

Sustaining Peace in Liberia: New Reforms, New Opportunities?

LESLEY CONNOLLY AND LAURIE MINCIELI



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Abbreviations

AU	African Union
CCA	Common country analysis
CSO	Civil society organization
DCO	Development Coordination Office
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
LMPTF	Liberia Multi-Partner Trust Fund
ODA	Official development assistance
PAPD	Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
PBC	UN Peacebuilding Commission
PBF	UN Peacebuilding Fund
RC	Resident coordinator
RCO	Resident coordinator's office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNCT	UN country team
UNDAF	UN development assistance framework
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNMIL	UN Mission in Liberia
UNSDG	UN Sustainable Development Group

Executive Summary

In his January 2018 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the UN secretary-general called for a shift in not only UN policies on peacebuilding, but also approaches to peacebuilding at the regional and country levels. In implementing this shift, he advocated for changes in four key issue areas: operational and policy coherence; UN leadership at the country level; partnerships with local and regional actors; and international support for sustaining peace. This was followed one year later by the reform of the United Nations development system, which empowered UN resident coordinators to be the heads of the UN country teams with a direct line to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

These changes come at a time of transition for Liberia. In addition to the new UN structure implemented in 2019, the country has a new administration under President George Weah, who was sworn in just one year earlier. The reforms also took effect less than one year after the departure of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), which completed its mandate in March 2018—another significant change to the UN presence in the country. Taken together with the lingering impact of the country’s civil war and the 2014–2015 Ebola outbreak, these changes pose a challenge to peace in Liberia. They also make Liberia one of the earliest test cases for the implementation of the secretary-general’s recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace and for examining the impact of the changing role of resident coordinators.

This implementation can be assessed across the four shifts called for by the secretary-general. In terms of operational and policy coherence, the resident coordinator’s office has been able to lead an integrated approach, aligning the UN development assistance framework with the government of Liberia’s national development plan. In terms of leadership, the empowered resident coordinator is well positioned to bridge operational activities and agencies in support of the country’s efforts to

achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In terms of partnerships, the resident coordinator’s office has shown a willingness not only to align its work with the government’s priorities but also to partner with regional organizations and support local civil society organizations. In terms of international support, innovative financing mechanisms have been put in place, and the Peacebuilding Commission has created a space for keeping attention on Liberia at UN headquarters.

Nonetheless, there are many challenges facing the UN in Liberia, and its offices need support to ensure that programming is oriented toward conflict prevention and connected to discussions at UN headquarters. This report recommends that the United Nations in Liberia move toward shared analysis; pursue joint programming to reach outside of Monrovia; provide appropriate human resources; generate reliable, long-term funding; support civil society and community-led initiatives; continue system-wide engagement with regional and subregional partners; and increase engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission as a bridge between Liberia and New York. As the UN country team (UNCT) works to adapt its strategy and operations to reflect this new way of working to sustain the peace in the country, it should be seen as a test case providing opportunities for ideas and actions to be adapted and applied to other post-conflict settings for future UN offices.

Introduction

January 1, 2019, marked the start of a new period for the United Nations presence in Liberia, with Yacoub El Hillo assuming the role of an empowered resident coordinator (RC) with a direct line to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General delinked from the UN Development Programme (UNDP).¹ El Hillo sits at the head of a new and expanded resident coordinator’s office that includes a political, peace, and development unit and oversees the entire UN country team (UNCT) in Liberia.² This innovative model is part of the “next generation” of UN country teams.

¹ RC El Hillo previously held the position of deputy special representative of the secretary-general/resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC) from June 27, 2016 to March 21, 2018, when he transitioned to being the UN country team’s (UNCT) resident coordinator (RC) and UNDP’s resident representative in Liberia. On January 1, 2019, the positions of RC and resident representative were separated, and El Hillo assumed the role of an empowered RC.

² Interview with UN Secretariat officials, New York, July 2018.

Liberia is one of the earliest test cases for the ongoing reform of the UN development system and implementation of the secretary-general's recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

As the UN works to manage its new set-up in Liberia, the country faces significant risks to sustaining the peace. The new set-up comes less than a year after the UN underwent another transition in the country: the departure of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), which completed its mandate in March 2018.³ Liberia also has a new administration under President George Weah, who was sworn in as Liberia's new president on January 22, 2018. While the 2003 Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement led to a period of strong economic growth, the Ebola crisis in 2014 and 2015 crippled the economy, which has still not recovered. The inflation rate continues to grow, while GDP growth projections for 2019 have been revised down from 4.7 to 0.4 percent.⁴ Human development indicators remain low; 95 percent of the country lacks access to clean water, and only 20 percent has access to electricity. Unemployment is widespread, and 50.9 percent of the population lives in poverty.⁵ There is also a high level of inequality, especially between Monrovia and rural areas.

This paper examines the implementation of the UN's peacebuilding and sustaining peace framework in Liberia, both in terms of what has been done and what is still needed. It explores implementation in the four issue areas drawn from the secretary-general's 2018 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace: operational and policy coherence; UN leadership at the country level; partnerships with local and regional actors; and international support for sustaining peace. It looks specifically at how the UNCT is adapting its strategy and operations in the country to reflect this new way of working following the official withdrawal of UNMIL. The paper reflects on the innovations taking place, challenges faced, and

support needed to operationalize the secretary-general's recommendations.

This analysis is based on desktop research, seventeen interviews in New York City, and thirty interviews in Monrovia, Liberia. All interviews were conducted between July 2018 and February 2019 with representatives of international donors and development partners in Liberia, member-state representatives in New York, members of the UN Secretariat in New York, members of the UNCT in Liberia, representatives of civil society in New York and Liberia, and members of the government of Liberia.

This paper is part of a larger project on the operationalization of the secretary general's recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the country level, which the International Peace Institute is conducting together with the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). Liberia is the first case study for this project and will be complemented by two additional cases studies in 2019. The intention is to connect field research with discussions at UN headquarters on how international actors can best create the conditions for peace and support actors working toward this goal.

What Is Sustaining Peace?

The resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace passed by the UN Security Council and General Assembly in 2016, along with the secretary-general's follow-on report in January 2018, call for a shift in how we think about peacebuilding not only in UN policies but also at the regional and country levels. The first recommendation in these dual resolutions is for the UN "to explore further opportunities to enhance links... [and] support of sustaining peace in the field."⁶

The notion of sustaining peace rose out of the Advisory Group of Experts' report on the review of the UN peacebuilding architecture in 2015.⁷

³ For an analysis of planning for the withdrawal of UNMIL and the transition of peacebuilding programming to the UNCT, see Daniel Forti and Lesley Connolly, "The Mission Is Gone, but the UN Is Staying: Liberia's Peacekeeping Transition," International Peace Institute, December 2018.

⁴ International Monetary Fund, "IMF Staff Completes 2019 Article IV Mission to Liberia," March 8, 2019, available at <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2019/03/08/pr1971-imf-staff-completes-2019-article-iv-mission-to-liberia>.

⁵ World Bank, "The World Bank in Liberia: Overview," available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/liberia/overview>.

⁶ UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/72/707-S/2018/43, January 18, 2018.

⁷ UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Challenge of Sustaining Peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture*, UN Doc. A/69/968-S/2015/490, June 30, 2015, p. 11.

Sustaining peace was conceptualized because it had become “increasingly clear that what is needed is a fresh look not only at the specialized [peacebuilding] architecture itself, but the whole approach to peacebuilding taken by the UN at large.”⁸ The advisory group’s report found that sustaining peace was widely understood to be a key task for the UN but remained “under-recognized, under-prioritized and under-resourced globally.”⁹ Moreover, the increasingly complex nature of armed conflict challenged traditional approaches to engagement taken by the UN and other international and regional actors.¹⁰

Sustaining peace is defined as “a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.”¹¹ This definition contextualizes the UN’s approach to peacebuilding within the full spectrum of the conflict cycle rather than viewing it solely as an action taken after conflict terminates. It therefore shifts the starting point of analysis from looking only at the drivers of risk to also understanding the sources of resilience in a society, putting the focus on preventive rather than reactive operations.

In January 2018, the secretary-general released a report outlining how the UN is implementing sustaining peace and proposing ways to further the process. In April 2018, the Security Council and General Assembly passed another set of dual resolutions (2413 and 72/276) endorsing the continued implementation of the secretary-general’s recommendations. These resolutions requested an interim report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in 2019 as well as a second report following up on implementation as part of the 2020 review of the UN’s peacebuilding architecture.

The secretary-general’s report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace is clear that the UN system should organize itself in a more coordinated and integrated manner so as to effectively support governments in their efforts to build peace and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹² It advocates for four main shifts, calling for:

1. Operational and policy coherence between all UN actors in headquarters and in the field, with a common country and risk analysis, common vision of sustaining peace for each country context, and common understanding of the role of each actor in implementing this vision, followed by joint planning and programming;
2. Effective leadership and capacities both in headquarters and in the field to institute this common approach to sustaining peace;
3. Stronger partnerships with local, national, and regional actors building off of their capacities; and
4. Adequate support from headquarters and member states to implement sustaining peace, particularly in terms of financing.

The remainder of this paper looks at the implementation of these shifts in the Liberian context, highlighting where more support or attention is needed.

Operational and Policy Coherence: Sustaining Peace and the UN Country Team

The secretary-general’s 2018 report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace advocates for “operational and policy coherence to strengthen support to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.”¹³ The starting point for this is a coherent and integrated context analysis developed by the different sections of the UNCT in cooperation with

⁸ Ibid, p. 11.

⁹ Ibid, p. 12.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 16.

¹¹ UN Security Council Resolution 2282 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. S/RES/2282; UN General Assembly Resolution 70/262 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. A/RES/70/262, May 12, 2016, p. 2.

¹² UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General*, p. 3.

¹³ Ibid, p. 2.

international, national, and local actors. This analysis should form a clearly articulated, overarching vision for how to sustain peace in the country. All actors should use it as the basis for their programming, and it should guide the development of the UN development assistance framework (UNDAF) and a country's national development plan.¹⁴ In this way, it can connect all actors, allowing for discussion on which ones have the comparative advantage in specific areas, contributing toward more integrated programming, and recognizing that the UN may not always be in the lead.¹⁵

In Liberia, the withdrawal of UNMIL and change in administration in 2018 provided a prime opportunity for the UN to set up a new structure to implement the secretary-general's recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The UN Executive Committee decided in July 2017 to strengthen the UNCT's capacities, "including by reviewing UNDP's Country Office capacity, ensuring the sustainability of [the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights'] presence, immediately establishing a Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) to support transition efforts, and further support by the Regional [UN Development Group] Team."¹⁶ Due to the convergence in timing of these changes in Liberia and the UN development reforms, the UN's presence in Liberia features an RC and a UNDP resident representative as separate positions, and the RC has a dedicated office to support his work (see Box 1).¹⁷ This new office is tasked with leading the development of a new UNDAF for 2020–2024 based on the new UNDAF guidelines (detailed below), focusing the

work of the UN in the country, and encouraging more risk-informed programming.¹⁸

THE COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS AND UN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FRAMEWORK

Since it was created, the empowered resident coordinator's office (RCO) has been working to develop a common analysis and centralize priorities for the UN country team. One tool has been the common country analysis (CCA), which was completed in August 2017 as part of the end-of-program evaluation for the 2012–2018 UNDAF.¹⁹ The CCA, while not a new tool, has been revised as part of the development system reforms to provide a more objective, impartial analysis and assessment. It aims to provide integrated analysis on a regular basis (every four to five years) that identifies key challenges and is shared across the UN system. The CCA is developed through consultation with national and local stakeholders but does not require formal endorsement. Rather, the purpose of the CCA is to add to existing analyses, including that of the government. Preparation of the CCA offers an opportunity to build partnerships with key actors in the country, including international financial institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector.²⁰

On the basis of the CCA, the UNCT is currently developing the new UNDAF (2020–2024).²¹ The new UNDAF is guided by the evidence base of the CCA alongside the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Integrated Transition Plan,²² the Liberian Peacebuilding Plan,²³ and the Social

¹⁴ Ibid, para. 24.

¹⁵ Ibid, para. 25.

¹⁶ UNDP Liberia, "UNDP Mission Report: Supporting Peaceful Transitions and Sustainable Development Pathways in Liberia," Mission Review Report, September 2017.

¹⁷ Per UN General Assembly Resolution 72/279, the reformed RC role is incorporated into the development system reform as a means of creating "a dedicated, independent, impartial, empowered and sustainable development-focused coordination function."

¹⁸ Interview with DCO official, New York, February 2019.

¹⁹ Interview with UNDP team in Monrovia, Liberia, January 2019.

²⁰ UN Sustainable Development Group, "Common Country Analysis Overview," available at <https://undg.org/programme/undaf-guidance/common-country-analysis/>.

²¹ The UNCT is currently working off the previous UNDAF (2013–2017), which, in March 2018, was extended to December 2019. Interview with UNDP team in Monrovia, Liberia, January 2019.

²² The Integrated Transition Plan (formally called the Government of Liberia, UN and Partners Transition Plan) was developed in the second half of 2017 and aligned with the substantive priorities identified in the Liberia Peacebuilding Plan. Part I of the plan focused on the Liberian government's transition (analyzed below), while Part II drove the UN's transition process. Part II assigned lead UN agencies to assume joint responsibility over each of the Peacebuilding Plan's priorities before and after UNMIL's closure. In addition to the Integrated Transition Plan, UNMIL prepared a comprehensive schedule for its departure and drafted policy papers on substantive issues for the UNCT and the new government (including on macroeconomics, security, and governance). See Forti and Connolly, "The Mission Is Gone, but the UN Is Staying," pp. 21–22.

²³ The Liberia Peacebuilding Plan was the first comprehensive peacebuilding planning framework mandated by the Security Council for a transition. It identified the substantive priorities intended to drive the UN's work during the transition. See Forti and Connolly, "The Mission Is Gone, but the UN Is Staying," pp. 13–15.

Cohesion and Reconciliation Index for Liberia.²⁴ At the highest level, the process of developing the UNDAF is being led by the joint steering committee between the government of Liberia and UN, which is co-chaired by the RC and the minister of finance and development planning.²⁵ At the working level, a UNDAF core team comprises members of the UNCT, the government of Liberia, and civil society organizations, including those working on issues related to gender, human rights, persons with disabilities, and youth.²⁶ The core team has led a number of consultation workshops with the government, international development partners, civil society actors, and the UN, culminating in a validation workshop in February 2019.

ALIGNING INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS WITH NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE UN COUNTRY TEAM

In an effort to ensure coherence with national priorities, the draft UNDAF has been closely aligned with the government's new national development plan—the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD)—using the same four thematic pillars: human development; the economy and jobs; sustaining the peace; and governance and transparency.²⁷ Each of these pillars has a series of outputs and indicators with which the UNDAF has aligned itself. This is a significant shift from the previous UNDAF, which had seventeen strategic outcomes, and shows a commitment by the UN to ensure its work is in line with the government of Liberia's goals and nationally agreed upon priorities.²⁸

In a move to further align with national actors, the UN and the Liberian government have created joint coordination committees associated with the

different pillars of the UNDAF, each led by a government representative. The UNCT is also working with international development partners and government offices to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework based on the PAPD and UNDAF indicators and aims to have a centralized progress-tracking system, further ensuring coherence and communication between project implementers.²⁹ As the process to finalize the UNDAF is ongoing, UNICEF, UNDP, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and the World Food Programme (WFP) are all working to revise their country strategies to align with both the UN and the national plans, illustrating a commitment to unite individual programs under one vision for the UNCT.³⁰

In a further effort to drive forward collaboration within the UNCT, as of March 2018, all UN agencies, funds, and programs, plus the African Union (AU) office in Liberia, have consolidated from fourteen different buildings in Monrovia into one complex, the One UN House, in the Pan African Plaza.³¹ This move has increased coherence and integration among UN agencies. It has strengthened UN programming, harmonized business processes, and improved service delivery, with tangible cost savings of over \$1 million per year and benefits as simple as car sharing and meeting coordination.³²

Another effort to encourage coherence among UN actors is the RCO's weekly analysis of key developments and risks in the country. This is based on information received from UN agencies as well as on media reports and government analysis and is shared with the UNCT, the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the Economic Community of West African States

²⁴ The Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index is a tool designed to measure peace in societies around the world. In order to achieve this ambitious goal, it examines two main components of peace—reconciliation and social cohesion—and the intricate relationship between them. It also looks at culturally specific components of peace that vary across contexts and help complete and enrich the analysis. See www.scoreforpeace.org/en/liberia/2018-General%20population-0.

²⁵ Interview with UNDP team in Monrovia, Liberia, January 2019.

²⁶ United Nations in Liberia, "UNDAF Roadmap," October 2018.

²⁷ Interview with UNDP official, Monrovia, January 2019.

²⁸ United Nations in Liberia, "UNDAF Roadmap."

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ These four agencies have a similar planning cycle and have to have their new country programs approved by a joint executive board in the latter half of 2019. Thus, the process aligns with the preparation of the UNDAF. Ibid.

³¹ The agencies and offices based within the Pan African House are: the RCO, UNDP, the UN Department of Safety and Security, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, UNICEF, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, UN Women, the UN Refugee Agency, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Office for Project Services, the Food and Agriculture Organization, UNAIDS, the UN Industrial Development Organization, UNESCO, UN Clinic, the UN Population Fund, the International Organization for Migration, the AU, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, and the Cities Alliance. UN in Liberia, "Resident Coordinator a.i. Transition Update for Liberia," July 9, 2018, provided by UN official from the Peacebuilding Support Office.

³² Forti and Connolly, "The Mission is Gone, but the UN Is Staying"; interview with UNDP officials, Monrovia, January 2019.

(ECOWAS), the AU, international development partners, and UN entities in New York. This brief informs discussions on joint entry points and responses as well as the UNCT's planning and programming discussions. The UNCT sees it as a commitment from the RCO to drive forward a coherent and integrated approach to sustaining peace in Liberia.³³

Additionally, the RCO shares RC El Hillo's daily schedule with the entire UNCT at the start of the day, outlining whom he is meeting with and the agenda he is following. This move, while seemingly small, allows UN agencies to follow how the RC is operating in Liberia and share any relevant information they may have or coordinate approaches to addressing challenges and issues facing the country. Members of the UNCT have praised this practice as promoting cooperation and information sharing.³⁴

Despite these moves in the right direction, there is no integrated risk analysis that can be shared among UN agencies. One challenge to developing such an integrated analysis is the fact that each UN agency has a different mandate and target beneficiaries and therefore views risk differently. It may be unrealistic or unnecessary to establish one coherent risk analysis for the entire UNCT. However, the UN should, at a minimum, develop processes for stakeholders—including the government and international development and financial partners—to share and discuss their separate analyses to ensure a common understanding of risks and determine which actors are best placed to respond to them.

It is too early to conclude whether efforts to achieve operational and policy coherence in Liberia have resulted in more programs and activities that effectively contribute to long-term peace in the country. As the development of the UNDAF and country strategy documents conclude and attention turns to implementation, the UNCT

needs to ensure that these overarching plans are integrated into project plans and thus result in truly integrated approaches to programming. In practical terms, such programming would combine activities across sectors, recognize the comparative advantages of different actors, acknowledge the interconnected nature of challenges facing the country, and support the government's development priorities.³⁵

Leadership: The Role of the Resident Coordinator

Strong leaders can articulate a strategic plan for sustaining peace in the field. As defined in the secretary-general's report, setting the direction for implementing the peacebuilding and sustaining peace resolutions is largely the onus of the senior leadership in a mission, specifically the RC and the RCO. RCs are “responsible for coordinating development strategies that are risk informed and help to build peaceful and inclusive societies.”³⁶ The secretary-general has advocated for empowered and impartial RCs to drive forward efforts aimed at sustaining peace in the field.³⁷

In Liberia, the new configuration has provided much-needed leadership, personnel, and tools for sustaining peace.³⁸ The RC now plays a coordinating and bridging role between all operational development activities and agencies in support of the country's efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda, as well as between the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, international donors and development partners, the government of Liberia, and civil society.³⁹ As an assistant secretary-general and the former head of UNMIL and resident and humanitarian coordinator, RC El Hillo in particular has seniority and knowledge of the context and actors. This allows him to effectively play a good offices role at critical moments and lessens the loss of contextual

³³ Interview with UNDP officials, Monrovia, January 2019.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ UN Development Group, “Principles for Integrated Programming,” available at <https://undg.org/programme/undaf-guidance/principles-for-integrated-programming/>.

³⁶ UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General*, p. 7.

³⁷ United Nations, “Presenting Reinvigorated Resident Coordinator System Plan, Secretary-General Urges Member States to Fully Support, Fund United Nations Development System Reforms,” Press Release, UN Doc. SG/SM/19206-DEV/3349, September 11, 2018.

³⁸ Interview with officials in UNDP country office, Monrovia, February 2019

³⁹ Interview with UNDP, New York, February 2019; interview with Yacoub El Hillo, Monrovia, July 2018.

Box 1. Overview of the UN's development system reform

On January 1, 2019, the UN development system reform, including the Implementation Plan for the Reinvigorated Resident Coordinator System, took effect. Previously, the resident coordinator (RC)—who was also, in most cases, UNDP’s in-country resident representative (RR)—generally reported to the UNDP administrator as both the designated resident representative of UNDP and the coordinator of the UN country team (UNCT) as a whole. Now, these two roles are separate.⁴⁰

The resident representative remains UNDP’s designated official in-country and the main actor supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, the RCs’ role has been expanded to make them the “highest-ranking development representatives of the United Nations development system.”⁴¹ This includes responsibility for strategic planning, integrated policy support, system-wide monitoring and evaluation, and strategic partnerships. RCs are meant to work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and to support the implementation of the core tenets of sustaining peace at the country level both within the UN and by national actors.⁴² The RCs are supported in-country by strengthened RCOs that serve as hubs for system-wide coordination, partnerships, and information sharing.

At the country level, the development system reforms have established clear dual reporting lines from all country team members to their respective agencies (as well as periodically to the RC). In terms of reporting from country level to headquarters, the RC reports directly to the secretary-general through the Development Coordination Office (DCO), which is overseen by the UN deputy-secretary-general. The resident representative, on the other hand, reports to UNDP headquarters through the department’s regional bureau directors. In addition, the RC is also expected to report to the secretary-general and to the host government on the implementation of the UN development assistance framework (UNDAF).⁴³

At headquarters, the reforms clarify the reporting structure and relationship between the DCO and UNDP within the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG). The UNSDG is the high-level interagency forum for joint policy formulation and decision making across the UN development system. It is chaired by the UN deputy secretary-general, while the UNDP administrator serves as vice chair, overseeing the coordination of development operations in 165 countries and territories. Under the collective ownership of the UNSDG—and reporting to the deputy secretary-general as its chair—the DCO oversees and manages the RC system. The DCO also provides advisory services to the UNCTs, drawing on inputs from all the members of the UNSDG. These new reporting structures both at the country level and in headquarters are expected to create more “robust lines of accountability, from UNCTs to host governments, from the Resident Coordinator (RC) to the Secretary-General, as well as between [the] RC and heads of UN entities at the country level.”⁴⁴

With the UN development system reforms, UNDP is no longer the primary funder for the RC system; rather, the system is funded through a three-tiered formula adopted by the General Assembly in Resolution 72/279 and managed by DCO.⁴⁵ The secretary-general has estimated that \$281 million is needed to fund the RC system and had initially hoped that the majority of that money would come from assessed contributions. To date, twenty-eight member states and nineteen UN entities have contributed to the Special Purpose Trust Fund for the RC system. This amounts to close to \$190 million in pledges, commitments, and contributions received, leaving a gap of almost \$90 million.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ United Nations Sustainable Development Group, “Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System (v4)” (draft), February 18, 2019.

⁴¹ UN General Assembly Resolution 72/279 (June 1, 2018), UN Doc. A/RES/72/279, p. 2.

⁴² ECOSOC, “The Reinvigorated Resident Coordinator System: Explanatory Note,” February 2018, available at www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/2_%20The%20reinvigorated%20Resident%20Coordinator%20system.pdf.

⁴³ United Nations Sustainable Development Group, “Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System (v4)” (draft), February 18, 2019.

⁴⁴ United Nations, “Development Reform,” available at <https://reform.un.org/content/development-reform>.

⁴⁵ One-third is funded by voluntary contributions from member states; one-third by UN agencies through a cost-sharing formula that takes into account size and ability to pay; and one-third through a 1 percent levy on all third-party, non-core contributions to UN development-related activities earmarked to a single agency or project. Ibid.

⁴⁶ United Nations Open Data Portal for the Special Purpose Trust Fund, available at <https://soc.un.org/SPTF/>.

knowledge and relationships at a time of transition.

In support of the RC, the political, peace, and development unit acts as a centralized body for political and conflict analysis and has a mandate to build national capacity for conflict prevention. This unit is supported by a senior political affairs officer and two peace and development advisers deployed by the UNDP and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) through their Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention.⁴⁷ This unit supports the RC in his good offices role, feeds into the process of developing the UNDAF, maintains contacts with political and civil society networks, and communicates with senior officials in government and the international community.⁴⁸ However, the effectiveness of the unit's peace and development advisers depends on their personal relationships with other members of the RCO and wider UNCT. With a change in country presence post-UNMIL, and in the midst of UN development system reforms that directly affect the RC and RCO, it will take time to see whether this unit will be effective in translating conflict analysis into more conflict-sensitive programming throughout the UNCT.⁴⁹

While the appointment of the former UNDP resident representative as RC lessens the impact of the delinking of these two roles, RC El Hillo faces a number of challenges related to the development system reforms. These include the effects (both intended and unintended) of changes in long-term programmatic responsibilities, the relationship between the RC and the UNDP resident representative, the lack of a reporting obligation, the limited formal communication structures, and financing shortfalls.⁵⁰ The convoluted reporting lines pose a particular challenge. While the RC leads and

supports the UNCT and leads the UNCT's engagement with the host state, UN agencies are firstly accountable to their respective headquarters for their individual mandates and only secondarily to the RC for collective results as defined in the UNDAF. Because the RC leads the UNCT, there is an expectation that individual agencies will report to the RC, but this is not obligatory and formal communication structures are limited. This places much of the burden of installing new reporting systems on RC El Hillo's leadership.⁵¹

In addition, the RCO lacks reliable financing or sustainable staffing, meaning that valuable time is being focused on the logistics of the change and on fundraising for the office rather than on programming around sustaining peace.⁵² Its funding in Liberia relies on ad hoc support from a number of sources. Sweden has seconded a peace and development adviser to the RCO. Norway funded the deployment of a gender adviser from January to July 2018 and is currently providing funding for the chief of political affairs, head of the political, peace, and development unit, twelve UN volunteers, the political affairs specialist, the field liaison specialist, and the three national officers. Further, all agreements with service providers and cost-recovery arrangements had to be renegotiated between UNDP and the RCO with a memorandum of understanding signed for each issue area.⁵³ Currently, UNDP backstops the salary of the RC, but this must be reimbursed from the Development Coordination Office's (DCO) budget until long-term funding is secured.⁵⁴ As of April 2019, funding for the RCO had been secured until the end of 2019. However, beyond 2019 it is unclear where funding will come from, leaving the long-term future of Liberia's RCO (and the new RC system more broadly) in a precarious state.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ The senior political affairs officer was formerly head of UNMIL's political affairs unit, and one of the peace and development advisers was also formerly part of this unit. This joint program was developed in 2004 and has strengthened the conflict-prevention capacities of national stakeholders, RCs, and UNCTs in more than sixty countries. In 2017, there were forty-eight peace and development advisers worldwide under this program. The program has been praised for helping countries in transition build capacities for peace. See UNDP, "Joint UNDP-DPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention—Annual Report 2016," May 2017.

⁴⁸ UNDP, "UNDP Mission Report: Supporting Peaceful Transitions and Sustainable Development Pathways in Liberia," Mission Review Report, September 2017.

⁴⁹ Sara Pantuliano, Victoria Metcalfe-Hough, and Alastair McKechnie, with Andy Carl, Ashley Jackson, Pilar Domingo and Rima Al-Azar, "The Capacities of UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes to Sustain Peace: An Independent Review," Overseas Development Institute, February 2018.

⁵⁰ Ana Maria Lebada, "UNDP Administrator Updates Member States on Resident Coordinator System Reforms," International Institute for Sustainable Development SDG Knowledge Hub, December 4, 2018.

⁵¹ Interview with UNDP official, Monrovia, January 2019.

⁵² Interview with UN Secretariat official, New York, July 2018.

⁵³ Service agreements include those related to petrol, printers, stationery, and other supplies. Skype interview with UNDP officials in Liberia, January 2019.

⁵⁴ UNDP is still paying the salaries of staff in the RCO. Once DCO has secured the necessary funds for this, it will reimburse UNDP.

⁵⁵ UN in Liberia, "Resident Coordinator's Update to the PBC for Liberia," January 31, 2019, available at https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/20190131_pbc_csc_liberia_chairs_summary_.pdf.

Partnerships: Local Ownership, Regional Anchors, and International Support

Government policy priorities need support from a wide range of actors at the international, regional, subregional, national, and local levels to ensure the success of long-term prevention work. In Liberia, all stakeholders have a role to play, especially the AU, ECOWAS, the national government, political parties, civil society, and the Liberian population writ large. Political participation, information sharing, integrated planning, and joint implementation of programs all benefit from close strategic and operational partnerships at every level.

WORKING WITH THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

President George Weah ran on a campaign of addressing corruption, generating private sector engagement, working with youth and encouraging job creation, and increasing transparency and respect for rights and democracy. In order to actualize these promises, the government has modeled its Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) on its previous development plan (the Agenda for Transformation 2012–2017) and its Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation for 2013–2013. The PAPD is also informed by lessons learned from the implementation of the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy (2007) and Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008–2011). The PAPD has four pillars:

1. Power to the people: Empower Liberians “through more equitable provision of opportunities in education, health, youth development, and social protection”;
2. The economy and jobs: Achieve economic stability and create jobs “through effective resource mobilization and prudent management of economic inclusion”;
3. Sustaining the peace: Promote “a cohesive

society for sustainable development”; and

4. Governance and transparency: Develop “an inclusive and accountable public sector for shared prosperity and sustainable development.”⁵⁶

The PAPD connects to the SDGs at the surface level, with sixteen development outcomes across these four pillars. The plan also outlines a commitment to achieve 120 national targets over the next five years. It has taken an integrated approach, connecting peace and development issues and recognizing the interconnected nature of the challenges facing the country.⁵⁷

The plan costs approximately \$6.2 billion over five years, with an anticipated funding gap of \$1 billion. Partners, including UN agencies, have advised the government to consider reducing the cost of the PAPD by prioritizing more urgent interventions, as well as considering its own budgetary and absorptive capacities. Liberia is still heavily reliant on grants from donors, which are expected to account for 47 percent of resources mobilized toward the PAPD.⁵⁸ In 2017, official development assistance (ODA) accounted for 21 percent of gross national income and 92 percent of gross capital formation (see Figure 1).⁵⁹ Relying this heavily on aid is a risk and a source of uncertainty for the PAPD. Added to this, the growth projection for 2019 has been lowered to 0.4 percent—down from an initial estimate of 4.9 percent—due to the rapidly growing inflation rate and drop in commodity prices.⁶⁰

The UN is undertaking some initiatives to support the government in achieving the PAPD. For example, the UNDAF is directly connected to the priority areas of the PAPD. As a result, all programming by the UN toward meeting the goals of the UNDAF should directly contribute toward meeting the goals of the PAPD.⁶¹ There are also now established mechanisms through which the RC and the Weah administration are coordinating. Each priority area of the PAPD has a working

⁵⁶ Government of Liberia, “Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development,” November 2018, p. xiii.

⁵⁷ Liberian Minister of Finance and Planning briefing to the PBC, New York, January 2019.

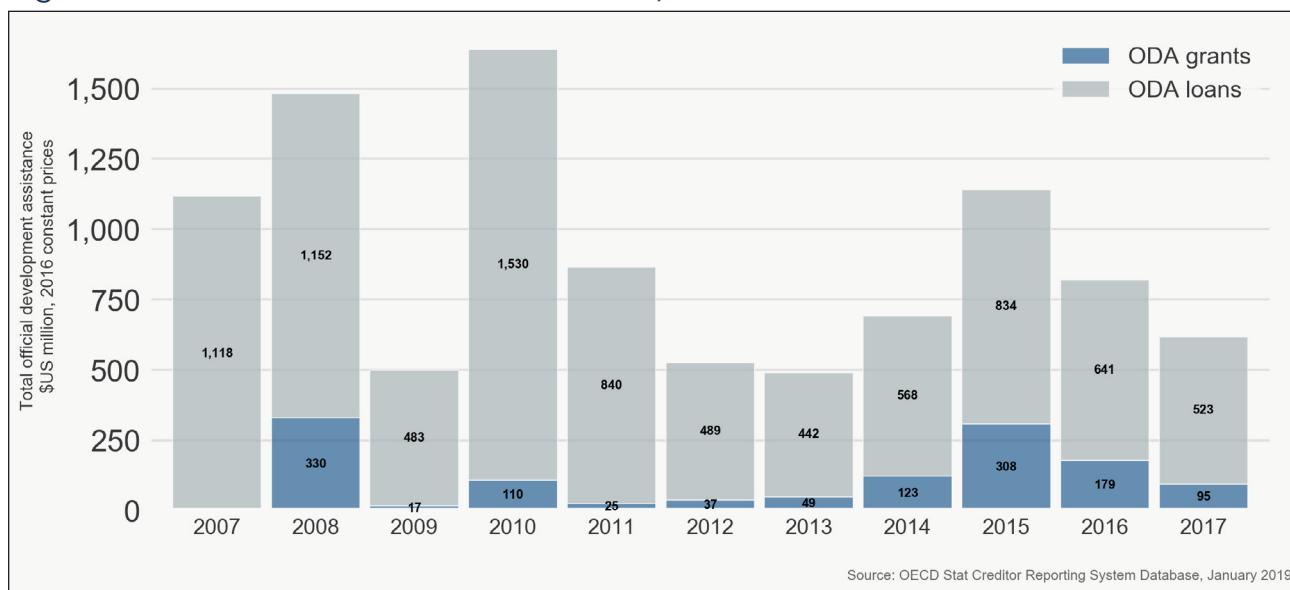
⁵⁸ Government of Liberia, “Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development,” Chapter 7.

⁵⁹ World Bank, available at <https://data.worldbank.org/country/liberia>.

⁶⁰ Africa News, “IMF Cuts Liberia’s 2019 Growth Forecast,” March 10, 2019, available at <https://www.africanews.com/2019/03/10/imf-cuts-liberia-s-2019-growth-forecast/>.

⁶¹ UN in Liberia, “Resident Coordinators Update to the PBC for Liberia,” January 31, 2019.

Figure 1. Gross ODA disbursement to Liberia, 2007–2017



group that includes a member of the UNCT. The PAPD National Steering Committee is chaired by the president and brings together key ministers and representatives of five key development partners, including the UN. Further, in what has been praised as a unique innovation within the UN system, both government representatives and the RC appear jointly in meetings of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, which was used as a platform to launch the PAPD in New York in January 2019.⁶² The RC was also present for Weah's January 2019 state of the union address in January 2019.

The UN and donors also collaborate with the government on financial support. The Liberia Multi-Partner Trust Fund (LMPTF) has a dedicated national window, which allows it to fund government entities and initiatives directly. The LMPTF's steering committee (co-chaired by the RC and the minister of finance and development planning, and made up of Liberian government and UN officials, donors, and civil society organi-

zations) sets its funding priorities. As a result, the Liberian government exerts some ownership over approved projects.⁶³ Additionally, most of the PBF's fourteen current projects have a government department as an implementing partner, and the more recent projects tie directly to PAPD priority areas.⁶⁴

One example of an effective joint UN–government of Liberia initiative is the PBF's support to establish and run the Peacebuilding Office in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (from 2008 through to the present). This office coordinates, monitors and evaluates, and supports all PBF projects on national reconciliation, justice, and security in Liberia.⁶⁵ Additionally, it provides advice to the government of Liberia in the implementation of programs that contribute to the peace and reconciliation deliverables in the Agenda for Transformation and now in the PAPD.⁶⁶ This office is a useful tool to connect the government and the UN to ensure coordination and collaboration, providing an example of how the UN could support the government directly

⁶² The PAPD was launched in Liberia on November 20, 2018.

⁶³ United Nations, "Liberia Multi-Partner Trust Fund Terms of Reference," 2017, available at https://www.undp.org/content/dam/unct/liberia/img/documents/Draft_TOR_Liberia%20Transition_MPTF_revised_with_NY_comments_1_December_2017.pdf.

⁶⁴ Interview with senior PBF staff member, New York, September 2018.

⁶⁵ UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) Office, "Project Factsheet: PBF/LBR/H-1: Support to the Liberia Peacebuilding Office for Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation, Communication and Capacity Building in Conflict Management," available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/project/00088471>; "Project Factsheet: PBF/LBR/E-2 Government of Liberia Peacebuilding Office," available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/project/00066681>; "Project Factsheet: PBF/LBR/A-6 Strengthening Liberian Government Capacity to Consolidate Peace," available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/project/00070702>.

⁶⁶ UN MPTF Office, "Project Factsheet: PBF/LBR/A-15: Support to the Liberia Peacebuilding Office (PBO) to Coordinate the Implementation of the Government Overall Peacebuilding and Reconciliation, Provide Peacebuilding Advice, and Strengthen National Entities," available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/project/00099192>.

in the future.

Despite this work on sustaining peace, progress has been slow while Liberians' expectations are increasing. President Weah's commitment to decentralize the government has not moved ahead, and he has been unilaterally appointing officials to agencies such as the Liberia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. In November 2018, he introduced legislation that undermines the independence of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission and Public Procurement and Concessions Commission by placing them under presidential control.⁶⁷ Concerns increased further when, in early January 2019, Weah appointed a new ambassador to the US without Senate confirmation, as required by the constitution.⁶⁸

Moreover, the process to finalize the PAPD took much longer than expected, and the implementation phase is only just starting. Partnerships between the government, UN, and all international actors and donors will be critical to ensure the coordinated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and PAPD and the delivery of equitable public services.

PARTNERSHIP WITH REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL BODIES

With the drawdown of UNMIL and transition to the UNCT, eighty-six UN field offices outside Monrovia closed. As of January 2019, the only UN entities with a presence outside Monrovia were the World Health Organization (WHO), UN Population Fund, UNICEF, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and a small cadre of national UN volunteers. As such, regional and subregional organizations play "a key role in the peaceful settlement of disputes, through preventative diplomacy, confidence-building and mediation efforts."⁶⁹ These organizations are often seen to understand the context and networks of actors. As such, the secretary-general's report advocates for the UN to engage more regularly with regional and subregional actors on information sharing, coordi-

nation, and joint analysis, planning, approaches, and activities in both headquarters and the field.⁷⁰

One area where regional organizations have played a strong role since the civil war is in setting up robust early warning and early response mechanisms. One example is when ECOWAS, together with the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and with support from the UN and the government of Liberia, established the Election Situation Room as part of the Liberia Elections Early Warning and Response Group.⁷¹ In place for the 2017 presidential elections, this group was effective at quickly defusing tense situations by sending community leaders to mediate among parties and dispel rumors as they arose. This platform was part of the West Africa Early Warning and Early Response Network, managed by WANEP and operational throughout West Africa. This system trains community members to safely and anonymously identify and report on conflict indicators and quickly feeds this information to policymakers.⁷²

More broadly, ECOWAS plays a prominent role in filling programming gaps both outside and within Monrovia, in light of the downsized UN presence. For instance, ECOWAS holds a monthly meeting with civil society organizations, international organizations and donors, and UN entities in Monrovia where civil society has an opportunity to update attendees on their programming on democracy and human rights and to share concerns or challenges. These monthly meetings situate ECOWAS at the center of engagement with local and international actors and contribute to more effective analysis, information sharing, and programming. As part of efforts to sustain initiatives developed by UNMIL, ECOWAS has also taken over management of the former UN Radio (now known as ECOWAS Radio) and uses this to communicate with a wide audience in the country.⁷³

ECOWAS has also started to complement the

⁶⁷ Ibrahim Al-Bakri Nyei, "Liberia: How Is President Weah Faring One Year On?" *African Arguments*, January 22, 2019.

⁶⁸ J. Burgess Carter, "Senate May Request Recall of 'Ambassador' Patten, Weah's Handpicked Envoy," *Daily Observer*, January 17, 2019.

⁶⁹ UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General*.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Interview with ECOWAS ambassador to Liberia, Monrovia, July 2018.

⁷² Economic Community of West African States, "ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework Portal," available at <http://ecpf.ecowas.int/components/early-warning/>.

⁷³ Interview with representative of AU office in Liberia, Monrovia, July 2018.

funding role the UN plays by providing small grants to civil society organizations to undertake activities in support of sustaining peace. One example is ECOWAS's financial support to Camp for Peace Liberia to work with youth to serve as "peace ambassadors." These youth monitored their communities in the run-up to and during the 2017 elections and liaised with early warning centers reporting on potential risks.⁷⁴

Through its liaison office in Liberia, the AU sees itself as having a similar function as the resident coordinator's office in the country: to monitor progress on peace and stability, identify risks, and communicate back to AU member states and the headquarters in Addis Ababa.⁷⁵ The AU liaison office in Liberia supports, observes, and monitors the implementation of the peace agreement and engages in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction activities in collaboration with partners. The partnership between the UN and the AU is governed by a number of signed agreements between the two organizations, including the Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security.⁷⁶ On the ground, the AU is coordinating political engagement between the UN and AU headquarters, which improves their alignment on governance and reconciliation policies.⁷⁷ Further, the UN, AU, and ECOWAS coordinated at the headquarters level to avoid a simultaneous withdrawal of the regional presence in Liberia when UNMIL departed. Both the AU and ECOWAS now regularly share information with the UN and have been part of the finalization exercise for the UNDAF and PAPD.⁷⁸

Because of their close relationship, the UN, AU, and ECOWAS have been aligned on political engagement and norms and policies on governance

and reconciliation. They also have a shared understanding of the central role the regional partners will play in the country in the long term.⁷⁹ For instance, they have issued joint statements to show their unity, including in November 2018 during Liberia's post-election violence, and maintained unified messaging around respect for the constitution in light of the president's recent actions. The organizations are also located in close proximity to each other: the AU has moved into the Pan African Plaza with the UN, and ECOWAS is in an adjacent building, which promotes continuous dialogue. This reflects stronger partnerships between the UN and AU at the headquarters level through frameworks such as the AU-UN Framework on Implementation of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 and the AU Peace Fund, whose board has two seats for the UN.⁸⁰

SUPPORTING CIVIL SOCIETY ON THE GROUND

Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Liberia played an important role in the peace process, including the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace led by Nobel Peace Prize-winner Leymah Gbowee. The 2016 Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index found that civil society and faith-based institutions in Liberia are trusted more than state organs.⁸¹ Civil society can be a key source of resilience, providing ideas, exerting influence, and setting agendas with the goal of preventing conflict and sustaining peace.

The UN has made some positive efforts to work with civil society to address the roots causes of the conflict in Liberia. For example, the PBF, UNDP, and Food and Agriculture Organization, in collaboration with the government, have funded CSOs to establish multi-stakeholder platforms in three

⁷⁴ Interview with director of Camps for Peace team, New York, February 2019.

⁷⁵ Report of AU representative to Liberia at PBC meeting, New York, January 2019.

⁷⁶ United Nations and African Union, "Joint UN-AU Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security," April 19, 2017, available at https://unoau.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/joint_un-au_framework_for_an_enhanced_partnership_in_peace_and_security.pdf.

⁷⁷ Interview with diplomat, Monrovia, July 2018.

⁷⁸ Report of AU representative at PBC meeting, New York, January 2019.

⁷⁹ Report of the AU representative to Liberia at PBC meeting, New York, January 2019.

⁸⁰ The AU's Agenda 2063 is the overarching strategic framework that outlines Africa's goals related to sustaining and inclusive development. AU Commission, "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want," April 2015. The AU Peace Fund enables the AU to finance its operational peace and security activities, including mediation and preventive diplomacy as well as peace support operations. It was endowed with \$325 million in 2017, with the intended total to be \$400 million by 2020 raised through a levy. The endowment is meant to be a maximum that is replenished when necessary (ideally annually). AU Peace Fund, "Securing Predictable and Sustainable Financing for Peace in Africa," August 2016.

⁸¹ Organs of the state such as the legislature, the Supreme Court, magisterial courts, local authorities, and police are mistrusted by over 50 percent of people. Christian leaders (88 percent), Muslim leaders (72 percent), CSOs (71 percent), and Palava Huts (62 percent) are seen as more credible. See Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index for Liberia, 2016, available at <http://scoreforpeace.org/en/liberia/2016-General%20population-1>. Email correspondence with Ilke Dagli, head of operations for the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD) and manager of the SCORE Index, May 2018.

hotspots to bring together communities and concession companies to resolve land disputes peacefully. This program targets a leading source of conflict by providing mediation services, encouraging new cultivation and market opportunities to diversify livelihood opportunities, and reducing communities' dependence on concession companies. These multi-stakeholder platforms illustrate how civil society and the UN can collaborate in conceptualizing approaches to and engaging in conflict prevention in a way that goes beyond "check-the-box" inclusion.⁸²

Another example is the collaboration between the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) and UN Women to support the work of the Peace Huts—an informal network of an estimated 23,000 individuals based in thirteen of Liberia's fifteen counties.⁸³ The Peace Huts aim to provide safe spaces for women to express themselves on issues related to reconciliation and peacebuilding. They also support women's economic empowerment through microfinancing, farming, and other initiatives, help women access justice, and engage in protest actions, often in marginalized communities to which the UN does not have access.⁸⁴ The huts are linked to the aforementioned concessions projects through the multi-stakeholder platforms to promote collaboration among peacebuilding initiatives supported by the UN and to ensure the participation of women in conflict prevention mechanisms. This initiative recognizes that the UN is not the principal peacebuilding actor in Liberia and ensures that it is able to support work across the country despite its limited presence outside of Monrovia.

A third example is the partnership between UNDP and Naymote Partners for Democratic Development, a CSO working to advance dialogue among young people. Prior to the 2017 elections, Naymote and UNDP held eight dialogues with young people and youth stakeholders, three fora to promote reconciliation among youth in different political parties, and a series of media engagements

and community mobilization events. Following the elections, UNDP has continued supporting Naymote to work with political parties and youth leagues and to convene dialogues among young political activists.⁸⁵ In addition to this, Naymote has created a platform called the Presidential Meter Project, which tracks the implementation of President Weah's campaign promises. This could be a useful tool in tracking implementation of the PAPD and analyzing where more support is necessary to meet political goals.

Despite these examples, the UN still struggles to engage meaningfully and systematically with CSOs. Some CSOs are confused over who is part of the UN and perceive the UN to have left the country along with the peacekeeping mission.⁸⁶ Others feel confused and frustrated after trying to engage, citing overly bureaucratic institutions and unclear or overlapping mandates. A high level of staff turnover within the UN also means that relationships are frequently lost.⁸⁷ Funding relationships are also difficult, as donors often require financial and organizational documentation many local CSOs do not have. Further, UN support is usually project-specific, making it harder for small CSOs to sustain their work in the long term.

International Support for Sustaining Peace: The Need for Long-Term, Flexible, and Reliable Funding

A significant portion of the recommendations in the secretary-general's report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace focus on the need for more international support in terms of both innovative financing models for peacebuilding work done by the UN and national actors as well as support from the inter-governmental bodies in New York, specifically the Peacebuilding Commission, to sustain the attention on countries working to sustain the peace.

⁸² UN MPTF Office, "Project Factsheet: PBF/IRF-230: Strengthening Conflict Prevention through Establishment of Multi-Stakeholder Platforms and Improved Alternative Livelihoods in Concession Areas," available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/project/00108368>.

⁸³ Interview with WIPNET and WANEP team, Monrovia, April 2018. WANEP also supports the Peace Huts.

⁸⁴ Aaron Weah, "Building Networks for Peace in Liberia," in *Δ*, edited by Lesley Connolly and Laura Powers, International Peace Institute, 2018.

⁸⁵ Naymote Partners for Democratic Development, "About Us," available at <http://naymote.com/legislative-engagement/>.

⁸⁶ Interview with WIPNET and WANEP team, Monrovia, April 2018.

⁸⁷ Interview with Camps for Peace team, Monrovia, July 2018.

THE UNITED NATIONS FUNDING MECHANISM FOR SUSTAINING PEACE

There are two UN funding tools for sustaining peace in Liberia: the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the Liberia Multi-Partner Trust Fund (LMPTF). The PBF is a central tool for sustaining peace and one arm of the overall UN peacebuilding architecture, created to “mobilize emergency financing and bridge the vast divide between funding needs and funding availability.” It provides rapid, flexible contributions “for interventions seen as too ‘risk-laden’ for more conventional funding streams.”⁸⁸ The PBF is particularly useful during mission transitions, when it can prevent or lessen the impact of the financial cliff once peacekeeping funding ends.

Liberia has received \$64 million from the PBF for peacebuilding projects since it became eligible in 2008.⁸⁹ The current portfolio is \$21 million (for 2017–2019), centered on five areas that connect directly to Liberia’s PAPD: women’s empowerment, youth political engagement and employment, legislative reform and human rights, the peaceful management of concession-related conflicts, and reconciliation. In 2008, the PBF set up a steering committee in Liberia consisting of government, civil society, and UN representatives to promote inclusive decision making and monitor implementation of peacebuilding programming.

Despite having clear priority areas and the goal of mitigating the financial cliff with flexible and fast funding, there are still various, and at times conflicting, views on what the PBF should fund. One such area is direct financial support to staff positions and the operations of the UNCT and RCO. Because staff support is not a peacebuilding project, the PBF does not make financial contributions to support office operations directly. However, many donors expressed a desire to see

the PBF fill this gap, as they, too, are not willing to fund these operational elements. This leaves a lack of financing for operations within the UNCT.⁹⁰

One innovation by the PBF to support programming on the ground has been its Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative. This initiative allows the PBF to directly support local civil society organizations working in the areas of gender and youth rather than funding them through UN agencies. In Liberia, three projects have been funded through this initiative in 2017: one strengthening women’s rights and participation in peacebuilding in Liberia;⁹¹ one working to build and support national networks of women in Liberia using film to support peace and stability;⁹² and one working to advance women’s human rights, focusing specifically on Liberia’s peace and security commitments through its National Action Plan (NAP) on women peace and security and the provision of women friendly services in the security sector.⁹³ This initiative has given local peacebuilding actors access to the PBF. However, the application requirements remain too arduous for most small civil society organizations, meaning that the funds often do not reach some of the most important potential beneficiaries.

The UN’s second funding tool for sustaining peace, the Liberia Multi-Partner Trust Fund, was established in 2017 as the “United Nations system’s principal financing mechanism for supporting programs designed to sustain peace in Liberia following UNMIL’s withdrawal.”⁹⁴ It is intended to mitigate the financial cliff after UNMIL drew down and compensate for the limitations of the PBF. It is expected to provide predictable funding to support the implementation of the SDGs and sustaining peace. Specifically, between 2018 and 2020, the LMPTF will fund projects that address the conflict triggers and immediate risks outlined in the PAPD

⁸⁸ UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Challenge of Sustaining Peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture*, p. 44. In 2017, the PBF allocated \$157 million for thirty-one countries and received \$97 million from thirty-four contributors.

⁸⁹ UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “Trust Fund Fact Sheet: The Peacebuilding Fund,” available at http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/PB000?fund_status_month_to=9&fund_status_year_to=2017.

⁹⁰ Interview with representative of Swedish embassy, Monrovia, July 2018.

⁹¹ UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “Strengthening Women’s Rights and Participation in Liberia (NUNO),” PBF/IRF-150 (Project Factsheet), available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/project/00104810>.

⁹² UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “Reel Peace: Using Film to Support Stability in Liberia,” PBF/IRF-238 (Project Factsheet), available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/project/00109098>.

⁹³ UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, “Inclusive Security: Nothing for Us Without Us,” PBF/IRF-216 (Project Factsheet), available at <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/project/00108312>.

⁹⁴ UNDP, “UNDP Mission Report: Supporting Peaceful Transitions and Sustainable Development Pathways in Liberia,” September 2017. The LMPTF is dedicated exclusively to Liberia’s peacebuilding and development objectives, while the PBF provides support to at least forty countries and can only fund UN entities and occasionally civil society organizations.

and forthcoming UNDAF. The fund is designed to receive contributions from both traditional and nontraditional sources including governments, intergovernmental or nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and philanthropic organizations. While it encourages unrestricted funds, donors can earmark which outcomes they aim to support.⁹⁵ The fund has both a national and an international arm, meaning it can directly support both national bodies including the Liberian government as well as international organizations that work in Liberia.⁹⁶

While the LMPTF will likely serve a valuable role, it has struggled to raise sufficient reserves to fund activities. As of January 2019, the fund has received \$20 million dollars, of which \$5 million comes from the PBF. This is much lower than was anticipated and not enough to meet estimated costs. Criticisms have therefore been raised that this fund should have been operationalized much earlier (some suggesting as early as two years prior to the transition date) to capitalize on the attention Liberia received while still on the Security Council agenda.⁹⁷

The LMPTF's priorities are set by its steering committee. This committee comprises both Liberian and UN officials as well as civil society and international partners and oversees both the LMPTF and the use of the PBF in-country.⁹⁸ The integration of the PBF into the LMPTF has increased clarity on the differences between these two funding mechanisms and fostered coherent support to projects that contribute to the goals of both the UNDAF and the PAPD.⁹⁹ However, moving forward, there is a need for an increase in flexible, consistent, and long-term financial support to the LMPTF to ensure effective work on the ground.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

The secretary-general's report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace strongly emphasizes the need for member states to support governments in planning and implementing their development priorities, especially as these connect to the 2030 Agenda. It also calls on them to support "strategic resource mobilization... for predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding."¹⁰⁰ This includes looking for opportunities with the private sector and international development donors. In the case of Liberia, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, African Development Bank, United States, and European Union are the most significant international donors, each giving over \$100 million a year (see Figure 2).¹⁰¹ These donors aim to align their development assistance to the country's development frameworks, thereby complementing the UNCT's development objectives.

The World Bank's newest country partnership strategy with Liberia, covering 2019–2024, is an agreement with the government on how the bank can support Liberia in achieving sustainable, resilient, and pro-poor economic growth. Having been involved in the development of both the PAPD and the UNDAF, the World Bank aligned this strategy with both documents. It focuses on three core areas: "(i) strengthening institutions and creating an enabling environment for inclusive and sustainable growth; (ii) building human capital to seize new economic opportunities; and (iii) narrowing the infrastructure gap to foster equitable development nationwide."¹⁰²

The African Development Bank supports Liberia, a country it classifies as "in transition," through

⁹⁵ Interview with UN Secretariat official, New York, September 2018.

⁹⁶ Interview with UN Secretariat official, New York, July 2018.

⁹⁷ Interview with senior PBF staff member, New York, September 2018.

⁹⁸ United Nations, "Liberia Multi-Partner Trust Fund Terms of Reference," available at https://www.undp.org/content/dam/unct/liberia/img/documents/Draft_TOR_Liberia%20Transition_MPTF_revised_with_NY_comments_1_December_2017.pdf.

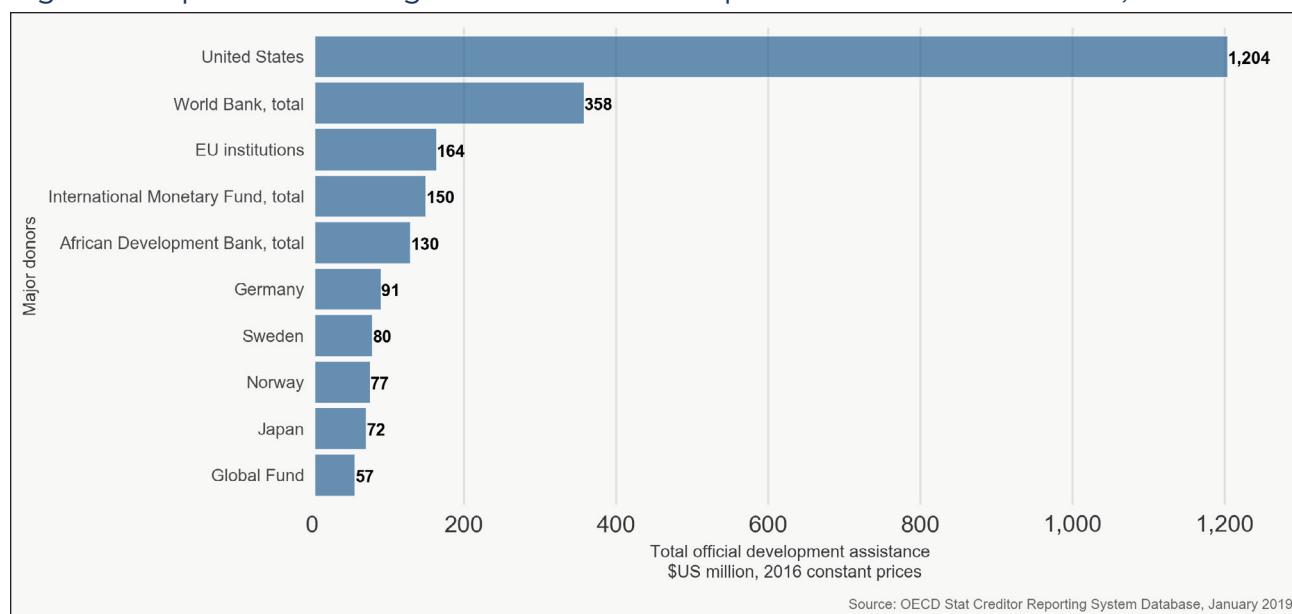
⁹⁹ Yacoub El Hillo, presentation at PBC meeting, New York, January 2019.

¹⁰⁰ UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General*.

¹⁰¹ Analysis prepared by Peacebuilding Strategy and Partnerships Branch, Peacebuilding Support Office, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. OECD Stat Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Database, available at <https://stats.oecd.org>.

¹⁰² World Bank, "FY19-FY24 Country Partnership Framework for the Republic of Liberia," October 26, 2018.

Figure 2. Top 10 donors of gross overseas development assistance in Liberia, 2015–2017



three financing mechanisms with resources from twenty-four donor countries.¹⁰³ Its broader development approach is to increase trade between Liberia and neighboring countries while encouraging greater private sector investment in the country, including through support to small and medium enterprises and microfinance.¹⁰⁴ Both the World Bank and the African Development Bank provide budgetary support to the new government and work with it to develop and operationalize the national development plan. These institutions prioritize infrastructure, particularly road maintenance—a gap left by the mission’s departure that the government does not yet have the capacity to fill.¹⁰⁵

Despite initially strong international involvement, donor fatigue is setting in. Many donors have wanted a finalized PAPD before releasing more funds, either through the LMPTF and PBF or bilaterally to the government, and it is unclear whether their commitments will move forward now that the development agenda is complete.¹⁰⁶ Norway, Sweden, and Germany also provided

significant financial support to the RCO in 2018.

When interviewed in July 2018, many within the international development and donor communities emphasized that they did not have the same level of interaction with the UNCT as they did with UNMIL, likely due to new processes that were being set up and change of staff.¹⁰⁷ Since then, however, RC El Hillo has instituted two forms of engagement to improve interaction. The first is weekly partner meetings, which are held at the One UN House with international development and financial partners including the World Bank, AU, and African Development Bank. These meetings allow for discussions on policy and strategy, information sharing, and collaboration. The second is a development coordination group co-chaired in rotation by the World Bank and US Agency for International Development (USAID) and joined by the government on an ad hoc basis, which meets monthly for joint strategic planning.¹⁰⁸ Further, there are monthly, informal, off-the-record meetings between the president, the RC, and other partners including ambassadors and donors

¹⁰³ The three financing windows are the African Development Bank, the African Development Fund, and the Nigerian Trust Fund. Interview with diplomat, Monrovia, July 2018.

¹⁰⁴ African Development Bank, “Liberia Economic Outlook,” available at www.afdb.org/en/countries/west-africa/liberia/.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with African Development Bank diplomats, Monrovia, July 2018.

¹⁰⁶ PBC Liberia country-specific configuration meeting, New York, January 2019.

¹⁰⁷ Interviews with diplomat, Monrovia, July 2018.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with UNDP official, Monrovia, January 2018.

to engage directly on key issues. These regular engagements allow for integrated planning, information sharing, and coordination of programming, which is helping to prevent duplication.

THE ROLE OF THE PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION IN SUPPORTING SUSTAINING PEACE

UN headquarters provides significant support for sustaining peace in Liberia. This is especially true of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), which, according to the secretary-general, “should become the advisory ‘bridge’ between relevant intergovernmental organs,”¹⁰⁹ connecting the peace and development aspects of the UN’s work and creating a space for regular discussions on countries in transition.¹¹⁰ As a bridge between the Security Council, ECOSOC, regional partners, and development actors, it can provide a space for discussing countries not on the Security Council agenda, facilitate early warning, and bring together actors to support and share information on countries undertaking peacebuilding efforts. During a transition process, as well as post-transition, this convening forum is invaluable for maintaining international attention and support.

The PBC can play a valuable, complementary role to the UNCT in Liberia. Liberia is a country-specific configuration on the PBC’s agenda, providing ample opportunity to discuss the country even after it shifted off the Security Council’s agenda with the withdrawal of UNMIL.¹¹¹ The chair of the PBC’s Liberia configuration, Olof Skoog, has been active in convening on Liberia. Between January 2017 and March 2018, five PBC meetings were held at the expert level and four at the ambassadorial level, bringing together UN entities from headquarters and the field, the national government, and regional actors. The PBC organized one trip to Monrovia in February 2013,

and Skoog visited the country twice during this period to build relations with the new government and the reconfigured UN presence on the ground during the transition process. The PBC also hosted Liberian ministers to share information between the UN and national counterparts and sustain the international community’s attention on Liberia.¹¹²

The PBC has provided space for discussion of Liberia’s PAPD, focusing on implementation. In 2018, the PBC decided to forgo an expansion of existing plans and commitments, keeping its focus on implementation of the PAPD.¹¹³ This has been a welcomed move, as it reduces the number of documents and focuses on priorities set by national actors.¹¹⁴ Additionally, the decision to prioritize the PAPD has promoted coherence between peacebuilding and development and led the PBC to look at and support Sierra Leone’s national development plan and consider its role doing so in other countries.¹¹⁵

The PBC also has the capacity to engage with the Security Council to communicate Liberia’s progress toward sustaining peace while acknowledging the challenges that remain. For example, through informal interactive dialogues, the PBC can brief the council ahead of discussions or a field visit, exchange views on peacebuilding challenges and needs, and share information on the work of the Peacebuilding Support Office financed through the PBF.¹¹⁶ Skoog in particular was able to highlight Liberia at the Security Council because his home country—Sweden—was on the council from January 1, 2017, to December 30, 2018, and served as the PBC’s Security Council liaison. This allowed him to bring a peacebuilding lens to the council’s discussions on Liberia and work with the deputy secretary-general to ensure that development and peace go hand in hand.¹¹⁷

The December 2018 Security Council presidential statement emphasized the role the PBC plays in

¹⁰⁹ United Nations, *The Challenge of Sustaining Peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture*, p. 8.

¹¹⁰ UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General*.

¹¹¹ A country-specific configuration allows the PBC to focus attention and tailor its approach to the particular needs of a country. Each configuration works closely with the national government to identify peacebuilding challenges and opportunities and develop recommendations for improving peacebuilding work.

¹¹² Interview with Swedish official, New York, January 2019.

¹¹³ Initially, as per the UN’s Peacebuilding Plan, the PBC was going to work with stakeholders in Liberia to develop a new statement of mutual cooperation and expand the second part of the Peacebuilding Plan guiding priorities for the new phase of the UN in Liberia.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Swedish official, New York, January 2019.

¹¹⁵ Interview with official from the Peacebuilding Support Office, New York, January 2019.

¹¹⁶ What’s In Blue, “Informal Interactive Dialogue with the Peacebuilding Commission on the Sahel,” March 19, 2019.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Swedish official, New York, January 2019.

providing an alternative perspective in council discussions. It stressed that the PBC must “align its work with the Council’s calendar and engage with the relevant actors to gather diverse perspectives well in advance of relevant Council meetings.”¹¹⁸ This offers an opportunity for the PBC to increase its interaction with the council as Germany takes over from Sweden as the bridge between the two bodies. In playing this connecting role, Germany can draw on both its past experience as vice-chair of the PBC as well as Sweden’s experience to ensure that the council is abreast of issues relating to Liberia.

The PBC can also provide space for Liberians to speak to people at UN headquarters about progress and challenges in their country, including financial needs—a role that remains important post-transition.¹¹⁹ The PBC should make a concerted effort to include the voices of CSOs, especially those located outside of the capital. Toward this end, the PBC could map peacebuilding actors in Liberia, highlighting the diverse and expansive range of peacebuilding initiatives, and identify gaps in resources and attention.¹²⁰ It could convene discussions on the LMPTF, the role it is envisioned to play, and how donors could support it.

The December 2018 presidential statement also encouraged the PBC to report on implementation of the peacebuilding and sustaining peace recommendations and efforts to sustain peace in different countries.¹²¹ This creates space for the PBC to continue working with the RCO to ensure it has the support and capacity needed to sustain the peace in Liberia and report on progress and gaps.¹²²

Conclusions and Recommendations

In his recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the secretary-general advocates for operational and policy coherence between all

UN actors in headquarters and the field. He emphasizes the need for effective leadership to create momentum behind this common approach to sustaining peace. He also notes that sustaining peace will require stronger partnerships with national and regional actors and adequate financial support from UN headquarters and member states.¹²³

In 2019, the secretary-general will release his interim report on progress relating to the implementation of the recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, as specified in Security Council Resolution 2413. In 2020, the full report will be released as part of the 2020 review of the UN’s role in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. These reports will offer a timely reflection on efforts to create a more prevention-oriented UN working across silos to support positive, long-term outcomes.

The changes taking place in Liberia illustrate that efforts to implement the secretary-general’s recommendations are already underway. The UN implemented a new, innovative model for its presence in Liberia with an empowered resident coordinator at the head of an office with expertise in political analysis. This office was able to lead an integrated approach, aligning the UNDAF with the government of Liberia’s Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development to ensure the UN’s work is supporting that of the government.

Nonetheless, there are many challenges facing the UN in Liberia, and its offices need support to ensure that programming is oriented toward conflict prevention and connected to discussions at UN headquarters. The following conclusions and recommendations offer insights into ways to support the UNCT in Liberia in its efforts to implement the secretary-general’s recommendations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Many of these recommendations could likely be adapted to and applied in other post-conflict settings as well.

¹¹⁸ UN Security Council, *Statement by the President of the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/PRST/2018/20, December 18, 2018.

¹¹⁹ Statement by the chair of the PBC Liberia Configuration to the Security Council, April 19, 2018.

¹²⁰ Center on International Cooperation, International Peace Institute, and Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, “Sustaining Peace and Peace Operations Mandates: The Liberian Transition,” December 14, 2016, available at <http://www.dagh hammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/ASP-Workshop-1-Report.pdf>.

¹²¹ UN Security Council, *Statement by the President of the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/PRST/2018/20, December 18, 2018.

¹²² UN Security Council, *Statement by the President of the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/PRST/2018/8, April 19, 2018.

¹²³ UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Report of the Secretary-General*.

MOVING TOWARD SHARED ANALYSIS

While the secretary-general advocates for a common point of analysis to be used by national actors and the UNCT, this is difficult when different entities have different perceptions of risk and target audiences. But even if a joint risk analysis is unrealistic, the UNCT should develop as thorough an analysis as possible and share it with all its partners. Formal avenues for sharing risk analyses between international development partners, civil society, and the government should also be developed and strengthened. This will ensure coherence, minimize duplication of work, and increase understanding of how each actor is and could be contributing to mitigating these risks.

One challenge is to overcome the different formats for risk analysis and management that UN entities and their external partners use. The World Bank is currently supporting governments in revising how they analyze and approach risk. This process could be expanded to include international, regional, and local partners to bring all actors together and, at a minimum, develop a coherent language for risk analysis in Liberia. Such collaboration would also create space for different actors to discuss how they analyze and understand risk, standardize their frameworks, and share lessons learned.

At the headquarters level, the UN should consider developing system-wide guidelines for joint risk analysis, taking into consideration different models and allowing flexibility for context-specificity. Furthermore, there should be guidance from headquarters to UNCTs on how to translate such analysis into coherent, actionable plans as well as how to overcome differences between agencies, funds, and programs and international, national, and local partners.

PURSUING JOINT PROGRAMMING TO REACH OUTSIDE OF MONROVIA

With the withdrawal of UNMIL, the presence of the UN outside of Monrovia is limited. This undermines the message that the UN peacekeeping operation has left but the UN is staying. While some joint programs have been initiated by UN

agencies, regional organizations, and civil society organizations, more are needed in order to reach across the country. The UN must recognize both its limitations and the political leverage and capacity of other actors and work to harness these to ensure all needs in the country are met.

While joint planning processes are in place, consideration should be given to more joint programming both within the UNCT and between the UNCT and local and national partners. This would not only contribute to the UN's commitment to support local partners but also work toward ensuring the long-term durability of programming. Additionally, the UNCT should develop models for joint technical support that cut across siloes within the UN and pool capacities and funding. At the country level, this could take the form of thematic working groups or a sustaining peace contact group composed of heads of UN agencies that reviews, discusses, and sets peacebuilding priorities and leads the development and coordination of policies, approaches, and activities relating to sustaining peace in Liberia.

PROVIDING APPROPRIATE HUMAN RESOURCES

While the model of the resident coordinator's office (RCO) with a political, peace, and development unit is innovative, it needs more staff and capacity to be effective. While having two peace and development advisers and a political coordinator gives it more capacity than many other RCOs, this is not enough to coordinate and support the implementation of programming in the country while also building the preventive capacities of national actors.

In the short term, the UN could fill this gap using surge capacity and secondments.¹²⁴ While surge capacity is not a long-term solution, it could meet the immediate demands and enable the office to escalate programming. The UN deployed surge capacity to Liberia between June and December 2018 as part of the peacekeeping transition and could do so again. For example, UNDP has a crisis-response surge roster that allows it to deploy international experts quickly as first responders or

¹²⁴ Surge capacity refers to the "ability of an organization to rapidly and effectively increase [the sum of] its available resources in a specific geographic location." Rachel Houghton and Ben Emmens, "Surge Capacity in the Humanitarian Relief and Development Sector: A Review of Surge Capacity and Surge Capacity Mechanisms within International NGOs," *People in Aid*, 2007.

as part of planning teams. These contracts, however, are usually for three to six months, aiming only to provide temporary relief. As another shorter-term solution, the RCO could use secondments, such as the peace and development adviser seconded by Sweden. But reliance on surges and secondments would result in unreliable staffing for the office.

The UN should therefore work across its pillars to provide long-term capacity. This requires longer contracts for current international and national staff, which would allow them to execute longer-term projects. Connected to this is the need for financial support for the creation of staff positions and funding for the RCO as a whole. The UN should also recruit and train more national staff as part of efforts to invest in national capacities.

GENERATING RELIABLE, LONG-TERM FUNDING

One of the most significant challenges facing the UNCT in implementing programming to sustain peace is the lack of reliable, long-term financing both for the RCO and for the LMPTF. Valuable time has been lost on the logistics of restructuring and fundraising for the office rather than on developing and implementing a strategy. While both donors and the RCO indicate that funding will be coming, the UN's overall approach to funding the new RC system is unclear, and it is uncertain how long-term any support will be.

At the country level, the RCO should continue strengthening relationships between donors, the UN, and the Liberian government and should coordinate these efforts with the PBC in New York to sustain attention on Liberia and attract more funding for sustaining peace in the country. With the PAPD finalized and the UNDAF being revised, the RCO needs to show how the UNCT's work is contributing to the country's broader development priorities and clearly illustrate how it will use funds it receives to support this work. Further, the UN needs to be cognizant that it is not the only development actor in Liberia. In its role as a coordinator, it should map the development assistance Liberia is receiving and what it is being used for. By understanding what money is being

received, it will be better able to see gaps in support and coordinate among actors working on the same issues.

From the headquarters side, the UN needs to explore new and innovative ways of raising money for Liberia, taking into account donor fatigue and donors' caution about working with the new government. This needs to go beyond calling for more funds for the LMPTF and PBF; it should also involve looking at how to engage new actors, including through public-private partnerships. It is essential that such funding strategies support organizations working outside of Monrovia to fill the gap left by UNMIL's withdrawal. Also at headquarters, the PBC could help identify resource and attention gaps to guide fundraising efforts and convene discussions on the role of the LMPTF and how donors could support it.

SUPPORTING CIVIL SOCIETY AND COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES

While the UNCT has made an effort to work with local actors, it could more deliberately identify and promote the work of local CSOs. For example, it could consider funding an exercise to jointly map civil society actors in the country and identify good practices and sources of resilience. Any such mapping should be sure to include actors working to sustain peace in hard-to-reach places.

The UNCT can also provide leadership and advocacy to ensure peacebuilding and development are inclusive of marginalized groups. This requires a more participatory approach, including partnering with local experts and organizations on conceptualizing and implementing projects. For example, the UNCT should support and join the initiative by ECOWAS to continue convening civil society in Monrovia on a monthly basis to support broader engagement with local actors and peer-to-peer learning. Such approaches would ensure that activities in Liberia are based on in-depth local knowledge, directly related to perceived needs on the ground, and more likely to continue after UN engagement ends.

Toward this end, the UNCT could draw on the community engagement guidelines currently under development to improve engagement

between the UN and local civil society.¹²⁵ It could also leverage initiatives undertaken by other organizations. For example, the International Peace Institute, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, and Quaker United Nations Office have conducted a survey of 270 CSOs globally (including some from Liberia) to understand how they view and engage with the UN and what is needed to enhance partnerships with UN entities on the ground. This rich survey data could help the UN better understand the work and challenges of civil society on the ground and adjust its engagement accordingly. Similarly, the UNCT could incorporate into its strategy CDA's Collaborative Learning Projects' guidelines on how to collect and integrate feedback from local stakeholders to ensure continuous verification and validation of ideas, projects, and engagement.¹²⁶

CONTINUING SYSTEM-WIDE ENGAGEMENT WITH REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL PARTNERS

At the headquarters level, the UN should strengthen its relationship with the AU and ECOWAS. The signing of additional partnerships frameworks between UN and AU headquarters would help align the institutions and promote collaboration at all levels. While much attention on the AU-UN relationship focuses on peacekeeping contexts, collaboration should extend to all countries facing peacebuilding challenges. The experience of Liberia has shown that joint AU-UN trips, statements, and activities in such contexts can be effective.

At the country level, the RCO should continue including the AU and ECOWAS in UNCT planning and programming, viewing them as a key member of this team. This responds to the secretary-general's call for improved dialogue, information sharing, coordination, and collaboration with regional and subregional partners while also recognizing the UNCT's limitations. UN

headquarters should provide more capacity to the RCO to engage in partnerships and funding streams that allow the UNCT to engage in joint programming. Further, the UNCT should use ECOWAS radio to communicate on work taking place and share information with a broad range of stakeholders.

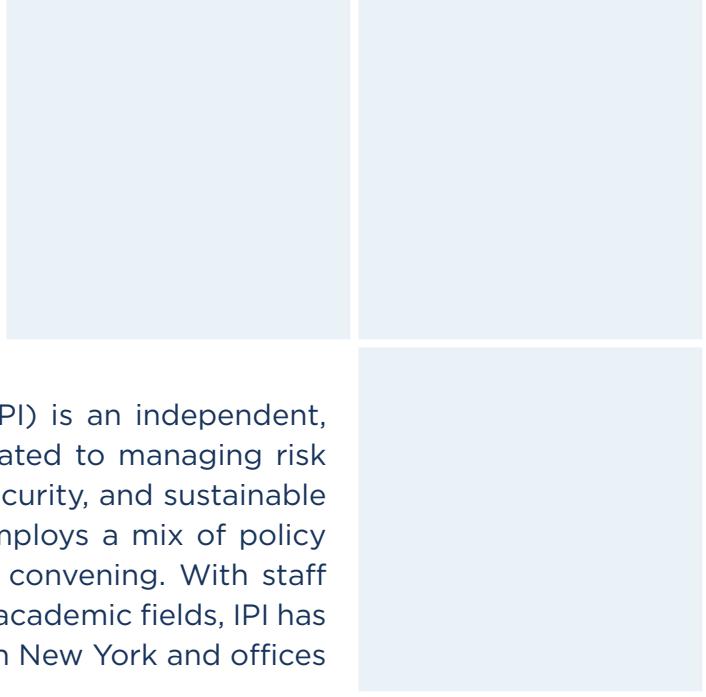
INCREASING ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PBC AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN LIBERIA AND NEW YORK

The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) can serve as a bridge between the Security Council and peacebuilding partners in Liberia. The PBC can provide a space for highlighting the peace-development nexus, discussing countries not on the Security Council, conducting early-warning analysis, coordinating support, and sharing information among a wide range of actors. This forum was invaluable during UNMIL's transition. To sustain attention on Liberia and emphasize the country's ongoing challenges, the PBC should continue to hold meetings on Liberia and bring in national and local voices.

As a nonpermanent member of the Security Council in 2019 and 2020 and coordinator between the PBC and Security Council, Germany should keep the council aware of developments in Liberia and any risks identified. It should also encourage more informal, interactive dialogues between the council and PBC. Sweden, in its role as head of the Liberia configuration, should continue to engage with the Liberian government and UNCT to provide the necessary support. Likewise, the Peacebuilding Support Office in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs should ensure that the PBC effectively promotes and sustains attention on Liberia. Additionally, it must ensure that the PBC creates space for a wide range of actors—especially civil society—to participate in meetings on Liberia, thus connecting local actors to global policy debates.

¹²⁵ In response to the secretary-general's recommendations, the UN system initiated the process of developing system-wide community engagement guidelines in September 2018. A working group led by the Peacebuilding Support Office and including civil society partners working in peacebuilding is currently developing the guidelines through an inclusive, impartial, and representative process.

¹²⁶ Collaborative Learning Projects, "Feedback Mechanisms in International Assistance Organizations," August 2011, available at <http://live-cdacollaborative.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Feedback-Mechanisms-In-International-Assistance-Organizations.pdf>.



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