, including HRBA, gender and anti-corruption measures/risk management</p> <p>Strategies for strengthening the civil society</p> <p>Added value as partners (of the 4 CSOs)</p> <p>Sweden's added value/strategic role</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sweden's CSO policy and the development cooperation strategy for Liberia (knowledge of these steering documents, experiences following these and other Swedish policies; opinions on strength and weaknesses of the Swedish support to CSOs) - Roles that the Embassy of Sweden plays (could play) in relation to the civil society - Key issues promoted by Sweden (Sweden as a champion of...) - How gender perspective is being implemented and promoted - Corruption policy and mitigation strategies - Views on complementarity with other Swedish support
Embassy of Sweden	<p>Current civil society support</p> <p>Overall portfolio in relation to the country strategy</p> <p>Donor coordination</p> <p>Sweden's added value as a donor</p> <p>Champion issues</p>	<p>Swedish development cooperation strategy in relation to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paris/Busan agenda (aid effectiveness, coordination, harmonisation, etc) - New deal approach (Busan) - Focus on civil society - Overlaps with other donor's strategies - Uniqueness/special entry points - Sweden's role as a donor - Sweden's "added value" - Support mechanisms and their fit for purpose - Possibilities to further coordination and synergies - Gender equality objectives - Anti-corruption strategies

1. Enabling environment (for social mobilisation, people's participation in development processes and civil society organisations)

- General situation
- Specific situation defending specific rights
- Registered positive changes
- Key challenges

- a) How are duty-bearers' relations towards the civil society?
- b) How would you describe the level of interaction/engagement of the civil society organisations in different processes in the society?
- c) How would you describe the manoeuvring space for the civil society?
- d) Are there any particular limitations and/or opportunities for civil society to act as independent actors and/or to work on specific issues/rights?
- e) Describe the possibilities for CBOs and NGOs (i.e. CSOs) to act as watch-dogs.

2. Windows of opportunity for civil society's engagement and participation

- a) How would you describe the civil society's role and engagement in local processes of change in motion (with or without ODA support)
- b) And in national processes of change in motion (with or without ODA support?)
- c) Are there any regional processes of interest where the civil society plays a central role?
- d) Recent policy changes that favours the roles of civil society?
- e) How would you describe the public opinion on (specific issues) – here we need to ask on specific rights, for example women's rights; sexual and reproductive health, sexual rights, youth's involvement in societal processes, etc.
- f) Knowledge about new forms of cooperation/relations
- g) Knowledge of support from new actors (for ex. Private sector)
- h) Knowledge of examples/experience of coordination with governmental development programmes
- i) Experience of coordination with donor funded programme's implemented by other actors

3. (Power) relations/dynamics national and international civil society

- a) How would you characterise the relations between international and national civil society actors?
- b) How is the division of roles between international and national/local CSOs, *who does what?*
- c) Only to Liberian organisations: Experiences of INGOs as partner and donors.
- d) Only to Liberian organisations: How is your direct/indirect access to donors (embassies, EU, foundations)

4. Liberian civil society

The approach to CSO respondents (in particular) will be guided by conflict sensitivity taking into consideration who the organisation actually represent, who is behind the initiative, what does the organisation stand for, what is their mandate and how is legitimacy gained in relation to the rights-holders addressed in their work.

- a) How is the coordination between different Liberian CSO?
- b) How does the civil society coordinate their initiatives with other sectors and actors (private actors, government, UN, etc)?
- c) Description of trends: supported sectors, issues in focus, kind of support; promoting service delivery/implementer of GoL policies/social mobilisation and networking/advocacy, or other
- d) Discussion on Strengths and weaknesses as organisations;
- e) More or less focus on specific thematic/geographical/rights-holder groups?
- f) How are citizens/rights-holder represented in CSOs?
- g) How is mandate from rights-holders achieved?
- h) Examples of advocates/voicing rights and local needs;
- i) How is the service delivery role implemented: are experiences used in evidence based advocacy work, campaigns, awareness raising, sharing of experiences with other actors, etc?
- j) How does civil society discuss and address corruption risks?

5. Gap analysis

- a) Are there any sectors not getting attention?
- b) Are there any specific rights that do not get attention? "The non-issues"
- c) Discrimination/invisibility or rights-holders in civil society programmes/projects?
- d) Initiatives focusing on Urban vs. rural situation, bias?
- e) Identification of local and/or national processes of importance that do not get ODA support
- f) Knowledge of predicted gaps (donors/actors pulling out, programme ending)

6. Assessment of the Swedish development cooperation strategy in relation to

- a) Compliance with Paris/Busan agenda (aid effectiveness, coordination, harmonisation, etc)
- b) How Sweden addresses the New deal approach (Busan)
- c) Level of the focus on civil society
- d) Are there overlaps with other donor's strategies (donors doing more of the same, donor darlings)?
- e) Identification of Sweden's possible uniqueness/special entry points as donor.
- f) Characteristics of Sweden's role as a donor
- g) Discussion on Sweden's "added value"
- h) Use of support mechanisms and their fit for purpose
- i) Possibilities to further coordination and synergies
- j) How are gender equality objectives addressed in the different civil society supports?
- k) Existence and focus on anti-corruption strategies in supported initiatives.

7. To the CSO partner organisations:

- a) Describe the partnership with Sweden, including dialogue
- b) The CSOs knowledge on(and application o/fcompliance") Sweden's CSO policy and the development cooperation strategy for Liberia,
- c) Discussion on roles that the Embassy of Sweden plays (could play) in relation to the civil society
- d) Identification of key issues promoted by Sweden (Sweden as a champion of..., not done by other donors or few)
- e) How is gender perspective being implemented and promoted in their initiatives?
- f) How are corruption policy and mitigation strategies implemented in their initiatives?
- g) Their views on complementarity with other Swedish support

ANNEX 5 – TERMS OF REFERENCE

2013-05- 27 Embassy of Sweden, Liberia

Terms of Reference

Review of the Swedish Civil Society Support in Liberia

Background

Due to the approaching end of the country strategy for development cooperation in Liberia (July 2008 – June 2013) Sida with support from the Embassy of Sweden in Liberia will be developing a result proposal for Swedish development cooperation, based on the directives and input values from the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In view of this the Embassy will embark on an assessment of the current support to civil society (CS) in Liberia with the aim of identifying recommendations for a strategic and complementary Swedish support to civil society in Liberia during the next five years.

The overall objective of the current Swedish development cooperation in Liberia is to strengthen peace, the respect for human rights, democratic governance and the effective implementation of Liberia's poverty reduction strategy; The Agenda for Transformation. The two main areas identified for cooperation are i) democratic governance and human rights and ii) agricultural development and business, including regional and international trade. All support should be based on the principle of strengthening peace and promoting security and will be guided by conflict sensitive awareness.

Swedish support to civil society is committed to the Swedish policy for support to civil society in developing countries; recommendations from the Busan Declaration (2011); and best practices such as the OECD DAC recommendations on partnering with CSOs. The civil society support should respond to the strategies and needs of civil society organisations (CSOs), be strategic, transparent and well coordinated with other donors' CSO support. It is of importance that the Swedish support to civil society in Liberia does not form an isolated support but rather functions as an integrated part of all bilateral Swedish development cooperation in Liberia.

The current bilateral support by the Embassy to civil society in Liberia is funded via international NGOs and is taking place between 2012-2016. The primary and current partners are Kvinna till Kvinna, National Democratic Institute (NDI), Search for Common Ground (SFCG) and Mercy Corps. Kvinna till Kvinna is providing organisational and financial support to approximately ten CSOs working with peace and security, women's empowerment and human rights in Liberia.

The aim of the NDI led programme is to foster greater interaction between citizens, the legislature and other public institutions. This will be achieved through supporting CSOs' political organisation and legislative advocacy as well as their capacity and opportunities to access the legislature. NDI will work with approximately five CSOs selected during the initial phase of the program.

The support through SFCG aims to improve the performance of CSOs to sustain a democratic culture that protects human rights and promotes citizen participation in decision-making processes. Approximately six CSOs working with 1) decentralisation and accountability 2) natural resource management 3) electoral reform processes and 4) SSR (police) will be 2013-05- 27 Embassy of Sweden, Liberia selected and receive training in media production, consensus based advocacy, public communication and dialogue

The support through Mercy Corps aims to engage youth to develop their vocational capacities through partnership with the private sector while building the capacity of local

institutions to provide enhanced youth vocational training in the future. A Liberian CSO is responsible for implement the cash-for-work component under the supervision of Mercy Corps.

In addition to the civil society support funded from the country programme (Sida's allocation account for bilateral cooperation with Liberia) Sida supports civil society in Liberia from the specific appropriations for humanitarian assistance and via Swedish CSOs, this support however is not to be included in this assessment.

Aim of Study

The main objectives of the assignment are to:

- a) Perform an assessment of the current Swedish bilateral civil society support in Liberia
- b) Present recommendations on guidelines for the future Swedish civil society support in Liberia

Scope

In order to assess the current civil society support the following aspects need to be considered:

- i. The current guidelines for engaging with CS, Swedish as well as international, taking into consideration i) the Swedish policy for support to civil society in developing countries, ii) the Busan Declaration (2011) and iii) OECD DAC recommendations on partnering with CSOs
- ii. The current Swedish Cooperation Strategy - To what extent the current support takes into account gender aspects - To what extent the current support address and prevent corruption
- iii. Current and potential linkages and areas of cooperation between the current civil society support and other contributions by the embassy within identified areas of cooperation - Considering specifically the New Deal approach, the Public Financial Management reform, Decentralisation reform, Land reform, Support to development of markets and value chains in agriculture in Liberia, International Finance Corporation, the Joint Programme on Sexual and Gender Based Violence and the Security Sector Reform. - To what extent the current areas of civil society cooperation complement other current and relevant development cooperation programmes by the embassy
- iv. Potential positive and negative trends in terms of prioritised civil society sectors in Liberia, financing, characteristics of partner organisations ("stronger" national organisations or "weaker" regional or local organisations) etc.
- v. To what extent the current support correspond to needs and priorities of national partners considering for example support modality (project vs. core support), support to long-term capacity development vs. service provision, areas of capacity development, balance between (cost for) capacity development and funds forwarded to national partners.

Based on the assessment of the current support the consultants shall develop recommendations for the future civil society support in Liberia considering the following aspects;

- i. Strategic areas and the most important processes where civil society in Liberia can and should play a crucial role

- ii. The support to civil society by other donors and existing channels of support to local CSOs
- iii. The potential added value of Swedish support
- iv. Suggest guiding principles regarding e.g. the objectives of the Swedish support to civil society in Liberia, organisation and support modalities, criteria for choice of partners (intermediaries and national) and focus areas/sectors

Required Competence

- Very good knowledge of Swedish development cooperation policies and strategies in general including the Swedish Policy for Support to the Civil Society
- Very good knowledge of the Liberian political and social context
- Very good knowledge of democracy, human rights, gender, peacebuilding and security
- Very good knowledge of English

Experiences of supporting other Sida-teams/Embassies in developing a strategic civil society support are an asset

Methodology and Time Plan

The assignment should be conducted through an open and inclusive process, using reference groups where appropriate, and drawing on the other major donors' experiences and current support to CS. The entire Liberia Team at the Embassy of Sweden should also be involved in the evaluation.

The methodology and a detailed time plan are to be proposed by the consultants. The proposal shall include a tentative list of stakeholders to be interviewed to be discussed and agreed upon with the Embassy before start. The assignment will mainly be carried out in Liberia.

The evaluation will preferably take place during mid-July – end of August 2013. The initial findings should be presented at a workshop with embassy staff and relevant partners preferably before the end of August. Based on the discussions and feed-back from the Embassy a first draft of the entire assignment should be compiled and delivered at the latest 2013-09-06. The focal person for the evaluation will be available at the embassy in Liberia from the 29th of July.

Reporting

The consultants shall present their findings in a report of maximum 40 pages containing both the evaluation as well as the recommendations for future guidelines.

All reporting shall be in English.

Resources

2 consultants (preferably 1 international and 1 national) à 6 weeks = 12 weeks.

Contact person

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Review of the Swedish civil society support in Liberia

This is a review of the Swedish civil society support in Liberia. Sweden currently has four international partner organisations, Kvinna till Kvinna, Search for Common Ground, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and Mercy Corps. Their focus on capacity building of Liberian partners is assessed to be relevant to the Swedish policies and the Liberian development strategy. A more comprehensive human rights-based approach is however needed. More priority should be given to organised rights holders at grassroots level and to initiatives that focus on the root causes of discrimination against women and girls in the Liberian society. The review also suggests that Sweden should give issues on natural resource management, land and large-scale land acquisitions a stronger place in civil society support.

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