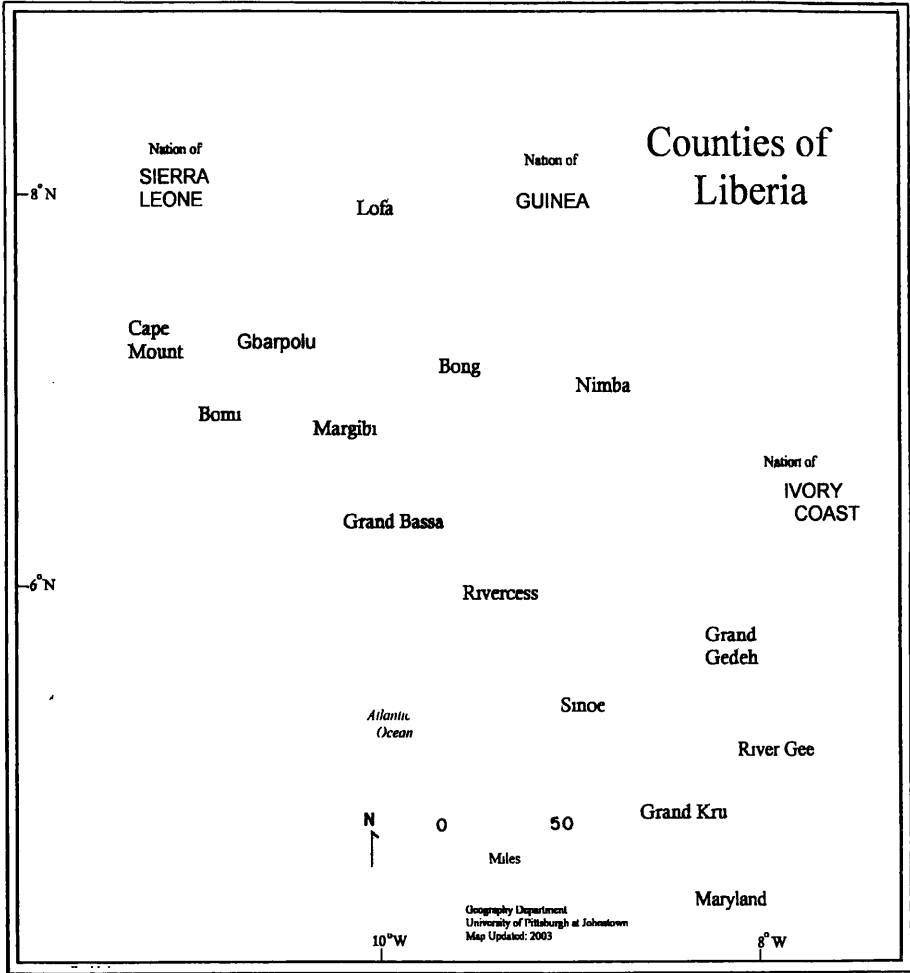


LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL



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LIBERIAN STUDIES JOURNAL

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SPECIAL ISSUE ON

**“POST-CONFLICT
PEACEBUILDING
IN LIBERIA”**

Guest Editor

**George Klay Kieh, Jr.
University of West Georgia**

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The Guest Editor's Note

George Klay Kieh, Jr.

Like the first issue of the special volume on “Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Liberia,” the second one is also designed to examine some of the major issues that have ramifications for the efforts to promote human-centered development and democracy in Liberia within the critical context of durable peace. In this vein, the articles in this issue would certainly make contributions to the current peacebuilding project on the way in Liberia.

George Klay Kieh, Jr. examines the nature and dynamics of Liberia’s unitary state system, since the founding of the country. He argues that the unitary state system is not the best trajectory for providing the crucible in which the current post-conflict peacebuilding project can take place. Alternatively, he suggests symmetrical devolution as the appropriate framework for restructuring and managing the relations between the national government and the local governments, and for promoting democracy and development.

Samuel Wai Johnson, Jr. interrogates the state of food security in Liberia, and the impact of the National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy on the situation. According to the findings, Liberia suffers from food insecurity. This is reflected in the fact that four in every ten Liberians do not have access to the adequate amount of food that is required for them to meet their nutritional requirements and live healthy and active lives. Importantly, he concludes that the National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy, which was launched in 2007, has had a negligible impact on the food problem. This is because the strategy has not addressed the major undercurrents of the food insecurity problematique —unemployment, poverty, the high prices of staple foods such as rice, and population growth.

Emmanuel Oritsejafor and Dorothy Davis interrogate the critical role of market women in post-conflict development in Liberia through the agency of informal markets. They begin the study by examining the social and economic challenges facing Liberia, including mass poverty and unemployment. In turn, they then locate the role of market women within the crucible of the efforts being made to address these challenges. They conclude that the Liberian market women's contributions to post-war development transcend the issue of the provision of daily sustenance through the sale of food products. Instead, the economic activities of Liberian market women have broader ramifications for the larger post-conflict development project.

Jeffery Makain examines the macro-level context and case study of selected communities to identify challenges, prospects and opportunities related to land tenure for conservation farmers in rural and urban Liberia. The findings indicated that local authorities and family heads allocate parcels of farm land to individual family members free of charge but, with the condition that the farmers can only grow food crops for family consumption. Whereas, private land owners grant landless farmers permission to use their land free of charge or rent through verbal agreement. The study concludes that the non-legally binding and ongoing ad-hoc tenure practices restrict landless farmers' productivity and do not enhance their potential to develop the land for long-term investment.

Baiyina Muhammad probes the enduring problematic relationship between the Africans, who were repatriated from the United States to Liberia, beginning in the 1820s ("Americo-Liberians") and their indigenous kin, who they met on the Grain Coast (now Liberia). She blames two major sets of factors for the emergent conflictual relationship between the two groups: American imperialism, and the failure of the repatriated Africans to develop an independent government based on a Pan-Africanist world view. Clearly, with the lingering Americo-Liberian-indigene divide, steps need to be taken to resolve the conflict as part of the current post-conflict peacebuilding project in Liberia.

The Travails of the Unitary State System and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Liberia

George Klay Kieh, Jr.

Introduction

One of the major challenges that has confronted post-conflict states is the imperative of designing and implementing the modalities for the restructuring of the power relations between the center (the national government) and the periphery (the local levels). The explicit postulate is that the asymmetries in the power relations between the two levels were integral parts of the labyrinthine of governance problems that undergirded the civil conflict and the resulting civil war. Several major trajectories of center-periphery power relations have emerged. For example, in ethnically divided societies like Ethiopia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, federalism and its pivot of “dual sovereignty” (Habtu, 2003; Gromes, 2010; Lerner, 2011) has been used. In other post-conflict societies like Rwanda and Sierra Leone, the existing unitary system has been reformed through the use of various models such as decentralization (Zhou, 2009; United Nations Development Program, 2012). Irrespective of the trajectories post-conflict states employ, the shared motifs are effective conflict management, stability and addressing the needs of citizens. Brinkerhoff and Johnson (2008: 3-4) provide an excellent summation of the imperative for restructuring center-periphery relations in post-conflict societies:

Center-periphery relations affect conflict resolution and the societal pacts that are central to achieving stability in post-conflict contexts...all nations need to address [the] fundamental challenge of state-society relations: governance that can produce public goods that solve common problems facing all their citizens—such as creating an enabling environment for social and economic development.

In the specific case of Liberia, there is the emergent consensus that the country's unitary system needs to be reformed against the backdrop of its various pathologies—e.g. the marginalization of the local levels in making decisions about issues that affect them. In this vein, two major proposals have emerged: decentralization and federalism. In the case of the former, it entails the transfer of authority and responsibility for selected public functions from the central government to the intermediate and local levels (World Bank, 2001). The latter suggests the establishment of a system of “dual sovereignty” (Cameron and Falleti, 2005) under which the center and periphery would, among others, exercise concurrent powers in such areas as law-making (with the existence of national and local legislative bodies), and law-enforcement (e.g. the existence of national and local police forces).

Clearly, decentralization would represent a laudable step forward in helping to break the stranglehold the center has over power. However, given the specificities of the Liberian predicament, including two civil wars, the restructuring of center-periphery relations would need to transcend traditional decentralization and its emphasis on the improvement of institutional performance by seeking to restructure the fundamentals of state-society relations (Jones, 2008). In the case of federalism, it is not appropriate for the Liberian case for several reasons. In contradistinction to some post-conflict societies in which the ethnic divide is the epicenter of conflict, Liberia does not have such a problem. Therefore, the federal solution (ethnic federalism) is not the appropriate remedial arrangement. Another issue is that Liberia is a small country (43,000 square miles). Hence, a federal system would not be appropriate, because it would complicate governance by creating layers of power. Finally, Liberia's topography and geography do not create the problems of the interconnectedness between and among the various parts of the country. Thus, the federal solution would not be appropriate as well.

Against this background that devolution is the approach to center-periphery power relations, as has been discussed, this would need to transfer of functions from the national government. Instead, the power restructuring project is on the development of a constitutionally-based “d

ent of this article is r the restructuring of ificantly, as has been transfer of functions ernment. Instead, the s on the development etween the center and

the periphery, and address the vagaries of state –society relations, especially authoritarianism and the hegemonic presidency. In essence, the major rationale for devolution is that, as Ghai (2007:3) aptly notes,

Devolution opens up opportunities for public participation in state affairs. Also, it promotes debates about the purposes for which power should be exercised at the local level. People in the rural and urban areas will be able to decide for themselves (or influence decisions) on numerous matters of local concern and to participate in greater number of debates...Government and officials at closer proximity to them will probably become more responsive and be compelled to be more accountable. Only in this way can we inculcate the practices and habits of democracy and participation.

In order to explicate the thesis, the article is divided into five parts. Part one provides the conceptual framework for the study. In part two, the study is placed in the crucible of the scholarly literature on the devolution of state power, and the resulting development of a theoretical model as the analytical framework for the study. Next, the article maps out the travails of Liberia’s unitary system, especially its ramifications for democratic governance and development. This is then followed by the discussion of the devolved model of state power as the best pathway to the establishment of durable peace, and the promotion of human-centered democracy and development in Liberia. Finally, the article draws some conclusions.

Conceptual Framework

The article is based on two major concepts: devolution and post-conflict peacebuilding. In the case of devolution, like other concepts, it is quite difficult to conceptualize. The major lacuna is that it is often used interchangeably with decentralization in the scholarly literature. However, for the purpose of this article, devolution is conceptualized as a hybrid model of center-periphery power relations that combines features of unitary and federal systems in which the center transfers specific functions, with the corresponding authority, to the periphery. The transfer is of constitutional magnitude even if not affected through a constitution (Kincaid, 1998:14). It is ordinarily intended to be permanent (Kincaid, 1998:15).

Using Lambourne's (2004:3) definition, peacebuilding is conceptualized as "strategies designed to promote a secure and lasting peace in which the basic human needs of the population are met and violent conflicts do not recur." These strategies of processes span the broad gamut of the societal spheres—cultural, economic, environmental, political, religious, security, and social.

The Devolution Of Power: Theoretical Issues

Literature Review

Mackinnon et al (2010) posit that devolution is a genre of state restructuring that is ostensibly designed to respond to various currents, including globalization, and the rise of supranational institutions and sub-state nationalism (MacKinnon et al, 2010:271). The restructuring process is dynamic and continuous. In other words, the process seeks to reflect the prevailing conditions and realities at various junctures.

Hague and Harrop (2010) argue that devolution revolves around the center granting decision-making autonomy (including at times some legislative powers) to lower levels (Hague and Harrop, 2010:283). They cite as a major case of devolution the decision by the

government of the United Kingdom to create regional legislative bodies in Scotland and Wales in 1999, as part of the broader process of devolving power. Also, they observe that the center can terminate the process of devolution whenever it chooses to do so.

Treading on the same path as Hague and Harrop, Drogus and Orvis (2012), postulate that while devolution represents a laudable effort to tackle the vagaries of the centralization of state power, it is nonetheless dependent upon the central government for its success and survival. In addition, they proffer two major genres of devolution: symmetrical and asymmetrical. In the case of the former, all of the subnational governments (states or provinces) have the same rights and relationship with the central government (Drogus and Orvis, 2012: 295). In the case of the latter, the various subnational levels have different rights and relationships with the central government (Drogus and Orvis, 2012: 295).

Leiten (1990) posits that devolution is the “middle ground” between unitary and federal state systems. However, the specificities of a devolved system vary from one country to another, in form and degree (Leiten, 1990: 2). Using Sri Lanka as a case study, he argues that the country inherited a highly centralized bureaucratic structure designed by the British mainly for political integration and the maintenance of laws and order (Leiten, 1990:5). However, having experienced years of conflict and civil war virtually since it gained independence, Sri Lanka is now engaged in the critical process of formulating and implementing modalities for ending the national government’s stranglehold on power.

Braathen and Hellevik (2008) interrogate the utility of devolution as a power arrangement for managing conflict. They found that devolution plays an ambiguous role in the peacemaking and conflict management processes (Braathen and Hellevik, 2008:22). Being an instrument of power-sharing, devolution may lead to peace and conflict management, but such arrangement may also further conflict (Braathen and Hellevik, 2008:22). As a solution, they suggest fiscal

equity between local governments, and accountability within the broader crucible of what they term “an interdependent central-local relationship” (Braathen and Hellevik, 2008:1).

The Theoretical Model

Based on the literature reviewed, the study developed a theoretical model of the devolution of state power to serve as its analytical framework. The model is based on several assumptions. First, the success or failure of devolution is dependent upon the nature and dynamics of state-society relations. For example, if the relations are hoisted on authoritarianism, then devolution would not succeed, because the broader political environment would not be propitious.

Second, the surrender of functions by a central government to a local one should be complete, permanent, and of what Tannenwald (1998:1) calls “constitutional magnitude.” In other words, the transfer of functions and the corresponding authority must transcend the whims and caprices of the center in term of the duration, if meaningful power sharing between the center and the periphery is to occur. In other words, the transfer should be grounded in constitutional and statutory changes that would ensure that the center cannot capriciously abort the process, and withdraw the transferred functions and their associated authority.

Third, devolution should revolve around a set of objectives as its *raison d’etre*. One of the major ones is the more efficient provision and production of public services (Kincaid, 1998:13). Another objective should be the better alignment of the costs and benefits of government for a diverse citizenry (Kincaid, 1998:13). Also, there should be a better fit between public goods and their spatial characteristics (Kincaid, 1998:13). As well, devolution should ensure increased competition, experimentation, innovation in the public sector, greater responsiveness to citizen preferences, transparency, and accountability in public policy-making (Kincaid, 1998:13).

Fourth, the center should transfer authority over public policy areas in which the periphery would have a comparative advantage. In this vein, the major determinant would be the nature and scope of the policy. For example, if the policy is of a local nature, then transferring it to the local level would be the most optimal approach. In addition, the corresponding authority for formulating and implementing the policy or policies should also be transferred.

The Travails Of Liberia's Unitary System Of State

Evolution

The Liberian unitary system of state was developed as an integral part of the “tugs and pulls” of the country’s state-building project that incepted on July 26, 1847, with the declaration of independence from the American Colonization Society (ACS). For about the initial three decades of the post-independence era, the country operated under a quasi-system of *de facto* devolution under which the periphery exercised significant amount of autonomy in local affairs. This could be attributed to two major currents. The geographic expanse of the country was then limited to five regions—Montserrado, Grand Bassa, Sinoe, Grand Cape Mount, and Maryland (this area became part of the Liberian state in 1857)—that had the history of self-governance. Accordingly, given the infancy of the state formation phase, the determination was made that the centralization of powers in the national government could have undermined the *esprit de corps* that was imperative for the emergent state to deal with the challenges posed by the various indigenous polities that existed outside of the ambit of the state, and British and French imperialism.

Second, civic humanism provided the ideological panoply under which the state operated (Kieh, 1988). As a compass for navigating the terrain of political economy, civic humanism is based on the postulate that “virtue is attainable only by men of independent property, preferably in land whose independent holdings could permit them to cultivate the intensely autonomous behavior that alone could preserve

the polity in a stable and incorrupted states... To prevent the degeneration of virtuous government into a corrupt one, civic humanist writers stressed the utility of institutional devices such as the rotation of office and frequent elections" (Greene, 1986:36). Against this backdrop, the role of the central government was limited (Kieh, 1988).

However, by the early 1900s, three major developments occurred that instituted a shift in the state system from quasi-devolution towards centralization and the unitary model (Kieh, 1988:9). The state was experiencing major economic problems, and this was made worse by the small base for revenue generation. Another development was that the British and French imperialists accelerated their campaigns of flaunting Liberia's sovereignty (Kieh, 1988:9). Also, the various indigenous polities increased their opposition to the Liberian state's expansionist agenda and its associated adverse ramifications for the former's territories and sovereignty. The confluence of these three major factors led to the centralization of power in the national government. The rationale was that the approach was imperative so that the center could have the requisite panoply of power that was critical to dealing with these challenges.

Four years later, the Liberian state succeeded in the completion of its campaign of territorial expansion by incorporating the hitherto independent and sovereign indigenous polities as subordinate layers. However, the state managers and the broader local wing of the Liberian ruling class were fearful that these incorporated indigenous polities could rebel. Hence, the determination was made to adopt the unitary state system in its absolutist form (characterized by the complete centralization of power in the national government). In this vein, the "Barclay Plan" of 1904 provided the "blueprint" for the centralization of power in the national government (Sawyer, 1973). Specifically, two major plans of the "Barclay Plan" were germane to the centralization of power project: 1) The reorganization of the administrative structure of the hinterland (the main terrain of the erstwhile indigenous polities) (Sawyer, 1973). Under the new arrangement, districts became the highest political units with the district commissioners as the emergent

barons of rural Liberia (Kieh, 1988:10); and 2) a new legal system was established (Sawyer, 1973). Under the system, there were two categories of courts: a) the courts of the chiefs; and b) the courts of the district commissioners (Sawyer, 1973). The latter constituted the courts of appeal (Sawyer, 1973). The new legal system was made accountable to the national government through the secretary of the interior and the president (Sawyer, 1973). During the Tubman administration, the districts were changed to counties in 1964—Bong, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, and Nimba. In addition, the overall system of local government administration was changed: the county became the highest local government unit. The other units were the districts (headed by district commissioners), cities (headed by mayors), townships (headed by commissioners), and chieftancies—paramount, clan, town, and village. Within the context of the absolutist unitary state system model, these various local levels did not exercise any iota of autonomy. Instead, they were simply appendages of the central government with the primary responsibility of implementing the edicts of the national government in their respective geographical areas.

In addition, other major factors accounted for the establishment of the absolutist unitary system of state. An important one was the imperative of the “hegemonic presidency.” The phenomenon became a major mainstay of the Liberian political terrain in 1904, beginning with the “Barclay Plan.” The phenomenon has entailed the establishment of presidential suzerainty and the associated subordination of the legislative and judicial branches, as well as all other tiers of the state, including local governments. As Wreh (1976:xi) lamented based on the excesses of the “hegemonic presidency” during the Tubman regime,

“There was no countervailing power from the people or from their constitutionally created National legislature and judiciary, institutions which should provide the checks and balances to the executive branch and mutually between each other. Unchallenged and unfettered, Tubman had everything to himself and ruled as

he pleased. The people escheated their freedom of speech, of conscience, and the press to the great dictator—the like of whom, I devoutly hope, Liberians will never see again.”

Several measures have been used to entrench the phenomenon. In 1904, upon the recommendation of President Arthur Barclay, the National Legislature changed the presidential term of office from two to four years (Huberich, 1947). Then in 1931, the term was extended to eight years (Liebenow, 1969). Then, under Tubman, the presidential tenure of office was changed to eight years for the first term, and subsequent unlimited terms of four years each (Liebenow, 1969). However, under the Tolbert administration, the term was changed to four years with unlimited terms. During the “Second Republic” (1986-1990), the presidential term of office was fixed at six years with the limit of two consecutive terms (Constitution of Liberia, 1986). Subsequently, the constitution was amended to effect the change.

Another step was the granting of *carte blanche* authority to the president by the legislature to control local governments. This was done in several ways. Under the system of local government administration, country superintendents, district commissioners, paramount and clan chiefs are accountable to the president through the minister of the interior. Also, chiefs hold presidential commissions as the basis of their authority, thereby eroding their traditional base and the attendant accountability to their peoples (Kieh, 1988). Another measure was that the president was given unlimited authority to tour the hinterland at any time and to convene executive councils to deal with any matter him or her so desires, ranging from administrative to social (Kieh, 1988:10).

Also, the constitution grants expansive appointive powers to the president. Both the 1847 and the current constitution grant the president authority to appoint county superintendents, assistant superintendents, commissioners, and other county officials (Constitution of Liberia, 1847; Constitution of Liberia, 1986). As Sawyer (2005:23)

aptly observes, "The President of Liberia exercises sweeping constitutional powers of appointment of executive and judicial officers..." To make matters worse, since the inception of the Sirleaf administration, the president has been granted the unprecedented authority to appoint city mayors. The change is based on a request President Sirleaf made to the Liberian Senate in September 2006 for the president to appoint mayors for cities across Liberia (Kennedy, 2006:1). Her major reason was that there was the lack of money to conduct municipal elections (Kennedy, 2006:1). President Sirleaf's request was criticized by various opposition political parties as unconstitutional and representing an attempt to establish a dictatorial state (Cheeseman, 2006:1). Subsequently, the issue was taken to the Supreme Court of Liberia by two opposition parties, Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) and the Liberty Party (LP) (Boweh, 2008:1). In a shocking 3-2 (the chief justice and two associate justices for, and two other associate justices against) decision, the Supreme Court of Liberia ruled that Article 54 of the Liberian Constitution gives the president the authority to appoint city mayors (Boweh, 2008). In addition, the president has sole control over public expenditures (Sawyer, 2005:23). The president exercises sole control in determining periodic allotments of public funds to all agencies of governments and levels of the state, including local governments, through a centralized warrant system of disbursement (Sawyer, 2005:23). So, the absolutist unitary state system helps ensure the unbridled control of the presidency over the body politic.

Yet, a major factor for the establishment of the absolutist unitary state system was the nature of the emergent domestic political economy after the finalization of Liberia's incorporation into the world capitalist system as a peripheral capitalist state in 1926. With the state as the major employer and thus the primary source for the accumulation of capital, the control of state power therefore became an epic "life and death battle" among the various factions and fractions of the local Liberian ruling class. Thus, whichever faction or fraction of the local wing of the Liberian ruling class that managed the state at a particular juncture used it for the purpose of "looting" (Gana, 1985:129). As

Nzongola-Ntalaja (1989:124) argues in the broader African context, "Since the state is the major avenue of wealth accumulation for those who control it, a major preoccupation of the African ruling class has been to expand and consolidate the state's role in the economy." In effect, as Fanon (1963:173-174) asserts, "The state is like a warehouse in which each member of the [ruling class] must collect his or her share of the loot." Put differently, the Liberian state is "akin to a 'buffet service' in which the ruling faction or fraction of the local ruling class and its surrogates can 'eat all they can eat'" (Kieh, 2009a:10). In short, given the centrality of the control of the state to the process of the predatory accumulation of capital, the establishment of the absolutist unitary state system became imperative so that the access to state resources could be limited to the members of the faction or fraction of the local Liberian ruling class that was in control of the state's machinery at particular historical junctures.

Furthermore, the establishment of the True Whig Party as the *de facto* single party in Liberia necessitated the maintenance of the absolutist unitary state system. This was because by having control over all branches of government, as well as the various levels of the state, including the local governments, it became quite impossible for opposition groups to capture and control political power even in the periphery. Also, the True Whig Party used its suzerainty over the political economy to even coopt some of the leaders and members of the opposition, as well as to buy the loyalty of people at the local levels (Lowenkopf, 1976).

The Legal-Constitutional Basis of the Liberian Unitary State System

Historically, the Constitution of Liberia has, and continues to provide the core of the legal-constitutional basis for the existence of the unitary state system in the country. For example, Chapter I, Article 3 of the 1986 Constitution (the current one) states thus: "Liberia is a unitary sovereign state divided into counties for administrative purposes" (Constitution of Liberia, 1986). Operationally, the counties are divided

into districts, cities, townships, and chiefdoms, all of which are subordinated to the national government.

In addition, the Administrative Regulations of the Hinterland, which have their historical roots in the “Barclay Plan” of 1904, address in details the functions of the district commissioners and the chiefs. As well, the regulations articulate the country’s dual legal systems—Western and traditional. Moreover, the regulations lay out the structures and processes for the operation of the traditional legal system.

Cumulatively, the legal-constitutional basis of the unitary state system provides the *terra firma* for the national government’s stranglehold over state power in relations to the local governments. In other words, the constitution, administrative regulations and statutes provide the legal foundation on which the unitary state system is anchored.

The Nature and Dynamics of the Liberian Unitary State System

Like all unitary state systems, the nature of the Liberian one is based on a hierarchical arrangement in which the national government controls the totality of state power, including the authority to abolish the local governments (Hague and Harrop, 2010). This is because the various tiers of the local government system are creations of the central government. For example, at independence in 1847, four counties—Montserrado, Grand Bassa, Sinoe, and Grand Cape Mount—were created as the kernels of the local government system. Ten years later, Maryland, which was previously an independent state, became the fifth county. In 1964, the national government changed the three provinces—Eastern, Western, and Central—that were in existence in the hinterland to four new counties—Bong, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, and Nimba. About sixteen years later, Bomi, Grand Kru, Margibi, and Rivercess Counties were created by the central government by carving them out of some of the existing counties. This brought the total number of counties to thirteen. Then, during the Taylor regime, two new counties—Gbarpolou and River Gee—were added, thereby bring the total number of counties to fifteen.

The operational dynamics of the unitary state system are reflected in several major ways. The overarching pivot is the centralization of powers in the national government. That means that the national government controls the totality of public policy-making, as well as all sources of funding. The local governments are essentially implementation units. However, the two major exceptions have been the granting of authority by the Tolbert government to the City of Monrovia to create a police force in the 1970s. Even in that case, the city police had very limited policing powers that were restricted to the enforcement of city ordinances. Under the Sirleaf administration, county development funds have been established, and the county governments have some authority in determining, formulating, and implementing various development projects in their respective locales, including the management of the financial resources in the funds. There are several derivatives. One of them is the appointment of local officials by President of Liberia without the participation of the people at the local level. For example, the president can appoint county superintendents, assistant superintendents, county commissioners, and city mayors without local participation. During the Tubman and Tolbert regimes, it was commonplace for the president to appoint local officials from the ranks of the Monrovia-based segment of the local ruling class, who had little or no knowledge of the local area. One of the most notorious cases was the appointment of J. Fulton Dunbar as the Superintendent of Nimba County by President Tolbert in the 1978 (Movement for Justice in Africa, 1978). Superintendent Dunbar, who had virtually lived in Monrovia, the capital city of the country, all of his life, had no clue about the prevailing circumstances and local realities in Nimba County (Movement for Justice in Africa, 1978). Moreover, since he was not accountable to the people of Nimba County, Superintendent Dunbar was notorious for the demonstration of hubris and contempt for the people of Nimba (Movement for Justice in Africa, 1978). Another issue was that the local governments had no independent sources of revenues. Thus, they were totally dependent upon the central government for their funding through the latter's annual budget and other appropriations. Also, all development projects were formulated by the

central government and imposed upon the local government, usually without input from the latter. In addition, basic government services such as obtaining driver's license, registering a vehicle, and acquiring license plates, and obtaining a passport are centralized in the capital city. That is, those desiring these services have to travel to the capital city to obtain them. In addition, it is commonplace for government employees, who are assigned to the various regions of the country, to travel to the capital city to get their salary checks.

Clearly, the absolutist nature of Liberia's unitary state system and its operational dynamics had adverse ramifications for governance in the country. Democratization was undermined by the limitation of the "political space" to the center, since it is the core of decision-making. The related conundrum is that people at the local level have no voice in the formulation and implementation of the public policies that affect their lives. Another lacuna is that local officials have no accountability to their constituencies. Furthermore, the centralization of development in the capital city region has negatively affected economic activities at the local levels, including the growth of businesses and employment. Ultimately, these acts of "bad governance" have undermined peace and stability in the country. As the United Nations Development Program (1999:5) observes, "There is overwhelming consensus among Liberian policy makers, leaders and civil society activists that persistent bad governance has been the cause of social and economic hardships, and the political crisis that culminated in the civil war."

Towards The Devolution Of State Power: The Pathway To Durable Peace, Democracy, And Development In Liberia

Background

The symmetrical devolved model (Drogus and Orvis, 2012) would be the best framework for restructuring center-periphery relations in the Liberian state system. Under this arrangement, there would be uniformity in the functions and the corresponding authority that are

devolved to the various levels of local government administration. In this way, there would not be the appearance of the center privileging some section of the periphery through variations in the nature and patterns of devolution.

Operationally, the devolved trajectory would entail the restructuring of state-society relations, the delineation of the legal-constitutional basis of devolution, the articulation of the objectives of the devolution, and the identification of the policy areas that need to be devolved. As Irele (2007:23-24) notes, "The overarching dividend is that properly organized, local governments give visible form to legitimacy at these levels where it counts most, and the autonomy it ensures can contribute to easing ethnic tension."

State-Society Relations

Successful devolution cannot take place within the context of the current authoritarian and negligent peripheral Liberian state. This is because the construct asphyxiates political rights and civil liberties, and neglects the basic needs of the country's subaltern classes. That is, for most of the country's history, citizens were not allowed to freely exercise their constitutionally guaranteed political human rights. Those who dared to take risk were subjected to various forms of repression by the state, including harassment, imprisonment, and in some cases death. Similarly, while the state created propitious conditions for foreign capital and the members of the local wing of the ruling class to engage in the predatory accumulation of wealth, it visited mass deprivation on the subalterns by failing to help generate employment, and to address basic human needs such as education and health care.

Alternatively, the authoritarian peripheral Liberian state needs to be democratically reconstituted. Essentially, this would entail the transformation of the state's portrait—nature, character, mission and political economy (Kieh, 2008). The nature of the state would need to reflect the historical and cultural experiences of all of the country's

ethnic stocks and groups (Kieh, 2008). In terms of its character, the reconstituted Liberian state would need to be, among others, democratic, enabling, and responsive. Its primary mission would be the promotion of the cultural, economic, environmental, political, religious, and social rights of all Liberians devoid of the privileging of any particular class or ethnic stock or group. As for the political economy, it would be anchored on the centrality of the use of public office as an opportunity to serve rather than to engage in the predatory accumulation of capital. In this vein, the reconstituted state would seek to address both the political and material conditions of all of the citizens.

The Nature and the Dynamics of the Transfer of Policy Functions and Authority from the Center to the Periphery

The nature and dynamics of the transfer of policy functions from the center to the periphery would need to transcend the traditional parameters of devolution, especially the authority of the center to revoke devolved powers from the periphery based on the former's whims and caprices. In the Liberian case, given the particular circumstances of the country's current unitary state system, particularly its history of authoritarianism, the transfer of power would need to be constitutionally grounded. In other words, the constitution would need to be changed to reflect the new state system and its features. For example, Chapter 1 Article 3 of the constitution, which provides the legal foundation for the country's unitary state system, would need to be changed as follows: "Liberia has a devolved state system with counties, municipalities, and traditional chiefdoms as the constituent units." The suggested amendment does not only change the texture of the state system, but extends its ambit to include the traditional political institutions as embodied in the chieftancy—paramount, clan and town. In addition, all statutes and administrative regulations would need to be changed to reflect the realities of the new devolved state system. Such nature and the dynamics of the methods of the transfer of power would help militate against the whims and caprices of the national government, especially should it arbitrarily determine to revert to the unitary system. In other words, by grounding the nature and dynamics of the

transfer in the constitution and statutes, it would be quite difficult for the center to easily reverse the process.

Equally important, the center has to devolve both functions and authority. That is, for each policy area that is devolved, the corresponding authority over the function should also be devolved. This would then enable the periphery to assume full responsibility for the devolve policy area. The failure to use this approach would make devolution symbolic.

Leadership and political will would be imperative for both the initiation and the successful completion of the nature and dynamics of the transfer of power for specific policy areas, especially the accompanying authority. Given the perennial adverse effects the centralization of power at the national level has had on governance in Liberia, the country's national leadership would need to develop a vision that frames devolution as an imperative for post-conflict peacebuilding, especially the development of democratic governance, and its critical dividends of peace and stability hoisted on citizen participation at the local levels. Concomitantly, it would require the unprecedented demonstration of political will on the part of the national leadership to end the center's stranglehold on power.

The Raisons d'être of Devolving Power

Devolution should have two major objectives: the promotion of democracy and development. The promotion of democracy should transcend the perennial pathological fixation with what Yidana (2008:1) aptly refers to as "form driven democracy." That is, democracy should transcend the liberal conception that focuses exclusively on political institutions, rules, procedures, and processes. Instead, the democratic project should also seek to address the critical issues of inequities and inequalities in power relationships in the cultural, economic, gender, political, and social domains (Kieh, 2009b). Also, this genre of democracy, as Ake (1996:232) argues, "[Should be one] in which people have real decision-making power over and above the

formal consent of electoral choice.” In essence, social citizenship should be the pivot of the democratization project. This would entail the expansion of citizenship rights beyond formal legal and political equality to encompass social equality rights, including the rights to a minimum level of economic security and social welfare assured by the state (Erickson and Mathews, 2003:2). With such a foundation, the democratic enterprise should also seek to end the “hegemonic presidency” and its deleterious effects on democratic governance. Two major measures would make important contributions in this vein. Presidential appointive powers would need to be curtailed. In turn, this would require the amendment of Article 54 of the Liberian Constitution to limit presidential appointive powers to particular groups of public officials: cabinet ministers, deputy ministers, and assistant ministers, among others. Other public offices, especially those of technocratic nature, should be filled through competitive exams. Also, county superintendents, assistant superintendents, and county commissioners should be appointed by the president based on a vetting process that involves the critical participation of county and district councils. Similarly, Article 56, Section b of the Liberian Constitution, which gives the president the authority to dismiss traditional chiefs from office for “proved misconduct,” should be eliminated. Instead, the traditional chiefs should be solely accountable to their respective constituencies.

Human security should be the centerpiece of the development objective of devolution at both the center and the periphery. As Caldor et al (2007:273) posit, “Human security is about the security of individuals and communities, and it links physical and material security—‘freedom from fear,’ and ‘freedom from want.’” Operationally, it should entail both the center and the periphery investing heavily in the improvement of people’s health, education, and capacity, so they can participate effectively (Ake, 1996:232). In other words, development should be people-centered by focusing on issues that would improve the material conditions of the citizens.

The Policy Areas to Be Devolved

The center should devolve authority to the periphery over various major policy areas. One major area should be the selection of county officials. City mayors should be elected by their respective municipalities along with the members of their city councils. As for county superintendents, assistant superintendents, and county commissioners, they should be appointed by the President of Liberia through vetting cum nomination processes. At the county level, the county council should nominate three candidates each for the position of superintendent and assistant superintendent as the basis of presidential appointments. At the district level, the district councils should vet and nominate three candidates for each district commissioner position. In turn, the President of Liberia would then appoint district commissioners from the various vetted lists. In addition, the county and district councils should have the authority to recommend the removal from office of the county superintendents, assistant superintendents, and district commissioners as part of the process of ensuring accountability at the local level.

Development policy is another major area that needs to be devolved to the local levels. Specifically, the county and city governments should have the authority to formulate and implement their respective development plans, based on broad-based consultations. The plans should reflect the development needs of the various localities. The funding for the plan should be provided for by county and city development funds. The money for the fund should be provided by both local sources, as well as by annual development allotments from the national government. In addition, the central government may also undertake development projects in the various counties and municipalities through consultations with the county, district, and city councils.

Also, the counties should be given authority over the personnel and logistical aspects of educational policy. This would include the recruitment and appointment of school administrators and teachers from

the primary to the secondary levels. The responsibilities for these areas would be carried out by elected county and district school boards. In addition, the presidents of the various community colleges should be appointed by these institutions' boards of trustees. The boards should consist of representatives of the major stakeholders in a county. The central government should have a representative on each board.

Water management policy is another area that should be devolved. Each county should establish a water and sewer authority that would be responsible for the provision of clean drinking water and sanitation to the residents of a county. The authority would work in collaboration with the relevant agencies of the central government to ensure that certain basic standards for safe drinking water and acceptable sanitation are maintained in all counties.

Another area regards budgetary policy. In this vein, the various local governments should have the authority to formulate and implement their own annual budgets. The primary responsibility for funding the annual budget should rest with the locality. However, the central government should make an annual allocation to each local government based on a formula that takes into consideration the latter's revenue base, including income generated from activities over which the local governments have exclusive authority, as well as funds that are derived from revenue sharing with the central government.

The local governments should also have exclusive authority over the property tax policy. This should include the formulation and implementation of the assessment formula. The revenues generated from the payment of the taxes should be in the exclusive domain of the local governments.

Similarly, the issuance of building construction permits for homes, offices, and other buildings should be done by the local governments. The criteria should be based on uniformed standards, and should therefore be applicable to all counties and cities. The revenues generated should go exclusively to the local governments.

A revenue sharing system between the national and local governments should also be established for the following areas: natural resources, business tax, and motor vehicle registration and fees. In the case of natural resources, a formula should be devised that would allocate specific percentages of the revenues to the central government, the county government where the national resource is located, and the other counties.

Conclusion

Liberia's unitary state system has contributed to poor governance, stymied local participation and initiative, and undermined the broader processes of democratization and people-centered development. The confluence of these factors contributed to the development, nurturing and implosion of the country's civil conflict as evidenced by the outbreak of two civil wars in 1989 and 1999.

Accordingly, as the country seeks to build durable peace, the unitary state system is not the appropriate crucible. In this vein, the study proffered symmetrical devolution as the alternative framework for restructuring, managing, and fostering the power relationship between the central and local governments. The rationale is that such a trajectory would promote, among others, local participation and initiative, and the broader processes of democracy and development based on the centrality of social citizenship. In this regards, the article has suggested that the democratic reconstitution of the Liberian state in terms of its nature, character, mission, and political economy would be critical to the success of the devolved model. In addition, rather than pursue the process through an "agreement" between the center and periphery, the study argued for constitutionally and statutorily-based foundations for the devolution of functions. As well, the study stressed that each devolved function should be accompanied by the corresponding authority.

Finally, visionary leadership and the demonstration of political will would be crucial for both the initiation and implementation of the

devolved model, especially against the backdrop of Liberia's history of the centralization of power at the national level. The centerpiece would be the national leadership linking devolution to the crux of the peacebuilding project, including the prospects for building durable peace, and promoting democracy and development.

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Post-Conflict Food Security and Peace Building

Samuel Wai Johnson, Jr

Introduction

This article examines the state of food security in Liberia and how it has been influenced by actions being undertaken under the National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (FSNS) aimed at addressing factors identified by the strategy as constraints to making the country food secure. Liberia launched its eight-year national food security strategy in 2007 as the master plan for rebuilding the country's food security system following years of conflict, and making it food secure as an integral part of its peace building and development agenda. These factors include rising unemployment and prices, poverty, inequality, and the declining gains from food production due to structural inequality and unbalanced economic development. The strategy lists a set of priority actions being undertaken by the government to influence these factors in the direction that would lead to household food security: improving food production as a dependable means of livelihood; stabilizing the price of rice, the country's staple; strengthening household income and social safety net; removing the constraints to domestic food production; securing the factors of food production and improving post-harvest processing.

While Liberians appear generally tired of food aid and desire to be food secure based on self-reliance, their state of food security is however, dependent on the response of these factors, which led to the violence of 1989 – 2003, to the strategy's priority actions. Food insecurity generates conflict. However, food security can be achieved only under conditions of political stability and certainty. Thus, a post-conflict food security strategy is not preventive of conflict if it does not fully problematize and address appropriately the factors that caused the food insecurity. Fully problematized and appropriately addressed,

a post-conflict food security strategy intervention can improve the lot of the population, and address the conflict trap of structural inequality and the high rates of poverty and unemployment and rising prices, and enable peace building and sustainable development.

But this notwithstanding, there is a gap in the literature about how these food insecurity and conflict-generating factors respond to post-conflict food security-targeted policy interventions. Liberia, given the role of food insecurity in its conflict history and its national effort at improving food security as an integral part of its peace building and post-conflict development process, presents a case for exploring this gap.

The article is organized as follows: The next section, Part II, lays out the conceptual framework of the article. Section III explores the relationship between post-conflict food security and peace building, identifying the various channels through which the state of food security impacts peace building and political stability. Section IV discusses Liberia's post-conflict national food security strategy; Section V presents the method for analyzing the state of food insecurity in Liberia; Section VI discusses the results; and Section VII summarizes the major findings of the article.

The Conceptual Framework

Food security refers to the condition that exists when all people have, at all times, physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 1996:1). By this definition, the attainment of food security is anchored on three pillars: 1) Food availability; 2) food access and 3) food utilization. Food availability refers to the unhindered supply of enough food through imports or local production. Food access refers to an individual's ability to purchase the adequate amount of food that meets his consumption and nutritional requirements, while food utilization refers to the individual's ability to consume food in health-sustaining ways. In summary economic

terms, food security is dependent upon the demand and supply of food. Reflecting on this definition, Flores (2004:6) identifies a fourth pillar for the attainment of food security: (in) stability. Stability refers to the following factors which impact food supply and demand: the price of food, the weather pattern, and the political environment in which the food is produced or supplied (Flores 2004:6). Stability as a factor of food security suggests a relationship between food security and the process of reconstruction and peace building in places that have experienced protracted instability such as civil war.

Post-Conflict Food Security: Literature Review

The relationship between food security and peace building is important, especially in low-income countries due to the interaction of food prices and household income, which affects the degree of inequality, entitlement, and relative deprivation within the population. Increases in the price of food raise the risk of conflict in low income countries (Arezki and Bruckner 2011:11) due to impact of the food price increase on household income: An increase in price reduces the strength of household income and its degree of entitlement. The ability of a household to attain food security is a function of its entitlement (Sen, 1999:162). Sen (1999:162) defines entitlement as an individual's ownership and control over a commodity. Therefore, Sen (1999:162) argues, "People suffer from ...[food insecurity] when they cannot establish their entitlement over an adequate amount of food." The loss in the strength of household income reduces the economic ability of households to express their entitlement over food that would meet their dietary requirements, causing significant variations in consumption pattern. In the instance of poorer households, this decline in purchasing power compels them to reallocate their expenditures mostly towards food purchases at the expense of non-food purchases that would assure them the full attainment of their desired satisfaction and the economic development goals of sustenance, economic freedom, and self esteem. This impact of food price increase widens the income inequality gap (Arezki and Bruckner 2011:11). This widening inequality gap provides the grievance which tends to put at stake the vertical legitimacy of a

government, through various forms of collective social actions such as protests, riots, and in some instances, civil war. Rising food prices have been implicated as the culprit for the recent waves of mass demonstration that led to regime change in parts of the Middle East and North Africa (Brinkman and Hendrix, 2011:4).

Brinkman and Hendrix (2011:4) warn, however, that while food insecurity has an inequality dimension, it is not necessarily a first-order condition for the eruption of violent conflict. Food insecurity must cohabitate with other factors for it to function instrumentally as a conflict trigger (Brinkman and Hendrix, 2011:4). These other factors, which are highly context-specific, include the nature of existing political institutions, the levels of economic development, the availability of safety nets, economic or social, and demographic pressures (Brinkman and Hendrix, 2011:4). Food insecure countries experiencing economic imbalances manifested through such forms as political exclusion, widening inequalities, or declining living standards of living are at risk of conflict.

Countries emerging from violent conflicts such as civil war are also faced with these increasing conflict-risks, which are due to the overhang, or conflict trap, from their previous conflicts. Among factors responsible for the conflict overhang are a disruption of the food production systems (Del Castillo, 2008:44), destroyed social institutions and infrastructure, weak governance structure, the massive population displacement, youth bulge, high rates of unemployment, rising levels of inflation, widening inequality, and increasing poverty. Besides, the inadequacy of financial resources available to post-conflict countries restricts their ability to ensure domestic consumption and food security.

For this reason, UNDP (2008:4) emphasizes an approach to peace building and national rebirthing that sees “food security ... and [the reconstruction of] a social safety net for all citizens...” as crucial to post-conflict stability and development. This approach contrasts with an approach that is pre-occupied with the macro-questions of economic

growth, governance, and security reconstruction, and resonates with Annan's (2000:14) integrated approach to peace building. This integrated approach incorporates what Reychler (2001:94) calls the "hardware" and the "software" of peace building. The hardware is engaged with the macro-level factors of economic growth, politics and military reconstruction, while the software is engaged with the deeper and less visible micro questions of poverty and the various forms of inequality, whose neglect threatens the work of the hardware (Reychler 2001:94). For this reason, Brinkman and Hendrix (2011:15) suggest that post-conflict peace building gives particular attention to reviving food production, especially the food-producing regions of the post-conflict countries that were affected by the conflict. In the words of Brinkman and Hendrix (2011:15), this is "social development." Social development emphasizes food security, and reduces inequality, which helps to rebuild national institutions destroyed by the conflict, while addressing the root cause of the conflict.

Growing out of the definition of food security are the economic issues of income, price, and utility. Income dictates the behavior of households through its influences on their budget constraints, preferences, and choices. Instrumental in this relationship is the price of food. Changes in food prices determine the purchasing power of household income, and hence its level of utility gained from the value of income. For example, an increase in food prices, all other things being equal, reduces the ability of household to undertake its desire level of purchases. Assuming that household income is spent entirely on food, which is the case with many poor households and households recovering from a period of civil conflict, an increase in food price reduces the amount of food they can consume. This drop in consumption reduces their utility, which can be reflected in their health and nutrition outcomes, such as stunted growth, wasting, or other forms of nutritional deficiencies.

Weil (2008:185) describes stunting as a form of households' biological adaptation to inadequate food consumption due to their inability to acquire enough food for their healthy growth. Through this

adaptation, poor food consumption impacts national output through its impact on labor productivity. Inadequate food consumption impedes the healthy growth of households, which reduces the supply of a higher quality or highly productive labor force. A poorer quality labor force produces lower output, which through the income distribution mechanism generates lower income for households, affecting their ability to secure adequate food and fight food insecurity. This however, does not negate the critical role of utilization in food consumption and labor output. But in post-conflict societies where food production has been abandoned and the distribution systems destroyed, making food available and accessible are critical jump-starters to economic growth, economic development, and peace building.

Civil conflict affects food security in developing countries because of its alarming impact on agriculture production and on the economy as a whole. Food insecurity is more acute in countries that are in protracted conflicts, such as civil wars, than in other countries not experiencing such problems (FAO, 2010:15). In Africa, nearly half of the countries facing food insecurity in 2003 were experiencing civil conflict (Clover, 2003:9). To address this, del Ninno, Dorosh, and Subbarao (2004:97) recommend a balanced configuration of policies that would revive food production and ensure its access by households. This means improving the household income for those in poverty and the population highly impacted by the conflict, along with ensuring the market supply of food at affordably lower prices (Southgate, Graham & Sweeten, 2007:175). This policy configuration is linked to a form of post-conflict economic development that focuses on addressing the root causes of conflict, including food insecurity and poverty, inequality, and unsustainable livelihoods (Taeb, 2004:13).

Food production and other forms of agriculture production provide poor households with various forms of livelihoods, though these livelihoods may not be sustainable. Carney (1998, quoted in Taeb, 2004:17) defines sustainable livelihoods as “comprising the capabilities, assets, (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living.” A sustainable livelihood enhances a

household's ability to cope and recover from such stresses and other social shocks as civil war (Taeb, 2004:17). Thus, threats to livelihoods, which for rural households are food production and other forms of agriculture production, prepare a fertile bed for the eruption of conflict (Taeb, 2004:17). Ensuring sustainable post-conflict livelihoods, especially where the majority of the conflict-affected population is returning to rural areas, requires due attention to agriculture production in general, and food production in particular (Ibid).

The food security situation in post-conflict societies is normally worse than their pre-conflict levels (del Castillo, 2008:48). Like in other food insecurity crisis, food aid is considered the immediate intervening response to post-conflict food insecurity; however, food aid has the propensity to create a hand-out dependency culture, undermining the rebuilding of domestic food production systems through price distortions and generating conflict (del Castillo, 2008:262; Teodosijevic, 2003:23). This impacts the income potential of households for whom food production and other forms of agriculture are the sole source of livelihood. The impact of income results in wider income inequality due to the impact of the conflict on pre-war inequality, generating a recipe for conflict relapse, especially if the conflict was rooted in inequalities.

According to Azar (1990), groups waging violent conflict do so in hope of changing the structures of their society, in order to have a redress to inequality. Post-conflict food security goals must therefore be aligned with efforts seeking to address the root cause of conflict. As Brinkman and Hendrix (2011:15) states, "if inequalities ...were a cause of conflict, a broader, equitable ... [approach] to food [security] is critical for peace building." Thus, post-conflict food security interventions must develop a food security mechanism that transitions post-conflict societies from reliance on food aid to reliance on domestic food production (del Castillo, 2008:23). This mechanism would rebuild social capital, and spur economic development and ensure stability and peace. In doing so, what might have been conflictual and generative of a "vicious circle of food insecurity is transformed into a

virtuous circle of food security” (Brinkman and Hendrix, 2011:15). In Rwanda, for example, food aid was suspected to have been a disincentive for the country’s attention to rebuilding its food production systems (Teodosijevic, 2003:23). Ensuring food security for post-conflict households also calls for attention to the factors that affect food supply. These factors include the quality of political institutions and stability (Southgate, Graham & Sweeten, 2007:176-178), the state of infrastructure, agriculture research and development, (Ibid) household safety nets, (Southgate, Graham & Sweeten, 2007:176-181) and the gains from food production.

The quality of political institutions and a society’s level of stability is a function of the society’s socio-political process, which defines people’s access to assets and strategies that assure the satisfiers of their basic human needs, hence the wellbeing of the society. Needs for wellbeing arise from three factors: structural, life-cycle, and crisis. Needs arising from structural factors include the demand for the products and services, including food production of poor people such as their labor; life-cycle factors include education, shelter, and healthcare needs; crisis factors include shocks to household status due to illness, loss of livelihood, and changes in household composition including the loss of a breadwinner, due to wars or disasters.

Besides, institutional quality and structure of governance are also recognized as the causes of poverty, inequality, and food insecurity (Taeb, 2004:13). Food insecurity is “often a result of deliberate policies” (Teodosijevic, 2003:24). The impact of governance and institutional quality tend to shape or inform post-conflict regulations governing access to livelihoods based on the various dimensions of the conflict. This conflictual system of regulations reduces the livelihood options available to households, and contributes to food insecurity. For example, in Rwanda, Clay et al (1998:373) found that a secured livelihood system enhanced the confidence of and assured food producing households of certainty and long-term stability for their investment and livelihoods.

Market access is another important factor that affects food supply both in non-conflict and post-conflict societies. The market incentivizes food production at reasonable prices. The market structure in post-conflict settings, however, tend be an evolution of the economic or market interactions that serve the interests of particular groups, usually heads and commanders of warring factions, that decided market mechanisms during the conflict period. This market evolution bears consequences on food producing households with ramifications for their post-conflict livelihoods, and income, and the society's degree of food security (Lecoutere, Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers, 2009:41-63) and inequality.

Another factor that impacts market access is the state of infrastructure, which in many post-conflict societies might have been destroyed or have deteriorated because of disuse or long periods of disrepair. A destroyed infrastructure, both physical and social, destroys the ability of post-conflict households to resume food production activities (Teodosijevic, 2003:26). The destruction of infrastructure creates a vacuum in the information flow between food producing households and market centers about market dynamics, especially the prevailing prices of products and produces. This information shortage created by the deteriorating state of the market infrastructure gets filled by market intermediaries, who "are willing to assume the risks involved and profit from the gap" (Lecoutere et al, 2009:50). While intermediaries reduce the transaction costs associated with market access for food producing households, food producers are however in a disadvantageous position to properly bargain due to information asymmetry produced by this inequality.

The gains from food production protect these households from social shocks other than civil conflict, enabling them to continue their investment in food production, despite losses. In times of civil conflict, however, this social safety net is destroyed as food producing households are uprooted from their homes and rendered unable to resume production, even after cessation of the conflict, due to their lack of start-up capital, shifting their livelihood pursuits towards other activities. This shift in livelihood pursuits results in a drop in food production.

The quality of political institutions and physical infrastructure, the level of stability, and income safety nets do not only influence the demand and supply of food, but they point to the crucial role of the market in the attainment of post-conflict food security. Apart from stabilizing the post-conflict food market, these factors also demonstrate the relationship between post-conflict food security, inequality and poverty, and post-conflict peace building and development.

What is less well understood, however, is how these factors respond to food security policy actions over a period of time. This is a gap in the literature that begs exploring with empirical evidence; hence the question: why does food insecurity persist in a post-conflict setting in the midst of economic growth despite national policy interventions aimed at making a population food secure? Liberia provides an excellent case for exploring these questions because of the role of food security in its checkered conflict history, and its efforts at rebuilding its food security systems as an integral part of its peace building and rebirthing agenda.

Methodology

Data and Data Sources

The data for the article was collected from various online databases. The data for income elasticity of demand for food (Income Elasticities for Broad Food Consumption Categories, 144 Countries, 2005) was obtained from the US Department of Agriculture Economic Research Services database (www.ers.usda.gov/Data/FoodDemand/), while the Food Production Index, and the Gross Domestic Product per capita, and population sizes were collected from the World Bank Development Indicators online database. The choice for the use of the income elasticity for 2005 is based on the assumption that there is no significant change in the food taste and preferences for the average Liberian consumer. Without a significant change and the lack of current secondary data for the income elasticity of demand for food by Liberian consumers, the 2005 elasticity of demand for food would provide a good indicator about the responsiveness of the average Liberian household demand for food to changes in income.

As shown in Table 1, the dataset covers the period 2007-2009. The food production index presents net food production (after deduction for feed and seed) of a country's agricultural sector relative to the base period 1999-2001. The food production index covers all edible agricultural products that contain nutrients; coffee and tea are excluded. In an ideal circumstance, the dataset should cover the period from 2007-present. This is however, not possible due to the lack of data for the period beyond 2009. Despite this inadequacy, the data for 2007-2009 would provide an indication of the trend of progress being made since the strategy was launched.

The Method

A food security equation, measuring the changes in both the country's aggregate supply and demand for food is used to analyze the progress in Liberia's food security position between 2007 and 2009. The food supply equation takes the form:

$$FS = (P^{t+n} / P^t)^{1/n}$$

Where:

FS = Change in aggregate food supply

n = the number of years that the strategy has been implemented;

P^{t+n} = aggregate food produced in 2009 as measured by the Food Production Index; and

P^t = aggregate food produced in 2007 as measured by the Food Production Index.

The food demand equation is of the form: $FD = P + \varepsilon g$

Where:

D = Change in aggregate demand for food

P = population growth rate;

ε = Income elasticity of demand for food

g = rate of growth for per capita GDP

Rebuilding Post-Conflict Food Security System and Peace: The Liberian Experience

Emerging from a brutal 14-year civil conflict, Liberia launched its National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (NFSNS) in 2007, as a demonstration of the government's commitment to "substantially reduce food insecurity and improve nutrition in the country" (Government of Liberia, 2008:i). The civil conflict left the country's economy, social services, and infrastructure in a devastated state, along with a massive loss of human capital. By 2003, when the conflict officially ended, there was barely any form of agricultural activity taking place in the country, due largely to insecurity and a severe disruption of rural livelihood systems.

The alarming state of insecurity and uncertainty about political stability not only displaced the majority of the population belonging to farming and agriculture households, either internally or in refugee camps around the world, but also provided the incentives for them to become dependent on food aid and other forms of handouts. By 2006, at least 80 percent of Liberia's population was food-insecure (USDA, 2007:13), with a substantial proportion of its children suffering from various forms of malnutrition. It is within this context, that the Government of Liberia launched its food security strategy. The NFSNS

defines the country's post-conflict food security systems reconstruction and development agenda. It is the reference document for the government's actions to "substantially reduce food insecurity and improve nutrition in the country in the next eight years" (Government of Liberia, 2008:i).

The NFSNS sees food security as an integral component of the country's post-conflict peace building and development "master development framework, the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS)" (Government of Liberia, 2008:i). Food insecurity, by its impact on inequality, was at the core of the country's conflict (1989-2003). For this reason, "[the Liberian] Government recognizes that to further its ambitions of peace, reconciliation, stability, and development, the nation as a whole, and each Liberian household, must achieve food security and improved nutrition" (Government of Liberia, 2008:i). The key objective of the strategy is to "ensure that all Liberians have reliable access to the food they need, and are able to utilize that food to live active lives" (Ibid). Specifically, the strategy targets infants and children under 5 years old and pregnant and breast-feeding mothers and the elderly (p. 3). Among the food insecure population, children are the most vulnerable to the effects of food insecurity, including under-nutrition and other micronutrient deficiencies, which impair their development and productivity at various stages of their growth process, leading to a vicious circle of under-nutrition, low productivity, and poorer living standard.

The NFSNS addresses the following separate dimensions of food security, namely, availability, access to food, and utilization. To ensure that all "Liberians are able to have reliable access to the food they need, and to utilize that food to achieve a good nutritional status necessary to live active and healthy lives" (Government of Liberia, 2008:20), the NFSNS lists the following as the government's priority actions: improving food production as a dependable means of livelihood; stabilizing the price of rice, the country's staple; strengthening household income and social safety net; removing the constraints faced by famers in the production of food; securing the factors of food pro-

duction, and improving post-harvest processing. The significance of these actions lies in their objective to reduce rising unemployment and poverty, narrow the inequality gap due to structural inequality and unbalanced economic development, and improve household gains from food production.

Thus, these priority actions enhance both the demand and supply sides of food security, and could be described as demand-enhancing and supply-enhancing actions. With its focus on enhancing both the demand and supply of food, the strategy recognizes the centrality of the market to the attainment of food security in Liberia. Accordingly, the government of Liberia has been executing these actions since 2007, the year of the policy's launch, to enhance both the demand and supply of food. These actions include an increasing household income through increases in the salary of public sector employees, and a steady increase in budgetary allocations to agriculture and related sectors; through investment in road construction as an attempt to remove the constraints faced by farmers in the production of food, and make food production a dependable livelihood and secure the factors of food production. Table 1 shows the budgetary allocations to agriculture and public works from 2006/2007 – 2009/2010.

Table 1: Liberian Government Budgetary Allocations 2006 - 2010

Sector	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010
Public Works	5,565,687	10,962,242	22,683,100	39,900,000
Agriculture	3,061,100	3,778,511	5,472,000	7,100,000

Source: GoL Annual Budgets; retrieved from MoF Liberia website.

These improving trends in the government's allocation to agriculture and its related sector and the increase in the salary of public sector workers, however, give limited evidence about the state of Liberia's food security conditions since the policy was launched.

Table 2: Data for Liberia's Food Security Equation, 2007 -2009

Indicators	2007	2009
Elasticity for Food (source: USDA ERS)	0.836	0.836
GNP/capita (source: World Bank Development http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do?Step=3&id=4)	150.667248	152.9851605
Food Production Index (http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do?Step=3&id=4)	121	131
Population (in thousands) (source: World Resources Institute http://earthtrends.wri.org/searchable_db/results.php?years=2007-2007,2008-2008,2009-2009&variable_ID=363&theme=4&cID=106&ccID=)	3,750	4,134

The Results And Discussion

$$FS = (131 / 121)^{1/2} - 1$$

$$= 0.0405 \text{ or } 4.05\%$$

$$FD' = P + \varepsilon g$$

$$= 0.0487 + 0.836(0.0066)$$

$$= 0.05423 \text{ or } 5.423\%$$

The growth in food demand has outpaced the growth in food supply for the period under study by 1.373 percentage points. This gap indicates that the country is food insecure, which is reflected in the nutritional status of children. Stunting remains a significant problem among Liberia's children: about 42 percent of children are experiencing stunted growth, a two percentage points above the "critical" threshold set by the World Health Organization (WHO) (Government of Liberia, 2011:9). This nutritional deficiency in children is due to the food insecure position of the households in which they live. In 2011, 66 percent of Liberia's population was estimated to be food insecure,

with 41 percent consuming food that had insufficient nutrients to enable them to maintain an active and healthy life (Government of Liberia, 2011:23). This 2011 food insecurity position is a drop from that of 2010, which showed marked improvement over 2006 and 2008, when 49 and 50 percent of the population, consumed inadequate nutritious food respectively (Government of Liberia, 2011:23). From the two equations, this gap is attributable to several factors: low income and weak income safety net, population growth and changes in food prices on the demand side; on the supply side are the following factors of production: poor transportation and communication infrastructure, limited capital and access to credit, declining labor for production, and outdated food producing technology.

Income has a critical function in the food security position of households. Many Liberians require income to meet their food and nutritional needs. In a country where the majority of the population relies on salaried employment, food security is largely a function of salaried employment. However, only about 19 percent of households have salaried employment (Government of Liberia, 2011:15). The majority of the population would remain food insecure until salaried employment opportunities are available to them. While the prevalence of food insecurity is widespread across the country, there are however, significant variations among Liberia's counties. Four of the counties, Bomi, Grand Kru, River Gee, and Maryland, are the most food insecure with more than 70 percent of their populations food insecure (Government of Liberia, 2011:24). While the situation in River Gee and Maryland counties can be attributed to increased stress on available food supply systems, due to population increase occasioned by the presence of Ivorian refugees, the situation in Bomi and Grand Kru can be attributed largely to poor income levels. Bomi and Grand Kru have the worst poverty rates in Liberia. Apart from these four counties, lower levels of household income is also impacting the food security situation of urban Monrovia, the home to one-third of Liberia's population; more than half of the population of Monrovia are in poverty with forty percent of households in the category of food insecure (Government of Liberia, 2011:24).

To apparently offset the impact of the rising prices on household food security position, the government has increased the salaries of public sector employees since 2006 by 727 percent (William Allen quoted in Liberia Daily Observer Newspaper Staff Writer, 2012). An increase in the salary of public sector workers increases their welfare independence and decreases their budget constraint. In the context of post-conflict Liberia, raising household income serves two functions: to provide a social safety net to help households recover from the social shock created by the years of violent conflict and the rising prices of food, and to enhance nutrition and sow seeds for fiscally sustainable investment in poverty reduction, economic equality, and peace building. The effectiveness of social safety net investments depends on the provision of meaningful protection to households against the social shocks associated with food insecurity. In order to be most effective, a social safety net investment must therefore reach the poor and food insecure, and provide maximum resources to them to limit their budget constraint. Through its impact on household budget constraint, raising household income helps to break the intergenerational cycle of food insecurity, poverty, and inequality, and eventually conflict. Hence, the value of increasing household income as a social safety net investment in the context of food security is enhanced by the extent to which it creates a stable household food demand with multiplier effects on poverty, economic development, and stability. Given the limited reach of the increase in public sector employees' salaries, it is questionable whether this salary increase is a valuable social safety net investment for the attainment of food security.

Taken in the context of Liberia's continuous economic growth since 2006, this declining value of the safety net investment pose some threats to the country's post-conflict stability and peacebuilding agenda. The Liberian economy has rebounded, and is growing, while a majority of the population is in danger of food insecurity. The Liberian economy has experienced impressive growth since the end of the conflict with Liberia's real GDP growing by 6.3% in 2010, up from 4.6% in 2009 (Sirleaf, 2011:9); however, only the minority of the population are food

secure. This situation indicates that although economic growth is the ultimate platform for reducing poverty and ensuring food security, focus is required on the rates of unemployment, poverty, and inequality, conflict generating factors that cohabitate with food insecurity. In this context, achieving food security cannot be tied to the increases in the salaries for public sector employees alone. Sustainable employment for the population not in the employ of the public sector is crucial to food security. Employment enhances the ability of households to earn income and acquire food.

The relationship between income and food security is mediated by the price system. More than 75 percent of Liberians access food through market purchases (LISGIS, 2011:17). The impact of changes in food prices are expressed through changes in household food preferences and/or consumption pattern such as skipping meals, or limiting the frequency or proportion of daily meals consumption. This is the case especially with poor households because of the impact of price on the purchasing power of their income. Poor households have had to substitute rice, the staple, for cassava, a less preferred food. For those who can still afford the purchase of rice, they have had to reduce their frequency and proportion of daily consumption. This strategy reduces the required calorie intake for households to lead a healthy and active life, with consequences for labor productivity and national output at the macro-level. About 41 percent of the population is reported to have inadequate consumption level, with the worst conditions found mostly in the southeastern regions of the country, due partly to differentials in the price of rice (LISGIS, 2011:24). Households in the southeast pay 50 percent more than households in Monrovia for the same amount of the country's staple, rice (LISGIS et al 2008:17). This price differential is due largely to the cost associated with transporting the food from the central port of entry in Monrovia to these various parts, which have poor transportation networks. This price differential also explains not only the worsening state of food insecurity in southeastern Liberia, but the potential danger the rising price of food poses to the national development priority of poverty reduction and peace building.

It is estimated that a 20-percent increase in the price of rice in Liberia could increase the rate of poverty by about four percentage points (Tsimpo and Wodon, 2007:10)—from 63.8% to 68%. This impact is due to the dominance of the consumption effects over the production effects, as Liberia is a net importer of food and more than half of the population are net food purchasers. Besides, a high percentage of expense goes towards rice consumption. In poor households, rice consumption accounts for 53% of their expenditure (Government of Liberia, 2010:31). It also demonstrates the high degree of inequality within the society, and the fragility of the income safety net for poor households, a condition that is very critical to the country's peace building agenda in the wake of rising economic growth rates since 2006.

Another factor that affects the demand for food is population growth. Rapid population growth increases the pressure on existing food supplies. While the population of Liberia has grown over the period, food production has not grown at a commensurate level to ensure adequate food supply. For example, from 2007 – 2009, the population of Liberia grew at an annual rate of 4.87%; however, Liberia's food production as measured by its food production index grew at an annual rate of 4.13%. This difference between food demand and food supply results in a nutrition gap. In 2001, Liberia's nutrition gap was 18,000 tons (USDA 2011:50). Food nutrition gap refers to the gap between available food, and food needed to support a per capita nutritional standard (USDA, 2011:50). The USDA (2011:50) estimates that 59,000 tons of food supplies were required to support the nutritional standards for the average Liberian household in order to eliminate this gap. The most viable option for Liberia would be food imports. With the price of food on the Liberian market exogenously determined, coupled with the high rate of poverty (64% by the national poverty line measure food import and 84 percent by the multidimensional poverty measure) (Government of Liberia, 2011) stands to benefit only the wealthier households.

The supply-influencing priority actions are tailored towards improving the market's ability to produce and supply adequate food for market exchange. At the crux of these supply-influencing factors is removing factors that increase the production and transaction costs for the supply of food provision at affordable prices. These factors include transportation and communication infrastructure, and the state of agriculture technology in general.

Although post-war food production is yet to reach pre-war levels, the poor state of Liberia's transportation infrastructure impedes market access by domestic food producers. Liberia has a road network of 6,162 miles total. Of this, only 456 miles (7.4%) is paved, and much of the pavement deteriorated during the conflict as a result of disrepair or disuse. The regions of the country, which produce the country's domestic food supply, are connected by primary and secondary laterite roads. Government has made some efforts towards addressing this constraint. Over the past four years, 37 miles of road paved roads have been either rehabilitated or rebuilt, while maintenance works are ongoing on the secondary laterite roads across the country (Sirleaf, 2010:54). The 37 miles of paved roads, however, are in Monrovia, Liberia's capital, a non-food producing region (Sirleaf, 2010:54). Regions connected by laterite roads are inaccessible by road during the months of intense rains, almost half of the year. Farmers producing food crops with the intent of supplying the domestic market are therefore restrained in their ability to access markets for their produce due to time-consuming transportation or/and high transport cost. This constraint resulting from the poor state of transport infrastructure acts as a tax, reducing the expected income of famers from food production.

This situation not only reduces access to market by domestic food producers, which is exploited by intermediaries, but it also creates uncertainty about their gains from the terms of trade. These intermediaries act as a link between the farmers and the market, influencing the volume or quality of market information available to farmers, as famers would have to rely on intermediaries, who are willing to the take risk involved, in getting the food produce to the market. Con-

necting to market through intermediaries theoretically reduces the risks and costs that are incurred by the famers, if they cannot access market easily. But this creates a moral hazard largely for the famers, as they are in a disadvantageous trading position with the intermediaries. The Government of Liberia (2008:26) recognizes this constraint and lists the use of mobile communications technology along with local community radio stations as a strategy to remove this hazard to famers. No evidence seems to be available however, about the implementation of this component of the strategy, or its impact on food production households. This is a testament that farmers are without storage and processing facilities, despite it being listed as a priority action.

These constraints result in losses for food producing households, which reduce the amount of capital available for increased food production. Compounding this loss of capital is the lack of credits for food producers. The Liberian banking system has not penetrated much of the rural areas to service that market, following the conflict. In instances where they have arguably moved into rural Liberia, their activities have had a marginal link with the farming population, due to huge transaction costs. Hence, too little capital is available to rural food producing communities, and current microfinance initiatives cannot fill the gap. Farmers have no alternative financial means to cushion their losses that are largely due to poor market access and the lack of storage facilities.

Since 1990, the agricultural labor force has experienced a steady increase: from 1990 – 2004, the agricultural labor increased by 41.5 percent². Despite this positive trend in agricultural labor supply, agricultural labor as a share of total labor has plummeted steadily for the same period by nearly seven percentage points. This steady decline is attributable to a declining interest in agriculture in pursuit of other forms of livelihoods. Food in Liberia is still being produced on farms that are cultivated by the traditional methods of slash and burn, a labor intensive method.

Conclusion

Liberia is food insecure. At least four in every 10 Liberians are unable to access the adequate amount of food to meet their nutritional requirements and live healthy and active lives. The state of food insecurity is in spite of the implementation of the national food security strategy since 2007 when it was launched. The strategy has had minimal impact on factors that enhance the demand and supply of food, hence food security. These factors include unemployment, poverty, the price of the country's staple, and population growth. Others include the poor state of the country's transportation infrastructure, due to structural inequality, declining interest in food production as a means of livelihood, and food producers' lack of access to opportunities for credit and capital, and the use of traditional farming methods.

While these factors have been exacerbated by the years of violent conflict, it testifies to the persistence of Liberia's past, which will continue to threaten every intervention in the country's peace building and development drive and not only food security, unless addressed. The government recognizes this and the centrality of the market, and has taken a set of actions to change these factors for the attainment of food security. These include raising the salaries for public sector employees, improving market access, stabilizing the price of food, and securing the factors of food production. The execution of these actions has, however, so far done little to influence these factors positively to make Liberia food secure. This is due to the failure of the interventions to problematize the degree of poverty, unemployment, and inequality within the country.

With less than 20 percent of the country's work force comprising salaried employed, raising the salaries of public sector employees without problematizing the role of poverty, unemployment, and population changes limits the reach of the impact from salary increase. Increases in the salary of public sector workers have done little to improve household food security safety net due largely to rising food prices and inequality. Given the exogeneity of the price of Liberia's

staple, rice, the rise in public sector employees' salaries only exposes the degree of inequality in the population arising from the high rates of poverty and unemployment. It has also shown that this nature of investment in household safety net is not fiscally sustainable investment in food security, poverty reduction, economic equality, and peace building.

Food producers have had to lose their gains from food production or reduce their volume of food production due to the lack of processing and storage facilities, hindrances in accessing market, resulting from the poor state of the transportation and communications infrastructure in Liberia. This hindrance to market access is exploited by intermediaries with whom the food producers have limited bargaining power, due to information asymmetry. In the absence of intermediaries, the produce is left to rot and waste. This results in a loss from which food producers are unable to recover, due to limited capital and credit opportunities. Thus, the drop in the gains from food production has made food production an unattractive livelihood option, affecting the supply of food production, and increasing unemployment and poverty for a substantial proportion of the rural population.

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NOTES

- ¹ $P = [\ln(P_1) - \ln(P_0)] / t_1 - t_0$ where t_1 and t_0 refers to 2009 and 2007 respectively
 $g = [(GDP/capita)_1 - (GDP/capita)_0] / (GDP/capita)_1 / t$
- ² See http://earthtrends.wri.org/searchable_db/index.php?step=countries&cID%5B%5D=106&theme=4&variable_ID=363&action=select_years

The Silent Majority: The Liberian Market Women and the Informal Economy of Post-War Liberia

Emmanuel O. Oritsejafor and Dorothy Davis

Introduction

Women have historically played an integral role in the development aspirations of most African countries. Although their contributions are often given minimal attention, they have remained the bedrock of the development aspirations of these countries. In the case of Liberia, after fourteen years of war and the destruction of major social and economic infrastructure, the market women have continued to make major contributions in the post-war development of Liberia through informal markets. The contributions of these women through informal markets go beyond just providing daily sustenance. They were an integral part of the national economy because the formal markets, during and after the Liberian civil war, were in a deplorable condition. Therefore, these women were not only providing social and economic sustenance, they were the driving force of the economy.

This study is an attempt to provide an understanding of the importance of informal markets in Liberia, and how the commercial activities of women in these markets provided national sustenance in the absence of the formal markets. Given the importance of the informal market and the role that women have continued to play in this market, it will augur well for policy makers and the Liberian government to continue to provide the necessary social and economic incentives and conditions for women and men in this sector to continue to contribute to the post-war development of Liberia. Specifically, the article will examine the relationship between the formal and informal markets. How has the informal market enhanced the social and economic in-

frastructures of post-war Liberia? What is the role of market women in the informal market? The following sections provide an overview of the Liberian economy after fourteen years of civil war, the contextual landscape for understanding the informal markets in Liberia, a discussion on the role of women in the informal markets in post-war Liberia followed by examples of how market women associations have contributed to the post-war economic recovery of Liberia.

Literature Review

The literature on the role of women in the informal economy of Liberia is evolving with the growing interests of scholars and development agencies in the compelling impact of informal markets and the role of women in these markets. The emergence of informal markets in Liberia and elsewhere in the West African sub region as a productive sector of the economy is contrary to some of the prevailing liberal economic orientations that these markets are “outmoded” (Hill, 1966, p.295).

Contrarily, some of the emerging literature on informal markets shows that they are profoundly important, not only for the sustenance of individuals and their communities, but they have become an integral part of the national development structure of some countries. For instance, (Kiteme, 1992) highlighted the important role women played in the food distribution system between the rural and urban African markets in Kenya. Along the same lines, (Hosier, 1987) suggests that informal markets can also serve as development alternatives because “they possess the ability to evolve or grow as formal establishments have” whereby they provide employment opportunities for the urban poor and can help address poverty (p.384). Similarly, Cherunilam (1981) posits that declining employment opportunities in rural India has led to urban migration and consequently the proliferation of informal sector employment in urban areas.

Bouserup (1970), in her cross-cultural analysis of women in developing economies, examined the role of market women in terms of

their economic and gender role. She raised the questions “why do women in developing economies such as those in Africa participate more in modern work in societies where the traditional position of women is confined and why are traditionally active and independent women from female farming and trading systems not more active in the modern sectors of their economy?”

Contrarily, Huntington (1975) suggested that though African women tend to hold subordinate positions even in traditional work environments such as female farming and trading systems, the focus of the discourse should not be on the economic independence of these women in relation to their men, but rather it should be driven by the extent to which the relationship of men to women has perpetuated the relationship of “aristocrat to peasants” (p.1007). She propounded that in these societies though women are the source of wealth, and have rights to land ownership, men controlled women and women’s production through their subordinate relationship in marriage (p.1007).

Kiteme (1992) examined the socio-economic contributions of Kenyan rural women traders to national development and livelihood. He propounded that In Kenya, the multifaceted female roles often overlap, but they always constitute indispensable services in the sustenance of life among both urban dwellers and peasants in the country side.

Although the recognized economic role of the market women in most African countries and economies have been noted by some scholars, however, women have continued to bear the brunt of the challenges presented by development crisis in Africa, as it is the case in Liberia. Nonetheless, they have remained active participants in the development aspirations of these economies. In this regard, Handwerker (1974) not only discussed the structure of the Liberian market place, its periodization, but highlighted the role of the Liberian market women in the national food distribution system. According to Handwerker (1974), in the 1970s, food distribution was organized largely in terms of a series of market places. The seven-day village periodic mar-

ket functioned as the location where farmers could purchase a variety of imported goods with money received from goods brought to the market for sale. Produce collected from these markets are forwarded to daily markets serving localized aggregates of non-food producers in towns, concessions, and cities. For the most part, these towns and small concessions functioned as the only bulk-breaking and retailing center that serves the daily food needs of local households. The larger and more dispersed urban markets and large concessions in Monrovia, such as the Firestone Plantation at Harbel, served as bulk-breaking and retailing locations where produce from the rural areas were redistributed to neighborhood daily markets serving urban households.

Handwerker (1980) further suggested that the emergence of modern technologies and access to roads had also changed the landscape of food distribution and markets in Liberia. Therefore, what used to be a dichotomous trading system for almost 500 years, which linked upcountry communities with Sudanic trading centers, and the other part which linked coastal populations with European-American trading centers, was radically altered into three distinct trading systems, which for the first time integrated the entire country: 1. a three-tiered system for imports dominated by European-American firms that served as national wholesale outlets. Lebanese firms dominated the middle level wholesale and retail functions as store merchants; and African firms clustered primarily in low level retail functions as shop merchants, hawkers, and traveling market sellers; 2. a series of specialized channels transporting commodities such as iron, rubber, cocoa, coffee, and palm kernels for the world markets; and 3. a system of market places through which local produce primarily was transported to towns, concessions, and cities (pp. 230-231).

Given the historical dominance of European-American and Lebanese holdings in the Liberian marketplace, the role of market women in the marketplace is often challenged by the economic inequality that has been perpetuated by these foreign holdings, and in some instances, by the attendant patriarchal structures of some African societies. This domination at times has contributed to the deteriorating

social and economic conditions of Liberian workers, particularly women in the case of the informal market.

However, women in Africa and Liberia are known to have been progressively active in their demands for social and economic equality. Moran's (1989) field work on the Grebo Women of southeastern Liberia highlighted the collective role of women in the political economy of Liberia. The Grebo women challenged a national policy, through collective action, which had instituted a new tax policy of \$10 per head for all individuals between the ages of fifteen and sixty. The policy profoundly alienated the women from their ancestral land, most of which had been appropriated for plantation agriculture by government and privately owned companies growing crops such as sugar, rubber, and oil palms. Albeit, these commercial operations provided job opportunities for male laborers; however, they equally marginalized women from rural labor and other daily subsistence activities that they primarily carried out (Moran, 1989).

It is along these lines that Kuokkanen (2011) suggests in her study of indigenous economies, that subsistence economic activities has traditionally been the domain of women; therefore, a war against subsistence economy through taxation on women, such as the case of the Grebo Women in Liberia, also represents a war against women.

The emerging literature on the role of women in the informal market demonstrates the historical role of women in the informal market, and particularly their contributions to national development of developing countries such as Liberia, although the historical role of women in economic development is not unique to the Liberian context. However, in this case, the Liberian market women appeared to have played a pivotal role during the civil war, and are actively engaged in the post-war economic recovery of Liberia through the informal markets.

Development Orientations

There are contending views that have had profound influence on the shape and outcomes of development models often prescribed by policy makers and development agencies for Africa. One such orientation is the liberal theory of economic development. According to classical and neo-classical economists, the existing international economic structure provides the best framework for the economies of developing countries (Spero and Hart, 2003). According to this school of thought, the major development challenge for developing countries could be addressed if they strengthen their weak market structures. Thus, domestic economic policies of developing countries that create or accentuate market imperfections must be ameliorated. The best way to ameliorate these problems, they argued, is through the adoption of market oriented domestic reforms (Haggard and Webb, 1994, p.2).

However, in recent decades, the growth of the informal sector in developing countries has precipitated a rethinking of its role in the economy, particularly by the development agencies and policymakers, who have come to appreciate the role of the informal sector in the global economic environment. Given the present global meltdown the informal market may as well be a safety net for developing economies (www.globalenvision.org, 2012). According to the Global Development Center, the informal sector is “an oxymoron, on one hand it is an unorganized nuisance whose members do not pay tax, and on the other hand it provides income and employment opportunities for the most vulnerable in our communities-low income earners” (Global Development Research Center, www.gdrc.com, 2012).

The indigenous orientation provides an alternative perspective through which one can better understand the importance of the informal market and the role of women in this market. The indigenous approach is analytically sound because it provides alternative lenses through which the development aspirations of developing economies such as Liberia could be better attained through local institutions for “self management and self-financing” (Olowu, 1989, p.201). It is along these lines, that Misati (2007) suggests that contrary to the notion by some

scholars that the existence of the informal sector in economies may serve as a deterrent to investment, growth and development; instead they can positively stimulate the economy through wealth creation and private investments. Informal markets can also contribute to poverty reduction through job creation in the urban and rural areas. Therefore, the role of the informal market in sub-Saharan African countries cannot be ignored.

The indigenous orientation is driven by indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is the stores of knowledge people have built to help solve problems they have encountered over time (Oritsejafor, 2004). The model provides a sound analytical tool for understanding the role of the Liberian market women in economic development. The indigenous economic system according to Ayittey (1999) is often misunderstood, primarily because proponents of western development models subscribed to the myth of “hunters and gatherers,” thus creating the impression that Africa had no economic institutions or culture before their contact with the colonialists. Instead, African societies had established economic and political institutions that were compelling and viable.

The negative views of informal markets according to Koukkanen (2011) and Ake (1987), stems from the discourse of development that waged a war against indigenous economies and everything it represents. For instance, the attack on the informal markets could also be seen as detrimental to the economic contribution of women in this sector. Though women have long been participants in the informal market in sub-Saharan Africa, they are usually excluded because of the lack of education and other resources. While men in the informal economy tend to have more education, money, and contacts, and are able to move into other business opportunities, women in informal markets are challenged because they typically start off in a vulnerable position (Anumonwo-Johnston, et al. 2001). Therefore, an examination of the role of women in the informal economy of Liberia presents a unique case in which one can access the extent of their contributions to post-war development.

Indigenous economies according to Koukkanen (2011), refers to traditional and local economic systems of indigenous peoples. These systems include a variety of land-based, small-scale economic activities and practices as well as sustainable resource management. Indigenous economies are often characterized by a subsistence mode of production. The economic activity of the indigenous economies is not primarily driven by profit or competition; instead it is geared towards the sustenance of individuals, families, and the community.

Methodology

The method employed for this study is the political economy approach. According to Ake (1981, p.1), at the forefront of this method is the focus on material conditions, particularly economic factors in the explanation of social life. The deployment of these methods is useful in order to understand the exact characteristics and role of market women in the development aspirations of post-war Liberia. The approach also provides the analytical platform to examine the dynamics of the informal market and the challenges market women have continued to encounter as an integrated part of the political economy of Liberia. Therefore, the challenges and the contributions of the informal markets cannot be treated in isolation. Instead, it must be viewed in the context of interrelatedness of social phenomena—the economic structure, the social structure, and the political structure (Ake, 1981, p.7, Ake, 1987).

The Socio- Economic Environment In Liberia

After fourteen years of civil war, most of Liberia's political and socio economic institutions were near collapse; roads, bridges, schools, health facilities, water, sanitation, farm, and markets were destroyed or abandoned (The Liberian Economic Review, 2012). In regard to poverty and access, access to water and sanitation is twenty six percent and eleven percent respectively, health services in the urban area is ninety percent, and rural is thirty seven percent respectively, education seventy percent, housing twenty percent (The Liberian Economic Review, 2012).

Liberia is one of the poorest countries in the world. Per capita gross national income is US \$150, and about two thirds of the population is living in poverty and half in extreme poverty. At the national level 63.8 percent of the population is poor, the equivalent of 1.7 million Liberians. The estimated share of the population in extreme poverty is 47.9 percent, which is the equivalent of 1.3 million Liberians (World Bank, 2010, p.5). Given the striking numbers of Liberians living in poverty and being unemployed, one can also see the relationship between unemployment and poverty as illustrated in Tables 1 and 2.

{TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE}

Table 1 is useful for understanding the dynamics of the Liberian socio-economic environment, because it allows one to draw a profile of Liberians that are poor and unemployed. This is further illustrated in Table 2 by gender, age, and welfare quintile.

{TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE}

Table 2 shows that unemployment is slightly higher among youth and also high among older groups. For instance, among men, unemployment is higher among youth than among older individuals, while the difference among women is minimal. The table also shows that for older individuals, unemployment is much more concentrated among the higher quintiles of the population. Among youths, it is concentrated among the higher quintiles. The data suggests that for poverty reduction to become plausible it would bode well for the Liberian government to address high unemployment among adult groups in the short run rather than among youths (World Bank, 2010, p.11).

In light of international support and efforts by the Liberian government to address poverty and unemployment in Liberia, the Liberian economy has remained structurally untransformed with exports, GDP growth, and employment being advanced by a few traditional sectors, largely based on foreign investment (World Bank, 2010). It is with this in mind that one should examine the input of the informal sector in the post-war economic recovery of Liberia.

The Dynamics Of The Liberian Informal Market

The informal sector of the economy is defined as an entire unit of production services and trade with a management style that is different from the modern sectors, particularly in the standardized accounting system. A business belongs to the informal sector if it is characterized by a traditional work organization (www.AfriqueAvenir.org, 2012). An examination of the informal and formal financial sectors in Table 3 illustrates some of the differences between the formal and informal financial markets.

{TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE}

As suggested earlier in this study, liberal economists have long thought that the informal markets ranging from street vendors, wheel barrow pushing, petty trading by “Yanna boys” such as shoe selling, to “Pem-pems”-motorcycle driving, as is the case in Liberia, have very little to contribute to the global economy (Liberian Observer, 2012). Contrarily, the informal sector has become an active participant in the global economy. The global economic meltdown in the formal sectors of developed and developing countries (Barta, 2012) has raised the importance of the informal sector. This sector of the economy has been instrumental in providing beyond immediate economic sustenance for some families. In the case of Liberia, where social and economic infrastructures were near collapse as a result of the fourteen years of civil war, the informal economy became a vital sector.

The extent of the contribution made by the overall performance of the informal sector of the economy in post-war Liberia was succinctly captured by Tarway-Twalla (2008) in his study of Liberia. He administered a structured and semi structured survey to one thousand and four persons in informal business (PIBs) in Central Region of Liberia. His study shows that persons in informal businesses (PIBs) provided support for their households and extended family members to cover their health services; sixty one percent of in school PIBs were supported by informal businesses (IBs); while ninety percent of PIBs

financed in-school children and dependents through IBs; in the area of food security, IBs provided ninety two percent of PIBs and family members' food (Tarway-Twalla, 2008).

In the area of employment in Liberia where IBs are job opportunities by itself, seventy eight percent of the employed are in the public sector and are in the informal sector involved in low productivity and petty production work. Moreover, five percent of PIBs provided employment for others seeking employment opportunities; sixty two percent of IBs contributed to community projects, while twenty percent contributed to county projects (Twaraway-Twalla, 2008).

The Silent Majority: Liberian Women In The Informal Market

The challenging economic environment has not stopped several Liberians from tapping into any profitable business venture. Instead, the economic environment, as suggested in this discourse, has been an impetus for the establishment of small and medium sized enterprises. One such example is Ms. Weah, a twenty six year old student at the University of Liberia in Monrovia, selling sandwiches at the corner of McDonald and Benson Street. She started her business with US \$75 (The Liberian Observer, 2012). The case of Ms. Weah is an example of the *Silent Majority* in Liberia and other parts of Africa, and the world where women, then as now, have played a pivotal role in economic development through the informal markets, but have often received little to no recognition for their resilience and contributions.

In the case of Liberia, Tarway-Twalla's (2008) study showed that the average person involved in the informal business (PIBs) is a young adult. About fifty-eight percent of these persons are women. Eighty-five percent of the PIBs were married at one point or another. Forty six percent of these women are also female heads of households, with about three percent having dependents (Tarway-Twalla, 2008, p.4).

The role of women in the informal market is not without challenges. Some of these challenges are driven by social, economic, and

political factors that are not unique to the case of Liberia. Nonetheless, these challenges are profound, in this case, because Liberia is a post-war environment with limited social, economic, and legal infrastructures to support the aspirations of women in IB. For instance, after fourteen years of war, there is recognition by the Liberian government that women have continued to face domestic violence and are increasingly the victims of rape. Concomitantly, the political and legal infrastructures are far too weak to adequately address and ameliorate these problems. Economically, women in IB are also challenged by the lack of start-up funds for business and micro-credit. However, most of these women are resilient enough to embark on petty trading through family support at times, and the traditional “Susu Club” credit system. Table 4 provides a description of the “Susu Club” typically used in the informal market system in Liberia.

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE}

The recognition by the Liberian government and other multilateral organizations that women in the IB are important to the post-war development of Liberia provides the context to examine factors that led to the establishment of the Sirleaf Market Women’s Funds, and the objectives and goals of the organization and its impact on the post-war recovery of Liberia.

The Case Of The Sirleaf Market Women’s Fund

The Sirleaf Market Women’s Fund (SMWF) was founded in New York City in 2005 by a group of international friends of Liberia and Africa, ten days after Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected the President of Liberia. Named in honor of the first female president in Liberia and Africa, who is also the granddaughter of a market woman, SMWF was created to recognize the critical role market women played during Liberia’s war and in bringing about peace.

As discussed in the preceding sections, during fourteen years of war in Liberia, it was the market women who primarily sustained fam-

ilies and communities when almost all social and economic infrastructures were destroyed, and a quarter of a million lives were lost in the war. This has consequently resulted in most households being headed by women (Sirleaf Market Women's Fund, 2012).

SMWF's goal is to build or rebuild 50 markets with all services. The initiative takes an integrated approach to empower urban and rural market women and ensure a safe and healthy working environment. SMWF provides storage, clean water, and sanitary facilities as part of market construction or reconstruction. Daycare is also a priority in the market buildings.

In addition to focusing on the work environment, the SMWF Microfinance Program is made up entirely of marketers, and has provided loans to more than 663 women in both rural and urban areas. Many market women also have traditional joint savings in *susu* groups. This is where members put in a certain amount, and every month one of them receives the combined input of the other members.

In order to combat a high illiteracy rate, adult literacy training has been offered in 12 markets through funding provided by the UN Development Fund for Women (now known as UN Women). To date, more than 500 market women have learned to read and write. These objectives were borne out of the poor social and economic conditions in which the market women have operated their IBs.

In 2007, eighty three markets across the country were surveyed by a Liberian consulting firm through a partnership with SMWF, Liberia's Ministry of Gender and Development, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and UNIFEM (Sirleaf Market Women's Fund, 2012). The results of the survey showed that two-thirds of the markets had been badly damaged; only about a third had sanitary facilities or garbage disposal, and hardly any of these markets had on site storage facilities. To underscore the primary thrust of this article on the role which women have played in the post-war recovery of Liberia, fifty percent of the market

women were heads of households and sole bread winners. Also, out of approximately 204,000 market women in Liberia, many have families of six to eight children. Some of these children are orphans of war or of AIDS (Sirleaf Market Women's Fund, 2012).

The international group that founded SMWF has become its international Board of Directors primarily responsible for fundraising for the reconstruction of markets and ancillary services as well as overseeing project accountability. A separate Liberian Board of Directors (that includes the President of the Liberian Marketing Association), Executive Director and staff, oversee the activities of the organization in Liberia. At the end of 2011, SMWF reported that in the past four years it has rebuilt or built 13 markets with an additional 9 markets in the pipeline (Sirleaf Market Women's Fund, 2012).

SMWF's innovative approach has been recognized in a number of ways. First, it was the recipient of the 2008 Special Award for South-South Cooperation by the UNDP Special Unit for South-South Cooperation. Secondly, the UN Fund for Gender Equality awarded the organization a \$3 million grant in 2010 to build eight markets over four years. Thirdly, SMWF received a \$150,000 grant from the UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa in 2011 for a case study of markets built so far. Once completed in 2012, RBA believes that the Sirleaf market program can be a prototype with potential for replication throughout Africa and the global South.

Conclusion

The increasing visibility and viability of the *Silent Majority* of market women in Liberia and across Africa through technology is empowering them to become a major force in global, regional, national, and local economic development. Through the use of their cell phones, they can find out daily global market prices for their produce. They no longer have to rely on the "middle man" to barter for them. With increased skill levels, they can effectively negotiate their destiny and that of their offspring. They only need the support of the government to sustain their

development efforts, as they find their footing, and provide a helping hand as they grow from a micro-enterprise to a macro-enterprise.

Overall, the silent majority in Liberia have been progressively engaged in the post- conflict development of Liberia through initiatives and partnerships with development agencies and the government of Liberia, but more importantly through their commercial activities in the IBs before and after the war. Therefore, policy consideration for development, if it is to be sustainable, must be driven by a well structured indigenous perspective and the provision of social and economic incentives for the informal sector.

APPENDIX

Table 1 - Share of the Population in Poverty by Employment Characteristics

Socioeconomic	u of household head	of the Po lation			Po t		
		Urban	Rural	National			National
Public		24.3	9.2	13.9	40.7		49.1
Private formal		5.6	5.2	5.3	37.5	63.0	54.6
Private informal		6.5	3.8	4.6	52.4	52.1	52.2
Self		3.2	46.7	33.3	79.4	71.8	72.0
Self-other		27.4	16.4	19.8	54.7	62.2	59.0
Une		12.1	2.5	5.4	67.6	62.9	66.1
Inacti other		20.9	16.2	17.7	66.8	72.2	70.3
Ind t of household head							
farm		3.5	53.0	37.7	80.1	71.3	71.6
F		0.5	0.2	0.3	23.0	91.8	56.3
F		0.7	0.1	0.3	77.4	67.3	74.3
Min		0.4	0.6	0.5	78.9	69.0	71.2
		0.5	0.3	0.3	70.0	64.7	67.2
Electric		1.6	0.1	0.6	31.8	14.6	30.2
Construction		3.1	0.7	1.5	60.1	52.7	57.5
	l trades	10.4	3.2	5.4	49.6	38.0	44.8
T	communications	2.8	0.3	1.1	36.9	46.4	38.06
	services	1.0	0.2	0.4	24.7	34.6	27.6
	services	13.7	7.4	9.3	42.0	57.1	50.3
Other		31.2	18.9	22.7	50.7	65.4	59.2
U	inactive	30.6	15.0	19.8	67.2	71.1	69.3

Source: World Bank, *Report on Liberia's employment and pro-poor growth: Poverty reduction and economic management 4 African region*, (Washington D.C: World Bank, 2010); Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics, Human Development Network Country Department W1, West African Region, p.4

Table 2

Table 2- Unemployment Rate (15-64) By Gender, Area and Welfare Quintile, 2007

	Residence area		Quintile					
	Urban	Rural	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Liberia
Both sexes								
15-24	14.0	2.0	2.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	7.9	4.6
25-64	13.8	2.9	7.4	5.7	6.3	5.7	6.0	6.2
Total	13.9	2.6	5.8	5.2	5.7	5.4	6.4	5.7
Males								
15-24	18.0	1.9	2.7	4.5	4.4	7.3	9.0	5.3
25-64	15.5	4.2	11.1	7.5	7.4	7.6	6.1	7.7
Male total	16.0	3.5	8.3	6.5	6.5	7.6	6.8	7.1
Females								
15-24	10.1	2.1	1.2	3.9	4.2	2.4	6.8	3.8
25-64	11.8	1.7	3.6	3.9	5.3	3.5	5.8	4.4
Females total	11.4	1.8	2.9	3.9	4.9	3.2	6.1	4.3

Source: World Bank, *Report on Liberia employment and pro-poor growth: Poverty reduction and economic management 4 African region*, (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 2010); Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics, Human Development Network Country Department W1, West African Region, p.1

Table 3 - Comparing Formal and Informal Financial Sectors

INFORMAL FINANCIAL SECTOR	FORMAL FINANCIAL SECTOR
1. The informal financial sector provides savings and credit facilities for small farmers in rural areas, and for lower-income households and small-scale enterprises in urban areas. i.e. <i>Susu</i> Club	1. Formal financial institutions ignore small farmers, lower-income households, and small-scale enterprises in favor of a larger-scale, well-off, and literate clientele which can satisfy their stringent loan conditions.
2. The procedures of informal schemes are usually simple and straightforward; as they emanate from local cultures and customs, they are easily understood by the population.	2. Complex administrative procedures are beyond the understanding of the rural masses and savers.
3. The informal sector mobilizes rural savings and small savings from low-income urban households.	3. Formal financial institutions do not mobilize rural savings or small-scale deposits. Commercial banks could contribute to rural and small savings mobilization if they had adequate branch networks and if they adopted the relevant procedures.
4. Informal groups operate at times and on days which are convenient for their members.	4. The working days and opening hours of formal financial institutions do not take rural work schedules into account; banks are open at times when farmers are at work in their fields.
5. Informal sector associations accept any amount of regular savings, even the most modest sums which a saver can afford to set aside. The financial techniques on which such informal groups are based lend themselves to the management of a large number of small accounts.	5. Formal sector institutions are selective regarding clientele, so as to avoid having clients who make only small deposits. Their financial technology is not suited to the management of modest sums from a large number of savers.
6. Access to credit is simple, non-bureaucratic, and little based on written documents. Literacy is not a requisite.	6. Loan application procedures are complex and require reading and writing skills so that a file on the borrower may be established.
7. The simple and direct processing of loan requests allows for their prompt approval and a minimum delay in disbursement. Rejections are rare; but the level of risk is reflected in the interest rate charged.	7. Processing of loan requests is complex, resulting in long delays before final approval or rejection. Even when approval is obtained, loan delivery is slow.
8. Collateral requirements on loans are to local conditions and borrowers' capacity. The conditions may be based either on regular contributions to ROSCAs or on precise knowledge of farm size and/or crops harvested so as to determine the borrower's capacity to repay a loan.	8. Collateral requirements correspond to the situation of relatively well-off urban-dwellers; deposits or savings accounts in a commercial bank, property which can be mortgaged.
9. Transaction costs are low	9. Transaction costs are high
10. Repayment rates are high	10. Repayment rates are low.
11. Because they emanate from the local environment, informal groups are aware of the problems that members may be confronted with, and therefore they can deal with repayment difficulties in a pragmatic manner. Debt rescheduling is possible.	11. Formal sector institutions do not have close contact with the environment in which they operate. Sometimes they prosecute defaulters, which can have negative social repercussions, while at other times they do not sue for reimbursement, leading borrowers to believe that formal loans are free.
12. The informal sector has a dense and effective information network at the grassroots level for close supervision and monitoring of borrower activity – particularly their cash flow – whether they are members of an informal association or not. This contributes to the efficient mobilization of savings and ensures high loan repayment rates.	12. Unfamiliar with the grassroots environment, formal institutions are ill-served by a mediocre supervisory and monitoring network, and are unable to gain insight into the activities of their clientele.

13. Within the informal sector, information is widely diffused. The regular meetings of informal savings and credit associations serve as a forum for dissemination of information.	13. Formal sector institutions do not have a good network for dissemination of information. In addition, they are out of touch with the rural masses and make little to seek ways of reaching them.
14. The interest paid on deposits in the informal sector compares favorably with that paid in the formal sector, thus providing an incentive for rural and small urban households to save.	14. Some institutions of the formal sector do not even offer savings facilities. Others apply low – or sometimes even negative – real interest rates, thus putting off many a potential saver.
15. The informal sector charges competitive lending rates; though they are sometimes high, this reflects the scarcity of loanable funds. There is little connection between deposit and lending rates.	15. Public institutions charge very low – sometimes negative – real interest rates on loans. Commercial banks apply moderate lending rates which are nonetheless considerably higher than the interest paid on savings. The link between deposit and lending rates is weak.
16. There are no investment opportunities for savings which have been mobilized but which have not been lent.	16. There are investment opportunities for savings which have been mobilized but which have not been lent.
17. The informal sector usually does not keep a written record on the borrowing and/or saving activities of its clientele. When it does, the procedures are relatively simple.	17. The formal sector keeps written records on the activities of clients, although the information recorded is sometimes irrelevant.
18. The volume and availability of loanable funds are subject to seasonal fluctuations.	18. The formal sector regularly has loanable funds available.
19. The informal sector is not subsidized by the government, nor does it receive grants or other forms of support from donor agencies.	19. Formal sector institutions are subsidized by the government and may also receive grants and other support from donor agencies.
20. Savings and credit mechanisms in the informal sector are not geared towards accumulating funds before the peak season when loan requests are highest.	20. A regular supply of funds allows the formal sector to lend at any time of the year. This is not the case with government lending institutions, which are deprived of sufficient funds because of high default rates on their loans.
21. Despite the widespread dissemination of information within the informal sector, informal groups are often unaware of new farming methods, and so members do not learn of new techniques which would allow them to increase production levels and raise their standard of living.	21. Formal sector institutions could reach a widely dispersed rural clientele by collaborating with government extension units. In practice, though, they do not resort to such intermediaries and do not provide financial services in rural areas.

Source: OECD Development Center, Comparing formal and informal financial systems. Financial systems and development: What role for the formal and informal financial sectors? Retrieved from <http://www.gdrc.org/icm/formal-informal.html>.

Table 4 - The Informal Sector Credit System in Liberia

Rotational Susu	<p>A Susu club is an organization of business men and women. Each member of the club agrees to pay a certain monthly amount that is given to a member of the club. This process rotates until each member of the club is paid.</p> <p>For example, a Susu club of 10 women agrees to each pay LD\$250 per month. The first member is given LD\$2,500.</p>
Yearly Susu/Savings Club	<p>This is a group of organized business people and other interested individuals who agree to contribute and save monthly. Money is then loaned to both members and non-members. Where formal commercial banks exist, the money is saved with the bank. At every meeting of the savings club, payments are collected and loans are made. Every member of the club is expected to borrow a certain amount and/or carry a potential borrower. The interest rates on loans can be as high as 20% for members and 25% for non-members.</p> <p>At the end of the year, the saving is divided according to shares owned and interest income generated.</p>
Daily Susu Club	<p>This type of club is normally run by one person. Typically, a well known business person will organize a daily susu and serve as a broker. The broker then prints cards with space for name and photo of a holder and daily amount of savings. Every business day, the broker collects daily savings from their customers. The saver decides how much to save daily. For example, a person decides to save LD\$25 daily. At the end of the month, he/she gets LD\$625. The remaining \$25 goes to the susu broker as compensation.</p>
Lebanese and Fula Merchants	<p>Lebanese and Fula merchants assist petty traders with goods on credit. They also serve as bankers for some of the petty traders.</p>

Source: UNDP-Liberia, "Informal Sector," *Liberia Economic Review*, July 2000 – June 2001, 13-14.

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Land Tenure Practices: Challenges and Prospects of Conservation Farmers in Bong County And Greater Monrovia

Jeffrey S. Makain

Introduction:

Most small holder farmers do not formally own the land they cultivate, but instead are given short-term user rights through traditional authorities. These terms are often unclear or dictated by local leaders, rather than central authorities based on the common land law.

Land ownership in Liberia is based on common law, which requires an owner to have a land deed. But a parallel system of customary law, based on verbal agreement, is prevalent. Most Liberians are more accustomed to customary law, seeing common law as a system imposed by the central government in Monrovia (Clower et al, 1966). Consequently, land use rights and ownership have been contentious issues throughout Liberia's history.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture Comprehensive Assessment of the Agriculture Sector Synthesis Report (CAAS, p. 22), although achieving crop area expansion in a sustainable way will be a major challenge, there is no shortage of available land. Nearly 5.4% of Liberia's land, amounting to approximately 600,000 ha, is said to be cultivated, but 220,000 ha is reported to be under permanent crop or plantation, while the rest is arable (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2005).

In Liberia, there is no established systematic registry for land deed holders to determine the true owner of the land, the person to whom all or part has been sold, boundary locations, inheritance, the role and validity of historical deeds, and occurrence of fraud. Hence

the proliferation of multiple sales, claims and counter claims a variation of the “culture of impunity” (CAAS, 2007, p. 23). Other problems include confusion over different types of deeds, problem with adjudication, including enforcement of decisions, theft of deeds, destruction and loss of deeds, misrepresentation involving deeds, and the high degree of ambiguity, low capacity, and significant level of confusion in the land and property institutions (Ibid, p. 23).

In spite of these circumstances, customary land tenure has played a large and positive role in the reintegration and resettlement of displaced persons after the war, and it does not appear that there are pervasive, explosive problems with reallocation. However, there are several issues of significant concern. The most important is the profound lack of confidence among smallholders in customary courts, and their ability to adjudicate land issues fairly.

The Government of Liberia established the Community Rights Law of 2009 with respect to forest lands (Republic of Liberia, October 20, 2009). Also, the Government of Liberia established a Land Commission in 2009 to tackle conflicts over land sales, secure people’s land tenure, and modernize the country’s land laws – supported by international donors including the World Bank (Republic of Liberia, August 11, 2009). But some say while progress is being made, more needs to be done on a village to village basis. This is where the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) steps in. The organization is currently mediating in over 300 land claims in Bong County in the central-north, and in additional projects in Nimba, Margibi, Montserrado and Lofa Counties.

As the government institutes measures to address land issues, humanitarian organizations, particularly the Cooperative Assistance for Relief Everywhere (CARE), Liberia, persevered to engage traditional leaders and vulnerable small holder farmers to resolve land issues, and increase the national food basket in an environmentally friendly manner through adopting “Conservation Agriculture”, several questions come to one’s mind. These questions are centered on key development issues like:

1. What are the main sources of land in Bong County and Greater Monrovia?
2. What are the social or economic benefits of the present land tenure practices?
3. To whom, or to which social group these benefits are accrued?
4. Are the envisaged benefits likely to enhance small holder farmers' potential for sustainable agriculture and preserve the environment?
5. Are there major social risks likely to emerge in post war Liberia (e.g. significant negative effects on vulnerable / marginalized groups or conflict)?

To find answers to these questions, the study examined:

1. The major sources of land being used by CARE conservation farmers in Bong County and Greater Monrovia;
2. Constraints and opportunities of the present land tenure practices;
3. Potentials of small holder farmers in sustaining agriculture and the environment, and
4. Social, political, and economic implications of the present land tenure practices in post war Liberia.

The “Tugs and Pulls” of the Land Issue

Experiences have shown that land dispossession has often been the cause of rural resistance and insurrection. In other contexts, local tensions around access to and control over land have been manipulated politically to co-opt people into national conflicts. Land is also used

by belligerents for personal enrichment or to reward their proxies or allies, like in Colombia, where paramilitaries have forcibly displaced the peasantry in order to acquire their land, in Darfur, where the government lured landless pastoralists into allied militia with the promise of expanded access to land and water. According to the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG Brief 39, p. 2), land is also used to extend patronage. And the most common form of land conflict is often played out at the local level between communities (along borders, between clan's men, pastoralists, and farmers), frequently in the context of a state that has little interest in seeing a resolution, or where the state has collapsed and is powerless.

According to (Gonlepa, 2010¹), mediator in land disputes, thousands of Liberians who fled across borders during the war have returned in recent years to find their land occupied by others. Most have lost their deeds during the war, or had customary "verbal agreements" that have since been broken. Whilst most farmers in Bong County have reported few problems securing land tenure rights, in some areas tensions have flared among the same or different ethnic groups returning to the same land after the war. An example is the case in Folobli and Garyea among the same ethnic group in Suakoko District. According to the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the legal cost of launching land claims is too high for many returnees.

In the smallholder sector, there are five broad types of land holding, with different level of tenure security: deed holders (or holders of other documents) with a comparatively high degree of tenure security; customary occupation without a deed, which results in relative security within the customary domain; rental or leasing of land with lower security; "strangers" or "borrowers" of land, who are not from a local area and do not rent, but who are allowed very temporary and insecure access to land, and must supply a token amount of crop produce to the owner to acknowledge that the land is owned by another or is being loaned; and squatters, who although they can be evicted at any time if they are discovered by the owner, are the most aggressive about attempting to claim land by planting tree crops and through adverse pos-

session. In spite of the differences, they all suffer poor tenure security, and issues emerge when the different types interact (CAAS, p. 23).

This study employed the context of relative land tenure security within the customary domain for three reasons. Firstly, most customary occupied lands are without deed as required by the common law. Secondly, the profound lack of confidence among smallholders in customary courts, and their ability to adjudicate land issues fairly. Thirdly, the Government of Liberia views that agriculture is key to inclusive and sustainable economic development and growth, food security and nutrition, employment and income, and poverty reduction. Moreover, the Government's plans to expand agricultural production by 3.2% per annum during the first two years of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) was highly challenged by weak or non-existing policies on land tenure and agriculture land use practices (UNFAO, 2008).

The findings from land use decision-makers, conservation farmers, land owners, regional and national land resource managers will stimulate initiation of policies affecting not only land tenure practices but also, engage communities in rural, peri-urban/urban agriculture for inclusive and sustainable social and economic development in post war Liberia.

Methodology

The research employed the case study method of selected communities with CARE Liberia Conservation Farmers in Bong County and Greater Monrovia. As per relative security in land tenure practices, the study found it cross-stitching across the communities, but, how promulgated policies enhance communities' engagement for inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development, food security and nutrition, employment, and income to achieve the goals of the Poverty Reduction Strategy require critical analysis beyond the scope of this research. In addition, the legal framework for acquiring land, documentation and institutionalization of ownership; transactions in land market; transfer to heirs—formal or customary—has been effectively

treated by the World Bank, (2008), Unruh (2008), and Sjaastad, (1997), and is beyond the scope of this study.

This study examined the sources of land being used by Conservation Farmers, tenure constraints, and opportunities associated with these land use practices, and alternatives CARE could explore to sustain this new concept of environmentally friendly farming practice in increasing the food basket of Liberia and conserve the largest remaining remnant of the Upper Guinea tropical forest of West Africa.

In Greater Monrovia, two participating farmers were purposively selected from each of the six townships designated for CARE's operation. The townships in Greater Monrovia are Old Road, Congo Town, Paynesville, Gardnersville, Barnersville and Johnsonville (Figure 1). At the time of the survey, the Red-Light Community in Paynesville has not yet been fully organized to qualify for the survey. Hence eight participating farmers were identified by CARE and interviewed from five townships in Greater Monrovia. Information obtained from CARE Liberia revealed that CARE operates in nineteen (19) communities in four (4) districts in Bong County. The districts in Bong County are: Jorquelleh, Kpahi, Suakoko, and Panta (Figure 2). Meanwhile, not all communities in these districts are engaged in conservation agriculture. Some are engaged in village savings loans schemes (vsls) operated by local members, but organized and monitored by CARE. Eight communities—Forty-two percent (42%) of the nineteen communities—were purposively selected by CARE monitoring unit from the four districts. In each community two participating farmers were selected for interview. At the end of the survey, fifteen qualified participating farmers were interviewed.

FIGURE 1: MAP of LIBERIA

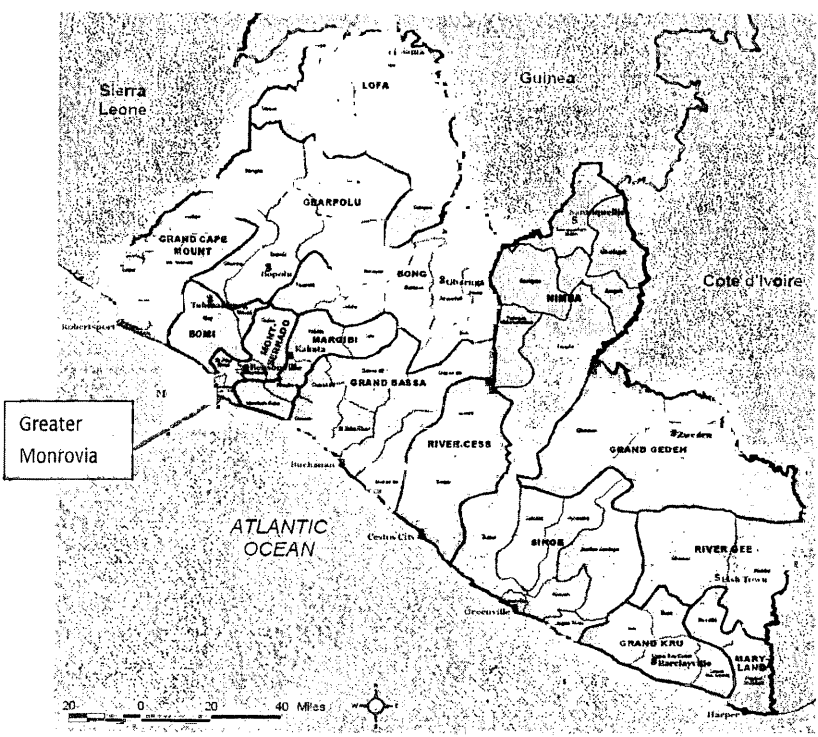
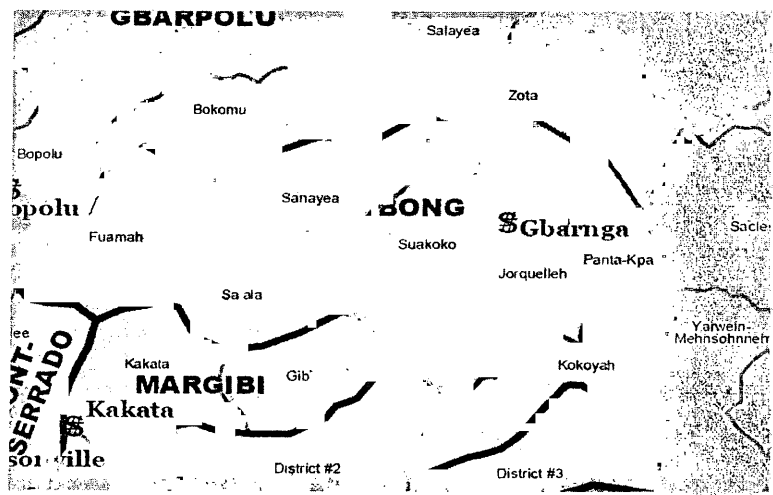


FIGURE 2: MAP OF BONG COUNTY SHOWING PROJECT AREA



Adoption of the purposive selection of communities was expedient and plausible based on two reasons: firstly, a comprehensive listing of conservation agriculture communities and farmers were not available during the enquiry, because CARE was still engaging communities and farmers. Secondly, these communities are homogenous in ethnicity, with common cultural practices, and grow similar crops in Bong County and vegetables in the urban and peri-urban settings.

Selected interviewees included decision makers, small holder farmers implementing projects in CARE operational areas, leaders of community based and humanitarian organizations, government officials at the community/district/county levels, community representatives in terms of gender, income, youth, and traditional leaders.

The method for assessing land tenure practices was based on the principle of linking “key people” to “more people” with the aim of gathering sufficient information and effecting change at the level of all stakeholders, including the individual, the community, national government, and land owners. At the macro-level, the research primarily examined decision makers’ knowledge of existing and perceived policies on land tenure and agriculture land use policies in rural and urban Liberia.

The overall assessment was participatory, culturally sensitive, and positively affirming, while at the same time highlighting areas that need improvement. It was transparent, open, independent, confidential, and non-attributive.

The research design focused on both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Three main techniques were considered: desk review of relevant resources, key informant interviews, and case studies in CARE Liberia operational districts and townships in Bong County and Greater Monrovia respectively. In the application of these techniques, the primary focus was on the following: Are there major sources of land ownership in rural and urban Liberia, and do the present land tenure practices pose constraints or opportunities for small holder

farmers? Are there major negative impacts already evident or perceived from these practices, if so, to which group(s)? Are there major social risks likely to emerge in the future (example, significant negative impacts to vulnerable/marginalized groups or conflict risks in post-war Liberia)?

Consequently, the research utilized data obtained at three levels: national government policy making (include requisite government designates at counties and district levels), traditional leaders, and active conservation farmers who are directly or indirectly affected. Moreover, key informant interviews were conducted at these various levels and discussions held with people of varying social, economic, professional, and occupational backgrounds at the community level.

Land Ownership

Land ownership as noted earlier, is based on common law, which requires an owner to have a land deed. In this regard, (26%) of the farmers interviewed have their own land (ranging from $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 lots). But, the farmer's private land is used mainly for dwelling purpose. Therefore, all land used for the CARE Conservation project is either allotted by the chief and elders in the rural communities or private land owners in the urban / peri-urban communities on temporary loan or gratis based on support to "uniting members for community development". Hence, there are various sources of accessing land for individual or group farming in the project operational areas.

The Sources Of Land And Tenure Agreement

The access to land is based on various sources, and is classified into four categories (Table 1). Thirty-five percent have access to farming land through inheritance of family un-deeded land on the basis of temporary allotment and gratis, whilst those with cost attached is twenty-six (26%). Also, thirty-five percent (35%) have access to farming land from private sources on temporary allotment with fees attached. The least is private land on temporary allotment without fee

(4%). Land tenure agreement is generally non-legally binding as revealed in both rural and urban settings, but highly negotiable on produce in the rural settings and cash for vegetable crops in urban areas. Some farmers, who plant cassava and potato in urban areas, normally give 25% of the area cultivated. In spite of the different sources of land, they are all liable to varying degrees of insecurity.

Table 1: Sources Of Land And Tenure Agreement Practices

Sources Of Land Type	Classification	Respondents	Type Of Agreement	Cost For Land Used	Per Cent
Inheritance	Family land undeeded	8	Temporary allotment	Free	35
Inheritance	Town- section /family head – reserved undeeded	6	Land rental (moderate and negotiable)	Seed rice 50 Kg. LD\$1,000 - 1,500/season	26
Deed / certificate	Private	8	Land rental moderate: produce/cash	Seed rice 50 kg each year /LD\$1,000–1,500	35
Deed / certificate	Private	1	Temporary allotment	Free	4
TOTAL		23			100

Source: Field Survey July 2010

The Sources Of Land: Constraints, Opportunities And Threats

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in land tenure practices were observed to be emanating from various sources of the socio-economic and political spheres. The basic areas considered crucial to this study are the social (family unit), political (leadership structure), and economic (land, labor, and the market) that are intricately linked in the process of accessing, allocating, and utilizing any piece of land, irrespective of its geographic setting (Table 2).

Land holdings recognized through the social and political system or based on family unit reserve or tribal reserve are considered public land, if there is no deed to qualify ownership, based on the Common Law. Recognition of family heads, especially women's rights and private land owners' rights observed in rural and urban settings, clearly illustrate their strength in unity of purpose (sharing available land resource).

Although they are opportune to have access to land in the short-run and emerging non-governmental organizations that may create awareness on the government's pending land reforms measures, the major threats ahead are the government's common land law that negates rights to traditional land holdings, and the cash crop boom in post-war Liberia. Powerful family members have begun planting rubber, coffee, or oil palm on harvested rice fields expected to lie fallow at the expense of weaker family members, when natural population increase is reducing available farming land space in rural communities.

Private land owners are also expanding their farms with cash crops to strengthen their economic base. These, coupled with the Government of Liberia large-scale concession rights to investors, may drastically reduce available farm land for food crops, leading to increase in food price, cost for labor, and hunger for many landless farmers (Makain, & Momoh, 2010). This prevailing situation highly disputes the statement that there is no shortage of farming land in Liberia, based on non empirical evidence (CAAS, 2007).

Moreover, the land tenure studies conducted in rural and peri-urban communities in Bong County and Greater Monrovia produced results that have remarkable similarities, though the studies were carried out in different geographic locations. That is, sources of farm land, existing mechanisms in place for administration of land use rights, control of the means of production and marketing, and the constraints that the landless farmers face in both geographic areas were similar. These similarities are highly associated with the two prolonged tenure practices revealed during the research. A major one is that local authorities and family leaders manage and control the distribution to and use of communal farm land by families and their members; family leaders allocate parcels of farm land to individual family members free of cost but, the farmers can only grow short-duration food crops mainly for family consumption. They cannot personally own the land permanently and, therefore, are not allowed to grow long-term cash crops on the land.

Table 2: Sources of Land, Constraints, Opportunities and Threats Swot Analysis:

LAND SOURCES	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
SOCIAL: Family unit Private Land owners	Recognition of family heads, women's rights to land; land owners' willingness to lease land to farmers	Rliance on family un-deeded inherited land; retards long-term investment; land under utilization	Provide access to farming land; Government pending legislation to legalize family / tribal land holdings; enhances local food production	Cash crop boom: e.g. rubber instead of food preference by powerful family members; limited land for food production; high cost of land & food (hunger)
POLITICAL: Leadership structure (Chiefs, Elders, and family heads)	Community members' confidence and trust in their unwritten knowledge about land disputes / conflicts; acceptance of the authority of community leaders to allocate land	Non-documentation of facts related to land over time; legally non-binding land use agreement	Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) advocating for rights (land, human etc.); Government pending land reform policy	Government legal land laws that negates tribal land holding rights
ECONOMIC:				
Land	Access to fallow farming land (subsistence); empowering individuals, especially women, to earn income, build capacity to contribute to household, and maintain unity in communities	Limitation to growing of short-duration food crop only, and on subsistence level; inadequate contact and knowledge about financial sources and investment ventures	Free cost (communal land) for farming; lease for (private land); emerging (NGOs) sharing knowledge of alternative farming methods, linking farmers to input suppliers and produce buyers	Greed of powerful family members to evict the weaker members; harassment by landlords, demand for higher rent; high incidence of pest invasion
Labor	Communal system	Poor entrepreneurship spirit, high dependence on external family system	(NGOs) in isolated villages with knowledge in agri-business; support to internship program to assist local farmers.	Greed of powerful family members to evict others and possess the land; attached value to land and labor cost
Market	Available market facilities to isolated communities; middle-men (produce- buyers)	Poor confidence building; weak bargaining power; inadequate knowledge about middle-men	Relative access to weekly market and middle-men	Commonality of produce; price instability; storage facilities; poor roads

Source: Field Survey, July 2010

Also, private land owners grant landless farmers permission either to use their land free of charge for an undefined period of time, or the land owner charges toll² payable in cash for the use of the land. The land use agreements are usually verbal “gentlemen’s agreement” which is not legally-binding.

Economically, these farmers use the system of pooling and revolving labor within the extended family system in their communities to execute the various farming tasks. In exceptional cases, they may hire labor. Marketing of farm produce is mostly through produce vendors (middle-men) in the weekly local market (83%), who transport and sell the produce in urban markets (Table 3).

Table 3: Sources Of Produce Sale (Multiple Responses)

SOURCES OF FARM PRODUCE SALE	RESPONDENTS	PERCENT
Weekly market through middle-men	19	83
Daily market through self and middle-men	9	39

Source: Field Survey (July 2010)

Results in Table 4 clearly revealed that the commonality of produce sold during the same season is the major challenge in farmers receiving fair prices for their produce (87%); the second major challenge encountered is means of transportation, accounting for (52%). The least is inaccessibility or poor roads (9 %).

Table 4: Constraints In Marketing System (Multiple Responses)

CONSTRAINTS	RESPONDENTS	PERCENT
Delay in meeting produce sale cycle	3	13
Inaccessibility – poor roads	2	9
Means of transportation	12	52
Price fluctuation	9	39
Lack of storage facility	6	26
Fluid commodity (common produce)	20	87

Source: Field Survey (July 2010)

The Land Type: Constraints, Opportunities And Alternatives

Two types of land used by conservation farmers are public and private. The public land is considered communal, but customarily or family managed on temporary allotment. Private is title deed conferred through purchase from government in fee simple (Clower et al, 1966).

Results in (Table 5) revealed insecurity as the main constraint (35% and 43% respectively) for public and private land used for conservation farming. Land underutilization was higher for public land farmers (22%); and the least (1%) for private land farmers.

The best opportunities for conservation farmers were skills and knowledge transfer (52% and 43% respectively) for public and private land. Empowerment of landless farmers and women accounted for the second best (30% and 35% respectively) for public and private land.

The best alternatives for public land users were legalization of traditional land holdings and the Government of Liberia liberalizing

rights for acquiring land, accounting for (57% and 44% respectively). Whereas, private land users preferred legalization of traditional holdings, and the Government of Liberia allocating land for landless farmers as best alternatives, accounting for (17%). Apparently, the best alternatives for conservation farmers engaged in public or private land tenure practices centered on legalization of traditional land holdings, the system most Liberians, especially small holder farmers, are accustomed to (Gonlepa, 2010; Clower et al, 1966).

Land Use Rights Decision Makers

Land use rights decision makers comprise key informants in government ministries / institutions (Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy, the Land Commission, township commissioners, land commissioners, city mayors, and district commissioners) in the formal sector; paramount and clan chiefs in the traditional sector.

In the words of the key informants, the following were clearly revealed about land ownership rights:

1. Administration of public land is in the domain of the land commissioners, but township commissioner/superintendent has authority to grant land use rights only in townships.
2. They claim not to have any knowledge on the amount of public and private land in their township, district, and clan.
3. Public land is distinguished from private land by holding a certified and registered land deed, and farm land cannot be acquired in urban areas.

TABLE 5: LAND TYPE, TENURE CONSTRAINTS, OPPORTUNITIES AND ALTERNATIVES (Multiple responses)

Land Type	Constraints						Opportunities						Alternatives					
	Land underutilization		Insecurity		Increase cost of land		Empowerment of landless farmers and (women)		Income generation		Skills & knowledge transfer		Legalize traditional holdings		GOL allocate land for landless farmers		GOL liberalize rights for acquiring land	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Public (Temporary allotment)	5	22	8	35	0	0	7	30	4	17	12	52	13	57	1	0.04	10	44
Private (Temporary allotment)	2	1	10	43	3	13	8	35	4	17	10	43	4	17	4	17	3	13

Source: Field Survey (July 2010).

4. They refer the customary administration of land to the local authorities and private land to private land owners.

5. They all revealed that the title of ownership to land is a land deed, but hasten to confess that the very poor system of land registry and authentication makes it difficult to identify the actual land owner.

With reference to constraints posed by the land tenure practices, they revealed the following:

1. They have no idea on existing land tenure system, but they indicated squatter rights (two years permit) through the land commissioner or superintendent in urban areas, and traditional land use rights granted by chiefs and elders or family heads on a case by case basis in rural areas.

2. They claimed there is no system of regulating land tenure.

3. Majority agree that community members understand land tenure rights. In rural areas, strangers present token to land managers to ascertain that the land used is on loan.

4. There is no existing policy on urban / peri-urban farming.

The Emerging Issues

Several major issues have emerged. According to land use rights decision makers, no public land is available in urban communities for farming, except mangrove swamp land; about 80% of land in peri-urban areas is private land; about 90% of land in rural communities is public land administered by local authorities and family heads under communal land use arrangements, but they had no knowledge about the total land size public or private, boundaries and accountable ownership. Local authorities and family leaders manage and control the distribution to, and use of, communal farm land by families and their members; family leaders allocate parcels of farm land to individual

family members free of cost but, the farmers can only grow short-duration food crops mainly for family consumption, cannot personally own the land permanently and, therefore, are not allowed to grow long-term cash crops on the land.

Also, private land owners grant landless farmers permission either to use their land free of charge for an undefined period of time or the land owner charges toll or rent payable in cash for the use of the land. The land use agreements are usually verbal “gentlemen’s agreement,” which is not legally-binding. Toll for use of privately-owned land for farm is usually in the form of giving the land owner a mutually-agreed share of the crop after harvest as compensation for using his/her land.

The potential for value chains developers to build local capacities of local inputs suppliers, technical service providers, and landless farmers to develop economies of scale to reduce unemployment and poverty is limited. As well, the participating farmers recognize and appreciate CARE farmer field school (FFS) as a medium for strengthening community unity, empowerment of landless farmers, women and transfer of relevant knowledge that build their capacity for maximum benefit from their family farms.

There is no established standard policy on land use or land tenure practices. Rather, decisions made on land tenure practices are ad hoc based on case by case verbal agreements with public and private land managers.

Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations:

1. Civil Society Organizations, CARE, and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) impress upon national Government to liberalize land use rights that can benefit landless farmers.

2. Civil Society Organizations, House of Parliament, CARE, and other NGOs should impress upon the Government, Ministry of Agriculture, and related institutions to formulate and establish a national agricultural policy.
3. CARE should explore possibilities of project farmers who own land to utilize it for project farming to enhance their potential for sustainable agricultural practices.
4. CARE should access opportunities for project farmers to have easier access to produce buyers (middle-men).
5. CARE should further investigate the farming calendar of farmers to enhance efficient caring of crops cultivated to meet middle-men supply and demand.
6. Civil Society Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, and CARE should encourage sensitization of land use decision makers to formulate policy on agriculture land use rights.
7. To enhance full utilization of CARE demonstration farms, participating farmers and CARE should reduce usage of such land into legally binding contracts

Conclusion

The study draws several major conclusions:

1. Participating farmers recognize and appreciate CARE Farmer Field School (FFS) as a medium for strengthening community unity, empowerment of landless farmers, women and transfer of relevant knowledge that build their capacity for maximum benefit from their family farms.
2. The Farmer Field School system also helps to reduce household expenditure on farm inputs that culminate into household income saved for domestic / family support.

3. There is no established standard policy on land use or land tenure practices. Rather, decisions made on land tenure practices are ad hoc based on case by case verbal agreements with public and private land managers, and are non-legally binding.
4. There is no existing Agricultural Policy on traditional farming, urban, or peri-urban farming.
5. Land use or tenure decision makers have very limited knowledge about existing public and private land within their jurisdiction.
6. Public and private land managers willingly give out parcels of land without toll to community members in support of development initiatives.
7. Potential for value chains developers to build local capacities of local inputs suppliers, technical service providers, and landless farmers to develop economies of scale to reduce unemployment and poverty is limited.
8. Government's Common Land Law that negates land rights to traditional occupants and encroachment of powerful family members on farm lands with cash crop plantation will eventually limit landless farmers' access to farm lands.

NOTES

1. Franklin Gonlepa (2010), Land Registration Assistant: Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
2. Toll is usually in the form of cash payment as compensation before or mutually-agreed share of the crop after harvest for using the land.

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APPENDIX: A

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW RESPONSES:

BONG COUNTY (JUNE 2010)

Appendices

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Section A	LAND OWNERSHIP: POLITICAL ECONOMY ASPECT (BONG COUNTY, JUNE 2010)											
Key Question	Interview Locations	Bong Land Commissioner	Agriculture Coordinator	Jorquellah District			Panta District		Kpali District		Suakoko District	
	Respondents	Land Commissioner		D.C. Hon. Edward Yaarkpawolo	P. C. Hon. Flomo Barwor	Clan Chief Office	P. C. Hon. Moses Galakula mah	Sectional Clerk	D. C. Hon. Joseph Kolleh	P. C. John Walker	Paramount Chief	Clan Chief
1	How much land your office administers?	Exact acreage not known: North starts with St. Paul River; North-East start with St. John and South-East with St. John	I do not know, traditional leaders handle land affairs.	Do not know actual acreage; land not survey	Land not surveyed, only know areas that make up the district	I only know the towns under my jurisdiction	Definite acreage not known	I do not know the acreage	The area is not surveyed	The land size is not known	Land size not known	Land size not measured
2	How much of the land is public land?	About Sixty-five percent	Have no details on land ownership	Over fifty percent	More than 50% (family and tribal means)	More than 90% (family and tribal mean)	Majority of the district land	Over three quarter	More than half	More than half	Land deeds are not reg. With us	We only sign
3	How much of the land is private land?	About thirty-five percent	No facts available	About 1/3 rd of the land	About 25%	About 4% with legal document	About 10% with legal document	I think Less than 10%	Almost 10 % with documents /life crop	Less than a quarter	I have no information on this	I do not know

4	What are the legal procedures for acquiring farm land in urban and peri-urban settings?	Not possible in urban area nowadays; in peri-urban, one starts with tribal certificate, obtain deed	None I know of	Meet elders; chief, or land owner of the area and obtain certificate	Meeting land owners paying for it to GOL for farmland	Buying house spot, not farm land	Not known to me; maybe NRC can help	Depending on NRC / JPC to help	Maybe NRC / JPC program will help	Not in my area of assignment	In my area through chiefs and elders, then certificate	From chiefs, elders & certificate
5	What are the customary procedures for acquiring farm land in traditional settings?	Engage Elders & Chiefs and pay a token (cold water)	Normally through chiefs & elders	Ancestral/ inheritance through birth proven by elders and chiefs and cash crop planted area	Inheritance from family / certificate / deed or area cover with life crop	Inheritance tribal certificate / deed / life crop on land	Inheritance from family certificate / deed / crop on land	Inheritance, tribal certificate / deed / crop on land	Inheritance, tribal certificate / deed or crop on land	Inheritance, tribal certificate / deed or crop on land	Family inheritance / certificate / deed	Family inheritance, certificate / deed
6	Who has the power to grant land use rights in your jurisdiction?	Government of Liberia (GoL) – formally; Traditional authorities – informally	Land commissioner, traditional leaders	Elders, chiefs and the GoL	Chiefs, elders and GoL	Chief elder and GoL	Chief, elder; GoL	Chief elders and GoL	Chief elders and GoL	Chief elders and GoL	Chiefs, elders, or family heads	Chiefs, elders, or family head
7	What proof is required to establish land ownership or rights of land use?	Duly registered, probated, administrative or warranty deed	Deed, certificate & agreement witnesses	Tribal Certificate and registered probated deed in court	Inheritance, tribal certificate or deed	Inheritance, tribal certificate / deed	Inheritance, family fallow system, tribal certificate, or deed	Inheritance, tribal certificate or deed	Inheritance, tribal certificate, deed or crop on land	Inheritance, tribal certificate or deed	Deed, certificate or cash crop on land & inheritance	Inheritance, deed, certificate / crop on land

Section B	LAND TENURE CONSTRAINTS – CAUSES (BONG COUNTY JUNE 2010)											
	Interview Locations	Gbarnga Land Commissioner	Agri. Coord.	Jorquellah District			Panta District		Kpail District		Suakoko District	
Key Question	Respondents	Land Commissioner	Ms. Monica	D. C. Hon. Edward Yaarkpawolo	P. C. Flomo T. Barwor	Clan Chief Office	P. C. Hon. Moses Galakulamah	Sectional Clerk	D. C. Hon. Joseph Kolleh	P C Hon. John Walker	Paramount Chief	Clan Chief
1.	What is the land tenure system in your area of jurisdiction?	Inheritance; Tribal Certificate; kinship /lease	None has been prepared	Traditional land tenure agreement	Kinship, toll or kind	Kinship, toll or kind	Traditional , kinship, toll, cash/kind	Toll/ cash or kind	Toll / harvest, cash or kind	Traditional, toll cash or kind	Traditional, toll/cash /kind	Traditional, toll/ produce
2	How is your land tenure system regulated?	Written or verbal agreement	N / A	Through Chiefs and Elders	Through chiefs, elders and family head	Chief elder family head	Through, Traditional means	Traditional means	Traditional means	Traditional means with elders	Traditional means with elders	Traditional means with elders
3	What is the land use policy for urban and peri-urban farming and farmers?	None to his knowledge	No policy is available, yet by MOA	Payment of token to land owners	I do not know	Have no idea	Hoping on NRC / JPC efforts	Not in my area	Hoping on NRC/ JPC efforts	Not in my area	Non I know of	Non I know of
4	What are some of the successful land use policies and regulations recorded by your office?	None	None cause the farmers resolve them at local level	Land documentation, planting of life crops on available land	Trust in chief and elders opinion on land matter	Trust in chief and elder decision	Facts findings from elders and chiefs	Maintaining traditional borders	Trust in elders' information about land matter	Consultation with chiefs and elders	Consultation with chiefs and elders	Chief and elders reporting of land matter
5	What are the major land policy and administration challenges faced by your office?	Classifying the right owner of land before purchase	None; farmers elders and chiefs action	Greed and personal interest of individuals	Greedy people trying to take others land	Payment default and greed	Greed and indiscipline of powerful family members	Poor recognition of others	Default and indiscipline by powerful citizens	Greed and disrespect	Greed, indiscipline of money boys	Greed, false accusation for possessing land

6	What policy and regulatory reforms are needed to improve acquisition of land rights?	GOL empower Traditional Inhabitants engaged in agriculture	GOL empower local Inhabitant to have land	Legal acquisition of land desired by family or individuals	GOL grant traditional landholding rights in the country	GOL to grant tribal reserved rights	No set policy; use traditional methods	Only traditional means now	Only traditional means now	Traditional means for now	Traditional means with chiefs & elders	Traditional means with chiefs & elders
Section C		LAND USE AGREEMENTS (BONG COUNTY, JUNE 2010)										
Key Question	Interview Locations	Bong County Land Commissioner	Bong County Agriculture Coordinator	Jorquellie District			Panta District		Kpail District		Suakoko District	
	Respondents	Land Commissioner	Ms. Monica	District Commissioner Hon. Edward Yaarkpawolo	Paramount Chief, Flomo Barwor	Clan Chief Office	Paramount Chief Hon. Moses Galakulama	Sectional Clerk Mr. A. Kolile	Paramount Chief Hon. John Walker	Commissioner Hon. Joseph Kolileh	Paramount Chief	Clan Chief
1	What are the types of land use agreements in use in your area of jurisdiction?	Formal Through lease in urban area; informal in rural areas (tolls or harvest)	Land rental or lease	Payment of token to land owner(s); produce, cash or in kind / service	Negotiation in kind, toll from harvest or cash	In kind, toll from harvest or cash	Payment of token to land owner, toll from harvest or cash	Toll from harvest, cash or kind	Toll from harvest, cash or kind	In kind, toll from harvest, kind or cash	Payment of token, toll from harvest, kind or cash	In kind, toll from harvest or cash
2	How are various land use agreements made and enforced?	Written: can be enforced legally; verbal based on trust and respect of user to pay tolls / harvest	Written-if it is a lease; Verbal mainly in traditional setting	Through informal discussion witnessed by elders, family head / chief to enforce payment before legal action	Round table discussions with chiefs, elders and enforced through trust in verbal agreements	Discussion and trust in verbal agreements	Discussion with chiefs, elders and enforced through trust in verbal agreements	Discussion and trust in verbal agreements	Through discussion and trust in verbal agreements	Discussion and trust in verbal agreements	Through discussion and trust in verbal agreements	Discussion and trust in verbal agreements

3	What are the major challenges of administering land use agreements?	Bridging of agreements, sub-contracting or poor harvest.	None through my office	Lack of confidence and trust between party	Insincerity, greed; no documentation	No land paper	Greed, poor knowledge, no paper	Greed, no paper	No legal document and default of payment	Indiscipline and greed	No legal document, greed and indiscipline	Default of payment greed
4	What are the prospects for urban and peri-urban farmers in the future?	Slime: no policy, poor feeder roads, means of transportation, & technological know-how	Very poor, cause even swamps are claimed by greedy land hunters for construction of houses	Very poor: no policy, people are building everywhere in the urban areas	No idea	Not in my area	Too expensive to farm in big towns	I cannot say now	They will have no land for farming	Poor, no land for farming	Hard to tell when many are buying land	Don't know, even swamp are being sold

SOURCE: FIELD SURVEY (JUNE 2010)

APPENDIX: B

KEY INFORMANTS INTERVIEW RESPONSES (GREATER MONROVIA, JUNE 2010)

Section A	ANSWERS: Land Ownership (Political Economy Aspects (Greater Monrovia, June 2010)								
	Interview Locations	Congo Town Commissioner	Gardnersville Commissioner	Bensonville City Commissioner/Administrative Asst	Johnsonville Commissioner/Town Clerk	Bardnersville city commissioner	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Lands, Mines & Energy	Land Commission
	Respondents	Hon. Mac-John Russell	Hon. Jehu H Clarke, Township Commissioner	Lincoln Railey, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent	Didymus P. Nyahn, Township Clerk	Clarence Eastman, Township Clerk	Isaac Kumeh, Dir. for City and Town Planning	Peter N. Blamo, Ast. Dir. Surveys Information Trainings	Hon. Lwopu G. Kandakai, Commissioner
1	How much land is covered by a township/City?	8 square miles	This township is 8 square miles	The city of Bensonville is 8 miles square in terms of area.	No knowledge	A Township is 8 square miles	A township is 8 square mile while a city 8 mile square.	The area of a township is 8 square miles and a city is 8miles square.	I would not know at the moment, I have to check it out.
2	Who administers this land in terms of allocating it for specific purposes?	The land Commissioner	The Commissioner	Land Commissioner	Commissioner is responsible for public land only	Commissioner	City mayor/Township Commissioner	Township commissioner administers land	Government through the commissioner or the city mayor
3	How much of the land is public land and how much is private land?	There is no public land now as we speak. All land is	Only swamp land is available as public land. All	Private land is more than public	Private land is more than public land but I cannot say the	No public land available. All land in this	There is no public land at present in the Monrovia	Not define	I wouldn't know

		privately owned	other high land has been sold		definite quantity.	community is privately owned.	Township area		
4	How is public land distinguished from private?	By Land Deed duly signed, probated and registered at the Bureau of Archives.	Only for the office of the commissioner	Public land go through land commission private land go through the owner	Commissioner's office. distinguish public land, older members of community also help	I repeat there is no public land.	No specific system to distinguish private land from public land	Land commissioner	I wouldn't know
5	What are the legal/statutory procedures for acquiring farm land in urban and peri-urban localities?	One cannot acquire farm land in urban communities.	One cannot get farm land in public area	-Land commissioner and city mayor -Ministry of land & Mines -Payment to revenue & receipt to land commission to do survey No farm land only squatters right lease	The land commissioner tells you through the process the steps involved.	No farm land is to be acquired in the township or city	City/Township commissioner verify by registered surveyor	Traditional area- one meets the chiefs for procedures land commissioner verifies	Normally one cannot obtain farm land in urban areas.
6	What are customary procedures for acquiring farm land in traditional settings?	I do not know	Local leaders of the area are responsible to grant land	None	For tribal land all land belong to the town people	You will have to go through your customer (seller)	Same as above.	Contact traditional leaders	One has to meet with the local authorities who will issue tribal certificate for deed

7	Who has the authority/power to grant land use rights to people in township/cities?	The Township Commissioner	The township authority has the right	The superintendent	Only the commissioner can grant use of public land while private land use is granted by the owner.	The Township Commissioner for public land; private land the owner	Township commissioner for Public land. Private, property owners,	people in traditional area and City Mayors, commissioners in cities.	The Local government authority.
8	What proof is required to establish land ownership or rights of land use in township/city?	Land Deed	Land deed	Land deal; warranty deal	Title deed	The required documentation is a land sales deed.	Land deed or memorandum of understanding or witness	Land deed	Land Deed

SECTION B	ANSWERS: LAND TENURE CONSTRAINTS – CAUSES (GREATER MONROVIA JUNE 2010)									
	Interview Locations	Congo Town Commissioner	Gardnersville Commissioner	Bensonville City Commissioner/Administrative Asst	Johnsonville Commissioner/Town Clerk	Bardnersville city commissioner	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Lands, Mines & Energy	Land Commission	
	Respondents	Hon. Mac-John Russell	Hon. Jehu H Clarke, Township Commissioner	Lincoln Railey, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent	Didymus P. Nyahn. Township Clerk	Clarence Eastman, Township Clerk	Isaac Kumeah, Director for City and Town Planning	Peter N. Blamo, Ast.Dir. Surveys Information /Trainings	Hon. Lwopu G. Kandakai, Commissioner	
1.	What is the land tenure system in urban and peri-urban communities?	No system	No system it depends on type of project to be done and negotiated with local authority	Squatters right – 2years permit through the land commission and the superintendent	Private land-negotiate with the owner, public land-negotiate with Township authority	Legitimate title registration with Commissioner's Office. Negotiation with property owners	For private land negotiate with owner For public land contact city mayor	No system yet	There is no definite land tenure system as yet	
2.	How is this land tenure system regulated?	Does not exist	One has to be authorized by Township authority to use area for intended purpose.	Superintendent's office regulates the use of land	All owners of land must register their land with commissioner's office	Township Office makes sure that the area is legitimately owned and must be in the bounds of Barnesville	No specific regulations	N / A	N/A	

3	Do community members have clear understanding of the land tenure rights?	Yes, they do.	Community has leaders who choose the	N / A	Yes	Attending called meeting where. They are told.	What people do not know is the Township limit	N / A	I wouldn't say.
4	What is the land use policy for urban and peri-urban farming and farmers?	Ask EPA	The use of land depends on the type of activity to be undertaken	For use of public land in city one has to go to the city mayor who refers you to superintendent to authorize the use of land by issuing permit	No land use policy in particular	For public land use, squatter's right is issued by the township for 2yrs.	N / A	Environmental Protection Agency has a policy in place	No policy is available
5	Do community members have knowledge about rights to land and natural resources?	I cannot say precisely.	Yes	Yes they know that no individual has right to natural resource even though it may be on their land	Yes	Yes, they do have the knowledge	N / A	N / A	Perhaps there is one but I cannot say for sure.
6	What are some of the successful land use policies and regulations recorded by your office?	None	Improvement on sanitary conditions; Maintaining vacant plots	N / A	None	We take care of ownership of land in the township mainly public land.	N / A	Land deed for ownership or have a lease agreement	N/A
7	How do local community members classify common land use rights?	None	N / A	N / A	Personal property	We take care of government's assets (river, resources under the soil)	N / A	N / A	I would not know.

8	What are the major land policy and administration challenges faced by your office?	There is no official land policy.	Claiming of Government land encroaching on land and selling land to two or more buyers	Claiming of land but cannot produce any prove - Said land have over grown bushes without maintenance and people who want to develop are deprive from using the land	-illegal land sale - Encroachment on Government land – multiple land sale	They say the price of land is increasing which makes it difficult for one to access.	N / A	Land fraud, manipulation of deeds, record system not secure. Proliferation of deeds	Care taker illegally selling others' properties people sell the same lot four to five times
9	How are community members practicing common land use rights?	Not too aware	N / A	Arrangements-paying something to the original owner -For public land you pay fixed amount to revenue and obtain a receipt which is brought to the superintendent.	No knowledge	They are not practicing it well. Real property owners are in America and the land is lying idle.	N / A	N / A	Question , not applicable
10	What policy and regulatory reforms are needed to improve acquisition of land rights for agricultural uses?	Commission to put in place a mechanism to secure property owners.	GOL empower local authorities to prevent wrong people buying and selling land	-Government of Liberia should make sure that all lands claim be proven by presenting legal title document	Archives / Probate court should not issue certificate copy to anyone without verification	Land should be developed by the owner or legally lease/ sold	County surveyor to look for government property-swamp belong to government	All land sold should be marked on the title deed and signed by the legal people.	Currently there are no policies in place. We are currently working to put some policies in place.
11	What type of land conflicts are they having (corruption, discrimination in decision-making)?	Encroachment on land by unscrupulous	- Sale of plots to several buyers	-Selling of one spot to several buyers - Encroachment, illegal sale of land	Resale of land that do not belong to seller	Issue of dual land sale; illegal land sale, encroachment	N / A	N / A	Prevalent conflicts involve the fraudulent activities

		individuals. Frauds, resale of one plot to many buyers.	encroachment on private lands	-people squatting on public land without permit		t on the properties of others.			false deeds, sales of land that do not belong to the seller.
12	What mechanisms are in place at the community level to resolve land conflicts?	Community group working with people to harmonize Traditional and political boundary.	- Commission er should investigate - provide neutral surveyor to reduce encroachment	-Conflicts involving title issues are sent to court - Conflicts involving public land the office of the superintendent resolves it by allowing the first person on it to have the first preference.	Investigate administratively but where parties cannot come to term the conflict can be settled in court.	Claimants are required to present title deeds to prove ownership of land for conflict resolution	No mechanism has been put in place to resolve conflicts	Investigation survey is been carried on or civil law court to handle such cases	There are not mechanisms as such at the moment. Everything is in bits and pieces.

SECTION C	ANSWERS: Land Use Agreements / Mechanism (GREATER MONROVIA JUNE 2010)								
	Interview Locations	Congo Town Commissioner	Gardnersville Commissioner	Bensonville City Commissioner/Administrative Asst	Johnsonville Commissioner/Town Clerk	Bardnersville city commissioner	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Lands, Mines & Energy	Land Commission
	RESPONDENTS	Hon. Mac-John Russell	Hon. Jehu H Clarke, Township Commissioner	Lincoln Railey, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent	Didymus P. Nyahn. Township Clerk	Clarence Eastman, Township Clerk	Isaac Kumeh, Director for City and Town Planning	Peter N. Blamo, Asst. Dir, Land Surveys Information & Trainings	Hon. Lwopu G. Kandakai, Commissioner
1.	What are the types of land use agreements/mechanisms in use in your area of jurisdiction?	Agreements are made between private land owners and the person wanting to use it. verbally	- Lease agreement for usage of parcel of land - Payment of land rent(1/3) to land owner	N / A	N / A	Land Lease and land rental for land belonging to private owners.	Land lease agreement – rent		Private land is between the property owner and user. Public land negotiated from GOL authorities
2	Are there traditional guidelines at the community level for land tenure? (any group with restrictions or advantage for access to land? Why?)	N / A	- Not to damage land - restriction for planting live tree	N / A	N / A	No.	N / A	N / A	N/A

3.	How is various land use agreements/mechanisms made and enforced?	The breach of agreement is enforced by the court or sometime the commissioner's office.	Agreement is made between the two persons requiring term of agreement to be reach	N / A	N / A	Individual or organization negotiates agreement with property owner for use of property either on a for lease or rental basis. a year.	Enforce through the government system	N / A	Private agreements are sometimes probated but not always. In the case of breach of contract people go to court or settle the issue through third party mediation.
4.	What are the major challenges of administering land use agreements?	Not applicable	Leasing people property unknown to them multiple sale of property to 2 or more persons -claiming property one do not own	N / A	N / A	Illegal selling. Users at times default on payment of fees agreed upon	Government has failed to locate	N / A	N/A
5.	Can local community members classify traditional system's mechanisms for land management?	I cannot say		N / A	N / A	I cannot say.	N / A	N / A	N/A

6.	What are the prospects for urban and peri-urban farmers in the future?	People only do back yard gardening on small plots which is not sustainable	Only back yard garden. -for agriculture if producers are providing assistance to develop large plot.	N / A	N / A	Poor because the urban population is growing and this will affect access to land	N / A	N / A	N/A
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SOURCE: FIELD SURVEY (JUNE 2010)

N/A: Information not available

GoL: Government of Liberia

“Slavery in Liberia”: The *Afro-American Newspaper*’s Investigation of the Liberian Labor Scandal, 1926-1936

Baiyina W. Muhammad

Introduction

Should the descendants of enslaved Africans be slavers? What shall be the appropriate course of action to ensure freedom and justice for all Africans? What would be the Pan-African course of action that would strengthen the relationship between African Americans and Liberians? These questions illustrate the complex nature of the *Afro-American Newspapers*’ connection to Liberia. The whole idea of emancipating Africa from colonial occupation and improving the condition of Black people worldwide was a key element in the concept of Pan-Africanism. However, the notion of liberating Africa became problematic for the *Afro-American*, when Africans were accused of being slavers or colonizers of other Africans in Liberia.

The Baltimore *Afro-American*, one of the leading Black newspapers of the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, attempted to forge a reconnection to Africa and other parts of the Diaspora with the aim that African Americans would begin to identify the similarities in their individual and shared experiences with other Africans. These similarities were intended to raise their level of consciousness as well as to forge a level of Black solidarity for Blacks globally. A sample of the *Afro-American*’s Pan African agenda was evident in its coverage of the Liberian Labor Scandal, between 1926 and 1936.

While the *Afro-American* paid close attention to the United States’ occupation of Haiti and its progress, it simultaneously and aggressively covered the Liberian labor crisis. The *Afro-American*’s commitment to Pan-African ideals of racial solidarity, and economic

cooperation between diaspora groups were evidenced in its involvement in Liberia. Moreover, the Baltimore *Afro-American's* practice of sending its reporters abroad, as well as borrowing from informed members of the Black intelligentsia to report, analyze, and disseminate news regarding the plight of Africans abroad was another expression of its Pan-Africanist approach. In the case of Liberia, the *Afro-American* utilized the writings of scholars George Padmore, W. E. B. Du Bois, and student, activist, scholar, and future President of Nigeria, Nnamdi Ben Azikiwe, which was Pan-African in nature. Equally important was the contribution that was made by its own reporter, William N. Jones, who served as a goodwill ambassador to Liberia during the alleged labor scandal. The most intriguing aspect of the entire controversy WAS the debate that it ignited within the African Diaspora, particularly in the United States and in the Caribbean. The scandal brought to the forefront issues of identity, class distinctions, economic development and the role of leadership in the Black community.

There were three major reasons why Liberia was important to the *Afro-American* newspaper and to the African American community. First, Liberia was home to African American ex-slaves, who were transported to Liberia to develop an independent colony. Second, Liberia was one of two self-governing African countries that maintained its independence during the European colonial occupation of Africa. Liberia was therefore viewed as a beacon of hope as an independent Black nation. Third, the *Afro-American* felt that Liberia might provide an opportunity for Black Americans to build an economic base. Thus, Liberia's continued self-sufficiency and efforts to eradicate corruption were supported by the *Afro-American*.

Thus, the focus of this paper is to examine the *Afro-American's* commitment to the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the action it took to strengthen the relationship between Diaspora communities.

Historical Background

The labor scandal, which did not receive widespread attention until its height in 1929, began under former Liberian President Arthur Barclay and then President C. D. B. King. During the early part of his administration, Arthur Barclay, an Americo-Liberian, established the Liberian Frontier Force, which operated as a system of indirect rule within the local government and in the Liberian Hinterland. The Liberian Frontier Force's major duties were to encourage farming among the indigenous groups, to collect taxes, and to protect the hinterland chiefs against exploitation by British and French forces. The people who occupied the area termed the "Hinterland" were made up of ten indigenous groups (Kpelle, Gola, Loma, Mano, Gio, Kissi, Vai, Bassa, Kru, and the Grebo). Their towns were grouped together into districts, akin to the emigrant settlements where the Americo-Liberians resided. The leading families of each indigenous group governed the county according to their traditional customs. The indigenous Africans were also allowed to use African customary laws in their courts. The leadership was organized in Council of Chiefs and one Secretary of the Interior, who acted as presiding official. Finally, the District Commissioners, who were appointed by the President of Liberia, administered the hinterland districts.¹

In the early part of the twentieth century, the hinterland groups provided labor to the central government for the construction of roads, and free labor for the Spanish Island of Fernando Po. Prior to the turn of the century, Liberia's most important export had been coffee. However by the early 1920's, the export of human labor had become the dominant source of revenue for the government and for individual politicians. Liberia had suffered economic crisis beginning in the latter part of the nineteenth century and again at the turn of the century. Subsequently, in 1912, the Liberian government attempted to negotiate an international loan agreement with the Bank of British West Africa, and the American government. The loan agreement meant that the country would be subjected to an international receivership, which would have the responsibility of managing the country's revenues. By the end of

World War I, Liberia was on the verge of bankruptcy, and its attempts to secure a financial agreement with the Bank of British West Africa and the American government, failed. Labor exploitation was seen as the only viable means of raising the country's revenue. The Liberian government looked to its indigenous population for free labor and as export profit. The government resolved to use unpaid labor within the country along with the export of labor as a principal source of income.²

In desperation, the Liberian government signed an agreement in 1926, to lease Firestone Plantations Company land for rubber production or other agricultural products. Firestone Rubber Company initially became interested in Liberia in 1923. Its interest was precipitated by the United States need for an alternative to British/Dutch control over major sources of rubber. By the turn of the century, British colonies produced 75% of the world's rubber, of which, Americans consumed 70%. The British enacted the Stevenson Act, which restricted the production of their Asian rubber plantations. The United States became concerned and looked for measures to offset its reliance on Britain's rubber supply. Subsequently, the United States' Congress passed a bill assigning \$500,000 for an investigation to locate rubber resources worldwide.³ Marcus Garvey's UNIA proposed land usage and construction plans were thwarted by the Liberian government in favor of the American Department of State's interests. Subsequently, the land was sold to the Firestone Rubber company.⁴

Harvey Firestone, of the Firestone Rubber Company began an independent worldwide search for rubber. By 1923, a Firestone rubber expert found that Liberia was an excellent possibility for rubber exploitation. Firestone's study concluded that Liberia was an excellent choice for two important reasons: "it offered the best natural advantages, and the labor supply was indigenous and practically inexhaustible."⁵

In 1925, the American Secretary of State wrote to the Liberian government saying that the American government believed, "that the successful establishment of the rubber industry in Liberia will tend to

promote the country's welfare Mr. Firestone has assured the Department that as soon as the contracts are in effect there will be money available for necessary public works such as roads and ports... it would be most unfortunate should a disagreement as to the exact terms of a loan prevent or delay the conclusion of a contract which will in all probability be of immense advantage to Liberia."⁶

On November 18, 1926, after long negotiations with the Rubber Company, the Liberian government agreed to lease land to Firestone Rubber Company for a period of ninety-nine years. The agreement allowed for a maximum lease of one million acres. Firestone was required to pay an annual rent of six cents per acre on land that was under development. The agreement also provided that rent be paid on 20,000 acres in five years. Finally, the agreement called for an investment of one million dollars and the employment of 350,000 Liberians.⁷

In the April 24, 1926 edition, the *Afro-American* printed an editorial which predicted a Liberian economic crisis if the country accepted a \$100 million loan from the Firestone Rubber Company. The Liberian government had previously attempted to secure a five million dollar loan from the United States but was unsuccessful. The *Afro-American* believed that a loan in that amount qualified as a purchase. They were even more opposed to Firestone's loan proposition because it would render Liberia helpless, and Firestone would essentially function as the *de facto* government with the support of American arms. In the *Afro's* estimate, the Liberian situation appeared to be following the same path as Haiti, when it came to U.S. involvement with protecting its capitalist interests.⁸

By 1929, the United States had become actively involved in the Liberian labor scandal through diplomatic rather than military intervention. The United States diplomatic intervention in Liberia was presented as a purely humanitarian effort, and the heavy economic investment of American capital by Firestone Rubber Company was not a motivating factor for the government's interest in Liberia. According

to the *Afro-American*, the steps that were taken by the U.S. government to ensure Firestone's successful venture were problematic and showed little signs of humanitarian interests.

The U. S. Department of State issued a letter to the Liberian government informing them that it had been brought to their attention that Liberian officials were involved in export of labor from Liberia to the cocoa-producing Island of Fernando-Po in Spanish Guinea. The report also indicated that the labor system was indistinguishable from organized slave labor, and that it was supported by the Liberian Frontier Force and high government officials. Several years earlier, the State Department received several reports that outlined labor abuses in Liberia, which fell on deaf ears. It was only when labor abuse threatened American investment that the Department quickly acted through diplomatic intervention.⁹

Ironically, the United States' Consul in Liberia, Solomon Porter Hood, an African American, resigned and returned to the United States. The State Department issued a statement to the *Afro-American* reporting that Minister Hood returned to the United States due to sickness and a need for rest. The *Afro-American* obtained information that contradicted the State Department's letter. The *Afro-American* was told that Minister Hood's inability to secure the five million dollar loan agreement between the Firestone Rubber Company and the Liberian government was the reason he resigned and returned to the United States. However, two American officers Sidney De la Rue, the General Receiver of Customs in Liberia, and Auditor C. R. Bussell, believed that the success of the Firestone agreement required a strong American voice. They argued that Liberians lacked respect for American Negroes and that Consul Hood should be replaced by a white representative. Ironically, upon Minister Hood's return to the United States, Minister Reid Page Clark, a white minister, was assigned as Charge de affairs to Liberia. It was felt by the U.S. State Department that he knew more about Liberia than any other American. De la Rue and Bussell also saw the need to use Hood's influence among Black Americans. De La Rue believed that a key element in their strategy to win support for the Fire-

stone project, was winning the support of Black Americans. "If Hood were kept in the United States, he would be most useful in rallying the Negro element to the side of the Firestone Project. Negro support could also be increased, De la Rue predicted, if Firestone would grant jobs in Liberia to Negro graduates of technical schools. Then we should have all the radical press controlled by DuBois also on our side."¹⁰ For the *Afro-American*, Liberia became a major concern when it moved into the international spotlight in 1929. During the same year, the *Afro-American* conducted an exclusive interview with Thomas J. Faulkner, an ex-presidential candidate in Liberia. Thomas J. Faulkner was an American born naturalized Liberian, a civil engineer, builder of Liberian lighting and telegraph system, owner of Liberia's largest hotel and ice plant, and candidate for president on the People's Party ticket. Faulkner's People's Party was the opposition party to the True Whig Party under which then President Charles D. B. King had served three terms. Faulkner accused King of falsifying the election results of 1927, failing to conduct government census, poor fiscal management, and promoting and profiting from forced native labor. Faulkner traveled to the League of Nations and to the United States to expose Liberia's corrupt officials and rally U.S. support against Liberian President King. Once in the United States, Faulkner sought support from the Black community and the U.S. State Department with hopes of being installed as Liberia's president and ending the forced labor scandal. In the *Afro-American* interview, and in his letter to the U.S. State Department, Faulkner proposed for a commission to be sent to Liberia to ensure fair elections, and to investigate the labor scandal in Liberia.¹¹ The Liberian government officials immediately responded to Faulkner's allegations in a letter to U.S. officials. Liberian Secretary of State, Edwin Barclay wrote to the U.S. State Department regarding the controversy. Ernest Lyon, Liberian Consul General in Baltimore, and Chief Diplomatic Representative in the United States delivered the letter to the State Department. In the letter, Barclay responded to several of the allegations that were made by Faulkner. Barclay stated that Firestone Company of Ohio was in the process of developing large rubber plantations in Liberia and employed native labor. While he did

not respond to the allegation of fraudulent elections, fiscal mismanagement, or forced labor to the Spanish Island of Fernando-Po, he did however state that the Liberian government was considering appointing an international commission to investigate and report whether harsh labor conditions existed in the Republic.¹² The *Afro-American* attempted to dispel any doubts about Falkner's character. The Liberian government accused Faulkner of being dishonest and disgruntled about losing the election. The *Afro-American* assured its readers that Faulkner's testimony was not false or malicious. It was also suggested that the public recall several earlier events that support Faulkner's claims.

Following the Liberian Secretary of State's letter, Liberian President King announced his intention to appoint an international commission to investigate charges of slavery in Liberia. President King's letter was sent to the League of Nations, shortly after the U.S. State Department informed the Liberian government that it had been brought to its attention that Liberian officials were involved in forced export from Liberia to Fernando-Po. In 1925, the League of Nations, Temporary Slavery Commission also heard allegations of free and slave persons in Liberia being subjected to labor abuses, and Raymond L. Buell, Harvard Professor, produced a book about Liberia and the forced labor situation.¹³ Moreover, "Liberia, founded as an asylum for slaves freed from their chains in America should be the last nation to allow or support such a heinous system to continue," suggested the *Afro*. However, the *Afro-American* failed to connect U.S. benevolence with its capitalist interest in Liberia.¹⁴

The *Afro-American* supported the idea of appointing African Americans to the proposed international commission to investigate the forced labor conditions in Liberia. In fact, in a letter to Secretary of State Frank Kellogg, Carl Murphy recommended that Charles Wesley, History Professor at Howard University, and Charles Houston, Assistant Dean of Howard University Law School serve on the International commission.¹⁵ The international commission was slated to comprise three members, one Liberian, one American, recommended by the U.S.

President Herbert Hoover, and a third to be recommended by the League of Nations, according to the Liberian President's letter to the U.S. State Department.¹⁶

In a follow-up letter to Murphy, the State Department replied that his letter had been received and placed in the Department's files. The response also noted that the State Department wanted to appoint Emmett Scott to the Commission, but he declined and recommended two other African Americans. In addition to his nomination of Charles Wesley, Scott also suggested Charles Johnson, a sociologist at Fisk University, be appointed Commissioner.¹⁷

Just weeks before the international commission members were named, the *Afro-American* conducted another exclusive interview with Thomas Faulkner regarding Liberia's debt and Firestone's financial investment in Liberia. Faulkner asserted that President King in his previous visit to the United States to secure finances to refund Liberia's debt, showed disdain toward African Americans. According to Faulkner, the Black-owned North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company of Durham, North Carolina offered to underwrite the five million dollar loan that Liberia needed, but President King refused stating he did not wish to accept private aid. Ironically, after the U.S. denied the loan, King was forced to accept Firestone Rubber Company's offer. Faulkner also cited another example of what he considered to be King's contempt toward African Americans. Faulkner stated that since Firestone Rubber Company came to Liberia it had never employed Black workers from the U.S., and that a number of white American workers had been employed. Faulkner quoted Mr. Harvey Firestone as saying that, "King and Barclay desired no colored American workers." The *Afro-American* concluded that President King feared aid from Black America, but it did not offer any analysis as to why.¹⁸

In November 1929, the U.S. Secretary of State issued the statement that the Department was giving careful consideration to the question of investigating alleged slavery or forced labor in Liberia, and also that no U.S. commission member had been selected at the time.

According to the reports from the U.S. State Department, Dr. Emmett J. Scott, then Secretary/Treasurer of Howard University, was slated as the American commission member, but declined. In an attempt to clear itself of the charges, the Liberian government not only welcomed the investigation, but also attempted to define the scope of the slavery investigation. The government asked that five issues be included in the investigations:

First, Liberia asked that the international committee determine whether slavery as defined by the League of Nations' Anti-Slavery convention exist in the Republic. Second, [to determine] whether the government participated in and encouraged slavery. Third, what leading Liberians participated in the traffic of slaves? Fourth, what extent if any forced labor exists? Fifth, whether the labor employed for private purposes on privately owned or leased plantations was recruited by voluntary enlistment, or was forcibly impressed by the Liberian government or by its authority. Lastly, they wanted an investigation into the Liberian Frontier Force and other government officials implicated in labor recruiting. The commission would also be authorized by Liberia to summon witnesses whose attendance would be obligatory. The commission would also be granted power to make recommendations to the government as it sees fit.¹⁹

The League of Nation's international commission to investigate slavery in Liberia was selected by 1930. The American member of the commission was Dr. Charles S. Johnson of Fisk University. Dr. Johnson's credentials as a sociologist and an expert on race relations made him the premiere candidate to represent the United States. Additionally, the U.S. government may have selected Dr. Johnson to appease the African American community because of its sensitivity to Liberia. The second commission member, who represented the League of Nation, and was appointed to chair the commission was Englishman, Dr.

Cuthbert Christy. Dr. Christy was a medical officer with extensive colonial experience in West, Central, and East Africa. The final member of the commission was past President of Liberia, Arthur Barclay. Barclay was unable to accompany the commission members on many occasions because of age and infirmity.²⁰

By April 8, 1930, the Johnson-Christy team reached Monrovia, Liberia. The commission's investigation was scheduled to last until September 1930. The commission investigated the labor traffic to the cocoa producing island of Fernando Po, the condition of the labor employed in road building and portage, and the practice of pawning known as the human collateral for payment. The commission also conducted interviews with paramount chiefs, respected elders, young boys, who were taken captive, women's organizations, indigenous and naturalized citizens, and others.²¹

The *Afro-American* published the findings of the commission's semi-official report. The investigators concluded and upheld Thomas Faulkner's allegations of corruption and forced labor. Several Liberian officials, including Post-Master General Samuel Ross, and Vice President Allen Yancy, were named for forcing indigenous Liberians into export labor to Fernando Po. The investigation found that Samuel Ross accepted head money from European shippers for each worker he delivered to the coast. The commission also found that domestic slavery existed, as defined by the 1926 Anti-Slavery Convention. Pawning was also recognized in the social economy of the Republic. However, the commission also found that domestic slavery was discouraged by the government in that any slave who appealed to the courts for release may be granted freedom and direct proceedings were initiated against his master or owner. In some cases, domestic slaves were granted freedom based upon evidence of ill treatment. Evidence was found against some Americo-Liberians, who took indigenous people as slaves, and in some instances forced women to become pawns to attract male laborers to their land.²²

In the women's mass meeting called by the international commission, local civic leaders spoke against their husbands' wishes and testified against the leadership. Civic leader, Irene Gant, stated that, "the male leadership was guilty of bringing the Republic to the brink of ruin." The women also called for the removal of President C.D.B. King and his entire regime. "Should they be found guilty [by the commission] of participating in and profiting from the illegal and forcible shipment of boys from Liberia to Fernando Po or any other forced labor without compensation," their resignation is appropriate, agreed the women.²³

The official commission report was filed with the League of Nations and with the U.S. State Department. Based on the findings, both the United States and Britain recommended that Liberia immediately initiate reforms. And Liberia replied by asking the League to make the general reform proposal of the international commission more concrete. Rather amazingly, the international commission report offered scant findings on labor abuses on both the island of Fernando Po and on the Firestone Rubber Company's involvement in the labor scandal. The Liberian government had initially agreed to assist in labor recruitment and Firestone agreed not to import unskilled labor, provided that the government furnished an adequate labor supply. But the Rubber Company's demand for labor conflicted with the preexisting labor supply to Fernando Po, which had to factor into America's scrutiny of labor export to Fernando Po. American capitalist interest and the danger presented by competition with Fernando Po then became the focal point for which an investigation was launched.²⁴

Diaspora Debates

Surprisingly, after receiving a letter, dated February 13, 1926, from the State Department, the *Afro-American* ceased the discussion of its suspicion of the U.S. government and its capitalist interests in the Black Republic, and focused its attention on the abuses made by the Americo Liberians toward the indigenous Liberian population. Consequently, the investigation became an intricate part of a larger de-

bate particularly among Diaspora communities both in the U.S. and the Caribbean, concerning Black peoples ability to be self-governing.²⁵

In the opinion of some, it was argued that descendants of slaves were themselves virtually enslaving their brethren. which was a sign that Liberia had failed as an independent Black nation. Racists regarded the failure as an example of Black incapacity to be self-governing. The attacks that were launched against Blacks inspired some Black elites to aid in the defense of the Liberian elite. Overwhelmingly, the literature of journalists, Black intellectuals, and the Black middle class began to reflect their desire to vindicate the race and dismiss the wrongdoing of their brethren.²⁶

To African American leaders, the Liberian crisis was important for mainly two reasons. Liberia was held in high regard among many African Americans because it symbolized Black independence. Secondly, economically oriented Blacks such as Garveyites and other Black entrepreneurs viewed Liberia as a field for Black enterprise. Many in the Black media viewed U.S. and Firestone Rubber Company interests in Liberian affairs as a threat to Black independence and self-sufficiency.²⁷

The scandal caused a split within the Black leadership in America. On one side, there was a deep desire by many members of the Diaspora to keep Liberia open as a potential homeland for Blacks, a view recently popularized by Marcus Garvey.²⁸ Garvey's desire for Liberia was for it to serve as the center for the UNIA's headquarters, as well as the destination for African returnees from America. Their desire to witness a free Africa made them defend Liberia even in the face of doubt about the conduct of Liberian elite.

Pan-Africanist writers and scholars were at the forefront of the defenders of Liberia. Scholars such as William Edward Burghardt Du Bois through the NAACP journal *The Crisis*, Ben N. Azikiwe in his book *Liberia in World Politics*, and George Padmore, through the African American press, were dedicated to emancipating Africa from

colonial rule and to improving the condition of Black people in both Africa and the Americas. Ben Azikiwe believed that Liberia was to be the source of African cultural renaissance, despite the attempts that were made to stifle the national consciousness and self-determination of the Republic of Liberia. Du Bois asserted that "indeed, the record of peace, efficiency and ability made by this little poverty stricken settlement of the rejected and despised, sitting on the edge of Africa and fighting the world in order to be let alone, is, despite querulous criticism, one of the most heartening efforts in human history." Du Bois warned Blacks against racial divisiveness, "which with engaging naiveté we accept and then proceed to laugh at each other and criticize each other before we make any attempt to learn the truth." Finally, George Padmore aggressively defended Liberia. In his work *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, Padmore wrote that Pan-Africanism was "an independent political expression of Negro aspirations for complete national independence from white domination, capitalist or communist."²⁹ Padmore, Du Bois, Azikiwe, and other Pan-Africanists were particularly interested in Liberia's success because its destruction would have far reaching implications for the future of West African nationalism and the fight against colonial rule. If the League of Nations plan had been accepted, or if Liberia had become a European mandate, it would have been under European supervision until the eve of the Second World War, and it is probable that the reemergence of Liberia as a self-sufficient nation would not have been likely.³⁰

On the other side of the debate, there were Blacks who wanted to expose the wrong doing of the elite Liberian government for its oppression of the poor indigenous Black population, and who also felt that Liberia might provide an opportunity for American Blacks to build an economic base. Some of the key supporters of Black economic venture in Liberia were Thomas J.R. Faulkner, a successful Black emigrant entrepreneur from Baltimore, Maryland, J.T. Betts, a Black businessman, Earnest Lyon, Liberian Consul-General in Baltimore and former minister to Liberia, and William N. Jones, Chief Editor of the *Afro-American*. Consequently, the *Afro-American* was the main party responsible for exposing the labor abuses in Liberia, which prompted

the League and the U.S. to send an international commission to investigate the allegation. Late in the summer of 1929, the *Afro-American* called for the removal of then President King, fearing that the country was too small to survive such a corrupt and incompetent government.³¹

The *Afro-American* both criticized and expressed concern for Liberia. Unlike Liberian supporters such as Du Bois, Azikiwe and Padmore, the *Afro-American* disdained the Americo-Liberian leadership for abusing other Africans. The newspaper's editor, William N. Jones, believed that the country's weakness would possibly lead to a takeover under the auspices of the League of Nation. Realizing the importance of Liberian independence to the morale of its readers, and the significant kinship felt by African American elite and Liberian elite, the *Afro-American* remained conscious of how its coverage would affect those groups. Therefore, it became necessary for the newspaper to campaign for a strong Liberian government and against the weak and corrupt government that existed.³²

The Afro-Americans' Plan For Liberia

The *Afro* intensified its coverage in the 1930's, after the international commission had revealed its findings. The Newspaper's editor, William N. Jones, argued that, "the ties between the African American community and Liberia must rely on more than sympathetic race feeling." In his view, economic interest should bind both peoples together and provide a venue for African American capital. The *Afro-American* also intensified its coverage of Liberia because of the appointment of Bishop Sampson Brooks, a former Pastor of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, where the late John Murphy, Sr. was a leader, to supervise A.M.E. Church activities in Liberia.³³

In the fall of 1933, *Afro-American* editor William Jones along with fifteen prominent Black men were invited, by then President and former Secretary of State Edwin Barclay, to Liberia on a good will mission. Jones returned to Baltimore with a plan he called the Liberian-American Plan of Cooperation. The plan was designed to revitalize

Liberia through financial and technical assistance.³⁴ The program consisted of several parts:

1. The organization of this present committee of a permanent commission to work with a similar commission appointed by the Liberian government in coordinating a permanent Liberian-American Plan of cooperation and of maintaining the proper relations between the governments of the two countries
2. The organization of a Liberian-American trading company. The Liberian government would cooperate with such a company in establishing a banking and insurance business and agencies in both countries that would promote trade between the two countries.
3. The establishment of a number of scholarships in our institutions that would train young men and women for Liberian and other foreign service. There are at present sixty diplomatic posts, held by whites, which Liberia controls in foreign countries. President Barclay has pointed out to us his desire to have these important posts filled by colored persons. These posts would form a mighty factor in working out a better status for people of color throughout the world. Young men trained as administrators, industrialists, and engineers are needed at once, and under this ten-year program would be welcomed by the Liberian government.
4. The organization of an international relations group, which would seek to coordinate the efforts of colored people throughout the world to improve their general economic, social and civic status. Such an organization to be promoted mainly among younger men and women and stimulated by an educational movement which will point out to our boys and girls their relations to Liberians and colored folk in other countries. This would be a mighty factor in working out a better status for Negro people throughout the world.³⁵

As outlined in the plan, the American group was expected to carry out their part of the agreement through the following:

1. The development of a mass campaign to bring pressure upon the United States government to modify its demands on Liberia. This campaign is already under way and is being accompanied by the most cunning demagoguery. The cry is being raised that England and France are menacing the integrity and freedom of Liberia. Whereas, in fact, the League of Nations Plan, which, as we have seen, really represents the interests of American imperialism and Harvey Firestone, is cunningly represented as a threat against Liberian independence, not by American imperialism, but by British and French imperialism. The campaign is being accompanied by strenuous appeals to race solidarity, unity of the darker races; hypocritical pleas are being made to the Negro peoples to rally to the defense of the last stronghold of Negro freedom.

2. This campaign is to be connected with the raising of \$150,000 among the Negro masses in this country to assist the Liberian government in its present difficulties. This, we are informed, will show good faith on the part of the American Negro in his desire to help Liberia.

3. These plans are to be carried through by a nationwide organization comprising the heads of all organizations now interested in Liberia; also, churches, lodges, civic and business organizations, on the basis of a Ten-Year Program. The next immediate step is the organization of a delegation of prominent Negroes to intercede with President Roosevelt and the State Department on behalf of Liberia and to persuade them to accept the above Plan in lieu of the Plan of the League of Nations.³⁶

Members of the Save Liberia Movement supported William Jones' plan. Some of the key members were: Carl Murphy, Charles S. Johnson, Oscar DePreist, C.C. Spaulding, Emmett J. Scott, Charles H. Wesley, Rayford Logan, W. E. B. Du Bois, Mary McLeod Bethune, Carter G. Woodson, Channing Tobias, P. Bernard Young, Walter White, Eugene K. Jones, Rev. J.H. Jernagin, Daisy C. Lampkin, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, William L. Paterson, E. Washington Rhodes, Hellen Allen Boys, John W. Davis, and Bishop W. Sampson Brooks.³⁷

Unfortunately, the Jones plan never came to fruition. The U.S. State Department did not support the Plan and many African Americans heavily criticized it. The Pittsburgh *Courier*, one of the *Afro-American's* competitors, viewed the Jones Plan as, "incredible philanthropy" in light of the social and economic hardships that African Americans were experiencing at the time. Another avid critic of William Jones and his supporters was Harry Haywood, a ranking Black member of the Communist Party. In an unpublished report for the Eighth Convention of the Communist Party of the United States of America, Haywood denounced the Jones Plan as an attempt by the Black elite to serve as middlemen of American imperialism in Africa.³⁸

The program was mainly attacked for its false motives to support poor and elite Blacks to share proportionate roles in Africa. Haywood argued that, "This can be seen in the statement of one of its leaders, we are beating our hearts and souls trying to break through the thick wall of prejudice which bars us from the higher brackets of big industry here in America, when there is a field which we can develop in Africa." Haywood aptly pointed out that the plan to protect an independent Liberia excluded any mention of the role of U.S. capital in Liberian economy. Furthermore, Haywood accused the Jones plan and its supporters of contriving a plan, which he termed Neo-Garveyism, to exploit the poor who themselves were suffering under the Depression.³⁹

Haywood charged that the Jones plan was the most subtle and refined edition of Neo-Garveyism, and therefore the most dangerous. In an attempt to rally the same mass support of poor Blacks, which Garvey accomplished during his time in the U.S., the supporters of the Jones Plan were accused of trying to replicate a similar plan to gain the support and allegiance of poor Blacks. Haywood predicted that the Jones Plan if initiated would have only one result: "to undermine the unity of Liberian workers in their struggle against exploitation and oppression by the Imperialists and the Americo-Liberian ruling class; to weaken the working class movement under the slogan of race unity instead of class unity, thereby strengthening the hands of the Imperialist oppressors and their Negro allies."⁴⁰

Not surprisingly, the State Department did not share a positive reaction to the Jones plan either. After all, the status of Blacks in America had not changed, Blacks continued to suffer the effects of a racist, unjust, and violent Jim Crow system. It would have been a huge contradiction for the Department to support any economic plan devised by African Americans to assist in Africa's development. Even though the Department endorsed an investigation into alleged slavery and supported the recommendations that were made by the Commission, its primary interest remained in securing American capitalist interests. Therefore, the Departments' primary concern rested with Firestone's interest in Liberia and not African American interest. Due to overwhelming criticism and lack of support from the U.S. State Department, Jones was forced to abandon the plan for American Blacks to assist in Liberia's development using Black capital.⁴¹

Conclusion

The capitalist interests of the U. S. was evidenced in 1935, when it abandoned the humanitarian interests in the conditions of indigenous Liberians and encouraged the renegotiation of the 1926 loan agreement between Liberia and the Finance Cooperation of America. Under President Barclay's administration, the Firestone Plantation Company was successfully able to negotiate an agreement that supplemented the 1926 loan and secured Firestone's presence in Liberia. The State Department's strategy to use its power to ensure American business presence abroad sent a clear message to less powerful governments like Liberia. It meant that through diplomatic intervention American private and government operations had the power to infringe upon the sovereignty of any nation that did not have the power to successfully defend itself.⁴²

Despite its failure to help organize a self-sufficient, independently controlled Black government, the discussion of the *Afro-American's* involvement in Liberia situates well within the Pan-African framework.⁴³ The Pan-African objectives that were endorsed by the *Afro-American* primarily focused on economic and political elements that

were important in the effort to unite Africans in a common cause. Its direct involvement in the labor crisis was shown in its consistent coverage, Carl Murphy's solicitation of the Secretary of State, and most importantly, through William N. Jones travel to Liberia. The *Afro-American* proved to be far ahead of some Black leaders in proposing concrete solutions for African American involvement in Africa. The *Afro-American's* attempt to get Black Americans to see their struggle against oppression as identical to the oppression that Africans around the world experienced was notable. It is possible that ties between African Americans and Africans could have been strengthened beyond just sharing sentiments of kinship, had it not been for the economic hardship they experienced during the Great Depression. However, given the tension between the Americo-Liberians and the indigenous Africans under their rule, African American development and investment in Liberia might have only helped to strengthen the existing government, given the ties they shared with the Americo-Liberians.

NOTES

- ¹ Ibrahim Sundiata provided an in-depth discussion of the role of the indigenous population as it relates to the labor scandal as well as an examination of the relationship between the Americo-Liberians and the indigenous groups, in *Black Scandal: America and the Liberian Labor Crisis, 1929-1936*, (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1980), 11-32.
- ² Ibid., 17.
- ³ Ibid., 34.
- ⁴ Ibid., 34, see also M.B Akpan, "Liberia and the Universal Negro Improvement Association: The Background to the Abortion of Garvey's Scheme for African Colonization." *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 14, no. 1 (1973) : 16-21.
- ⁵ Ibid., 35, see also George Padmore, *American Imperialism Enslaves Liberia*, (Moscow: Centirzdat, 1931), 29-34.
- ⁶ Frank Chalk, "The Anatomy of an Investment," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 1 (March, 1967): 17, see also Raymond Leslie Buell, *Liberia: A Century of Survival, 1847-1947*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1947), 30, For further discussion of Firestone's economic involvement in Liberia see, League of Nation, *Report of the International Commission of Enquiry Into the Existence of Slavery and Forced Labor in the Republic of Liberia*, Monrovia, Liberia (August, 1930), 77-83.
- ⁷ Ibid., See also, Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe, "In Defense of Liberia," *Journal of Negro History*, XVIII (January, 1932): 44, For discussion of Firestone's labor projection see, J.H. Mower, "The Republic of Liberia," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXII (July, 1947): 3. While Firestone placed high expectations on Liberia and had devised this elaborate plan to support the company's goals; by 1930 only 55,000 acres of the allotted one million acres had been cleared. Furthermore, Firestone had only employed 18,000 of the proposed 350,000 Liberian laborers, in Sundiata, *Black Scandal*, (1980), 35.
- ⁸ "That Firestone "Investment" Might Prove Fire and Stone After All," *Baltimore Afro-American*, April 24, 1926.
- ⁹ *Baltimore Afro-American*, August 10, 24 and October 19, 1929. See also, League of Nations, Secretariat, *Report of the Liberian Commission of Enquiry* (C.658.M272), June 1930, 36.

- ¹⁰ Baltimore *Afro-American*, September 4, 1926. For an in-depth discussion of De la Rue and Bussell's involvement in securing the Firestone loan agreement see Frank Chalk, "The Anatomy of an Investment," (1967):18-22. Chalk also points out that De la Rue's expectations of DuBois were misguided. In fact DuBois later attacked the Firestone project.
- ¹¹ Ibid., Baltimore *Afro-American*, July 27, 1929.
- ¹² Ibid., Baltimore *Afro-American*, August 10, 1929.
- ¹³ Raymond L. Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*. (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1928).
- ¹⁴ Ibid., Baltimore *Afro-American*, August 17, 1929.
- ¹⁵ Carl Murphy to Secretary Frank Kellogg, November 1, 1929, National Archives 882.5048/117.
- ¹⁶ Baltimore *Afro-American*, August 17, 1929.
- ¹⁷ State Department to Carl Murphy, December 7, 1929, National Archives 882.5048/152.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., Baltimore *Afro-American*, September 21, 1929.
- ¹⁹ Baltimore *Afro-American*, September 21 and November 9, 1929.
- ²⁰ Baltimore *Afro-American*, November 9, 1929.
- ²¹ League, *Report*, (1930), 6.
- ²² *Afro-American*, July 26, October 25, December 13, 20, 27, 1930.
- ²³ Baltimore *Afro-American*, July, October, December, 1930. See Also, League *Report* (1930), 94 102.
- ²⁴ Baltimore *Afro-American*, December 13, 20, 27, 1930.
- ²⁵ The *Afro-American* received two letters regarding the Liberian situation. The letter only referred to the replacement of Solomon Porter Hood as U.S. minister to Liberia. The Department explained that he was released from his duties due to illness and not because of his inability to secure the Firestone program in Liberia. The U.S. government may have been concerned about preventing African American resistance to the replacement of a Black minister to Liberia, particularly since it had been done previously in Haiti. Therefore, it appealed to the Black press for legitimacy, see *Afro-American*, February 20, 1926.

- ²⁶ The *Afro-American* expressed condemnation of Liberia for allegedly en-slaving the indigenous African population. On August 17, 1929 its editorial entitled "Slavery in Liberia" reads... "its strange that Liberia, founded as an asylum for slaves freed from their chains in America, should permit the nefarious system to continue... In light of this evidence friends of the West African republic want not a commission to investigate, but expects slavery and forced labor to end to end once and for all." See *Afro-American*, August 17, 1929. After the U.S. State Department commission filed its report the *Afro-American* urged Liberian officials to end slavery. See *Afro-American*, October 25, 1930. For a detailed discussion of racist attacks that were stated see, I.K. Sundiata, "The Liberia Lobbies," in *Black Scandal* (1980) 81-106.
- ²⁷ In the 1930's Ernest Lyon, former Minister to Liberia opposed mass emigration to Liberia, but supported Black financial support, as well as *Afro-American* editor William N. Jones' goodwill mission to Liberia. In their view, economic self-interest would bind African Diaspora communities together and provide a venue for black capital. Bishop William Mathews of Baltimore's African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church also encouraged Black economic investment in Liberia. See *Afro-American*, July 27, August 17, September 21, 1929 and January 31, July 11, 1931.
- ²⁸ Amy J. Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* (New York, 1923), Immanuel Geiss, *The Pan African Movement* (New York, 1974), M.B. Akpan, "Liberia and the Universal Negro Improvement Association: The Background to the Abortion of Garvey's Scheme for African Colonization," *The Journal of African History*, xiv, 1 (1973): 105-127. *Afro-American*, June, 30, 1917, December 13, 1918, February 28, July 4, 1919, September 20, November 24, 1920.
- ²⁹ W.E.B. Du Bois, "Pan-African and New Racial Philosophy, *The Crisis*, XL (November, 1933): 247-262, Ben N. Azikiwe, *Liberia in World Politics*, (London: A.W. Stockwell, 1935), 245, Ben Azikiwe, "In Defense of Liberia", *Journal of Negro History*, XVII, 1 (January, 1932): 30-50, George Padmore, *Pan Africanism or Communism*, (London, 1956), 148.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ On August 17, 1929 the *Afro-American* printed an editorial entitled "Slavery in Liberia" it read... "it's strange that Liberia, founded as an asylum for slaves freed from their chains in America, should permit the nefarious system to continue... In light of this evidence friends of the West African republic want not a commission to investigate, but expects slavery and forced labor to end to end once and for all." After the U.S. State Department commission filed its report the *Afro-American* urged Liberian officials to end slavery. Baltimore *Afro American*, August 17, September 21, 1929. See also, *Afro-American*, October 25, 1930.

- ³² Ibid., Baltimore *Afro-American*, November 28, 1931, November 18, 1933.
- ³³ Ibid., Baltimore *Afro-American*, January 1932 through December 31, 1932.
- ³⁴ Baltimore *Afro-American*, November 23, 1933 through June 23, 1934.
- ³⁵ Baltimore *Afro-American*, November 23, 1933 through June 23, 1934.
- ³⁶ Baltimore *Afro-American*, June 23, 1934.
- ³⁷ Baltimore *Afro-American*, June 23, 1934.
- ³⁸ Pittsburg *Courier*, February 3, 1934. See Harry Haywood, unpublished autobiography, "Eighth Convention: Description of Eighth Convention of Communist Party of the United States, Cleveland, Ohio, April 2-8, 1934, Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of Afro-American Communists*, (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978), 428.
- ³⁹ Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, (1978), 428-429.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ For State Department reaction to Jones Plan see Memorandum by Philips Conversation with Ernest Lyon, W.W. Allen, and William N. Jones, January 12, 1934 USNA, RG29, 882.01 FC1767, Memorandum from Hibbard with T.J. Jones, January 31, 1934, USNA, RG59, 882.01 FCL791 ½, cited in Sundiata (1980), 120-121.
- ⁴² "Recognition By the United States of the Administration of President Barclay Upon Evidence of the Liberian Government's Intention to Carry Out Certain Reforms," U. S. *Foreign Relations*, vol 1(1935) Geneva, Near East and Africa, Department of State.
- ⁴³ Jacobs's article entitled, "Pan-African Consciousness Among Afro-Americans" defined Pan-Africanism as the idea or belief that all people of African descent, no matter where they are located, have a common destiny and history and should work together for the liberation and improvement of Black people everywhere. See, Sylvia M. Jacobs, "Pan-African Consciousness Among Afro-Americans," in *Black Studies: Theory, Method and Cultural Perspective*, ed. Talmadge Anderson (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1990), 68-75. Drake's article, "Diaspora Studies and Pan-Africanism," points out that in addition to Pan-African emphasis on solidarity between Black people globally; it has also been its emphasis on both cultural and political activity that has added to its distinctive characteristics. He argued that both cultural and political activity have always been present with the former reinforcing the latter. See also, St Clair Drake, "Diaspora Studies and Pan-Africanism," in *The Global Di-*

mensions of the African Diaspora, ed. Joseph E. Harris (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1993), 451-514. Dibua's article entitled, "Pan-Africanism" provides a broader definition of Pan-Africanism. He adds that Pan-Africanism is a multifaceted approach that included political, economic, cultural, and religious aspects in the struggle for the unification, rehabilitation, and regeneration of peoples of African descent in all parts of the world. Also see, Jeremiah I. Dibua, "Pan-Africanism," in *Africa: The End of Colonial Rule Nationalism and Decolonization*, ed. Toyin Falola, vol 4 (North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2002), 29-48.

