



MODERNIZING FOREIGN ASSISTANCE
INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD: LIBERIA

October 2009

On the cover:
 Children playing in buildings destroyed in the
 1990 war, Zwedru town.

With support from the Hewlett Foundation, Save the Children USA and UK are collaborating on a research and advocacy program, examining the impact of aid at the country level and distilling best practices for policymakers.

The research contained in this report draws upon information gathered by Save the Children during a series of interviews conducted in Liberia in February 2009 by Fanwell Bokosi and Lawrence Norman. The research team gathered data from representatives of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), other United States (U.S.) government agencies, international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), local nongovernmental organizations, representatives of the Government of Liberia, other donors, and the beneficiaries of U.S. foreign assistance.

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Acronyms

CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement	NGO	Non governmental organization
DA	Development Assistance	NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
ESF	Economic Support Funds	ODA	Official Development Assistance
FY	Fiscal Year	OFDA	U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
DFID	Department for International Development	PRM	Bureau of Population Refugees and Migration
GEMAP	Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program	TOKTEN	Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Networks
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
LCIP	Liberia Community Infrastructure Program	U.S.	United States
LRDC	Liberian Reconstruction and Development Committee	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
LPRS	Liberian Poverty Reduction Strategy	USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

Save the Children is conducting research into the effectiveness of U.S. foreign assistance and producing case studies on a series of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Save the Children believes that to become more effective, U.S. foreign assistance, which should prioritize poverty reduction, needs to be modernized to better address the challenges of the 21st century. To achieve this, we offer the following recommendations for the reform of U.S. foreign assistance:

- Improve the **internal coherence and responsiveness** of U.S. government development policies and foreign assistance
- Enhance **local ownership and long-term sustainability** of U.S. development and relief initiatives
- Focus on **better coordination** with other partners in the development community, particularly national governments
- Increase **accountability for results**, including improving the effectiveness of strategic planning and impact assessment.

Key Findings

- **Coherent and wide-ranging use of foreign policy toolkit:** The United States is bringing considerable resources from its foreign policy toolkit to ensure success in Liberia's rebuilding. With at least 14 U.S. Government agencies engaged in efforts including training the Liberian army, providing health and education services and over half a billion dollars in debt forgiveness, Liberia may be a model for coherent development policy, encompassing security, trade benefits, development assistance and cooperation with other development partners.
- **Coordination is strong between the U.S Government agencies that have a physical presence in Liberia:** However, more work is needed to foster better coordination between the in-country U.S. mission and those U.S. Government agencies that are not present in Liberia, but manage or fund development or relief projects there.
- **Transitioning from humanitarian assistance to development assistance:** The transition from conflict to peace commonly results in a funding gap. More flexible, responsive humanitarian aid contracts may come to an end before the more cumbersome, time-consuming programming of development aid gears up. Alerted by NGOs and the government, the United States developed an interagency strategy to facilitate the transition from humanitarian assistance to development assistance. A strong strategic planning process and technical expertise are extremely important to prevent the traditional relief-development gap.
- **Flexibility of funding mechanisms:** The State Department and USAID are aiming to increase their flexibility to deal with the complexity of post-conflict and fragile states like Liberia by requesting Economic Support Funds (ESF) over Development Assistance (DA) funds. Congress has been slowly changing the balance of funding toward more ESF funds.
- **Strengthening the capacity of the government:** After many years of civil war, the capacity of the Liberian government remains weak. To help address this, the U.S. Government is focusing its efforts on capacity building through technical assistance, advice and training at the national level. However, the United States remains reluctant to move any funds directly through government systems which is essential to allow the government to learn by doing.
- **Inadequate support to local NGO capacity building:** Despite the essential role of civil society in helping post-conflict recovery, many interviewees perceive the U.S. Government's program in Liberia as inadequately engaged with local civil society, especially local NGOs.
- **Multi-donor trust funds in Liberia:** Despite its leadership role among donors, the United States does not contribute to any multi-donor trust funds or pooled funding mechanisms in Liberia in the general belief that there would be inadequate traceability and fiscal accountability for U.S. funds. Selective U.S. participation, rather than blanket dismissal, in pooled funds in Liberia would enhance U.S. leverage with the government and with donors, and increase U.S. influence in the government systems of concern.

Country Background

Liberia is a small nation of 3.47 million¹ people, now recovering from a devastating 16-year conflict. The civil war claimed over 300,000 lives, completely destroyed Liberia's infrastructure, and displaced more than one million people. Both refugees and armed groups moved in and out of neighboring West African countries, thereby fueling a continuation of regional conflict.

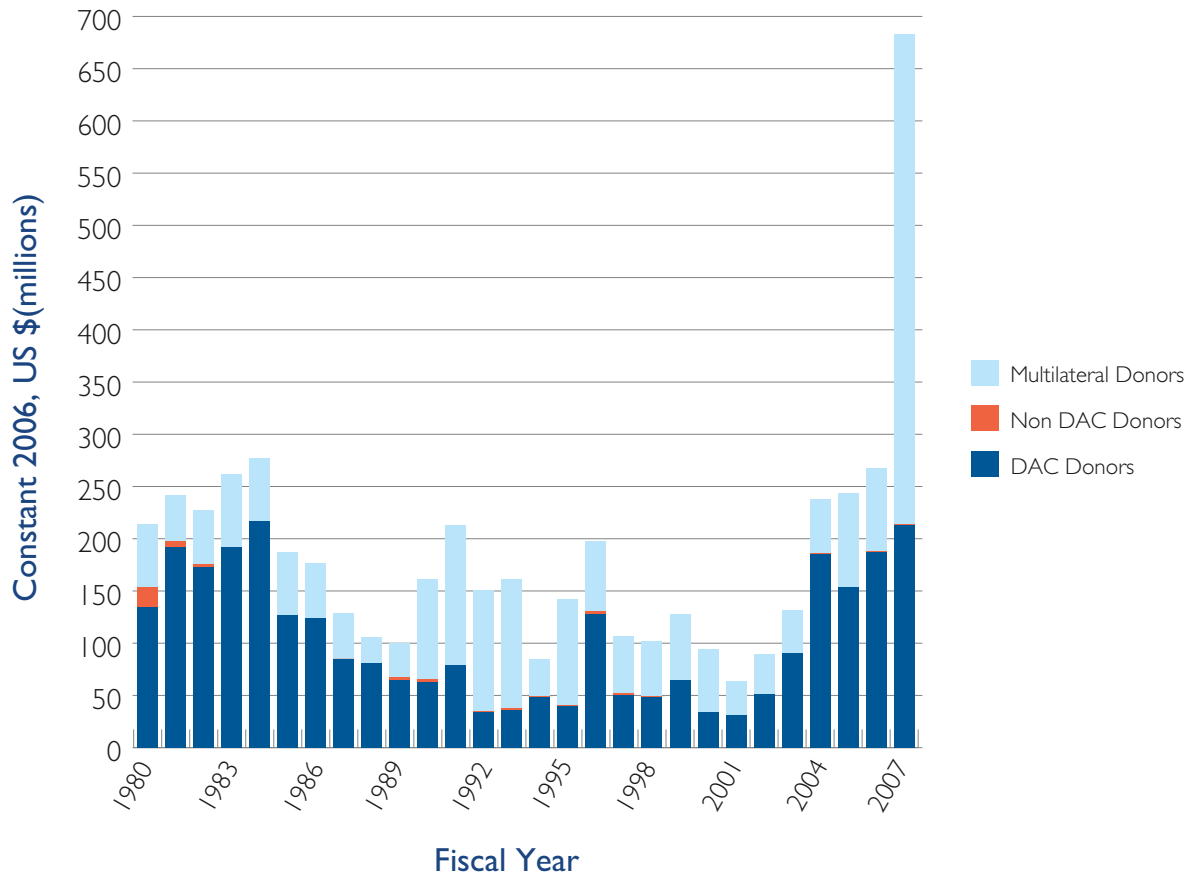
With the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2003 and peaceful elections in 2005, overseen by a UN peacekeeping force, Liberia started a process of recovery.²

Yet the challenges remain enormous and the country faces some of the worst socioeconomic conditions in the world. Over 63 percent of Liberia's population lives below the poverty line, with 48 percent of the population living in extreme poverty.³ Most children do not attend school and access to health care is limited—there is only about one doctor for every 70,000 Liberians.⁴ Under-five mortality rates are estimated at 133 deaths for every 1,000 live births.⁵



Map from Wikipedia Commons⁶

Figure I: Total ODA to Liberia 1980-2007⁷



Despite these challenges, efforts to rebuild the country have begun to accelerate. Liberia's gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate increased from 5.3 percent in 2005 to 7.1 percent in 2008. The democratic election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in 2005 has brought about a sense of hope for both the Liberian population and the international donor community.

One of the world's most aid-dependent countries

Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Liberia has fluctuated with the stability and politics of the country. ODA increased from 1980 to 1984, despite the military coup by Samuel Doe. The fraudulent 1984 election appears to have tipped the scales, however, and ODA dropped off significantly for the rest of the decade. In the 1990s, ODA again rose and fell as peace settlements were signed and subsequently broken.

Since 2001, ODA to Liberia has increased tremendously, boosted in particular by the end of the civil war in 2003. In 2007, Liberia received \$696 million in ODA—up nearly 1,000 percent from 2001.⁸ This equals 120 percent of the nation's gross national income⁹ making Liberia one of the world's most aid-dependent countries.¹⁰

As attention and resources have shifted from humanitarian response to rebuilding and development, the nature of ODA to Liberia has also shifted. In 2003, about 70 percent of all aid was humanitarian in nature; in 2007, this figure was down to 14 percent.

The United States is the largest donor to Liberia, providing 36 percent of all gross ODA in 2007 (Figure 2). This is well above the next two major donors, the European Community (EC) and Norway, with 14 percent and 10 percent respectively. In absolute terms, the U.S. Government provided \$103 million—almost four times more than the next major bilateral donor (Norway), which disbursed \$28 million in the same year. The United States has been the largest contributor to total ODA to Liberia since 2003.

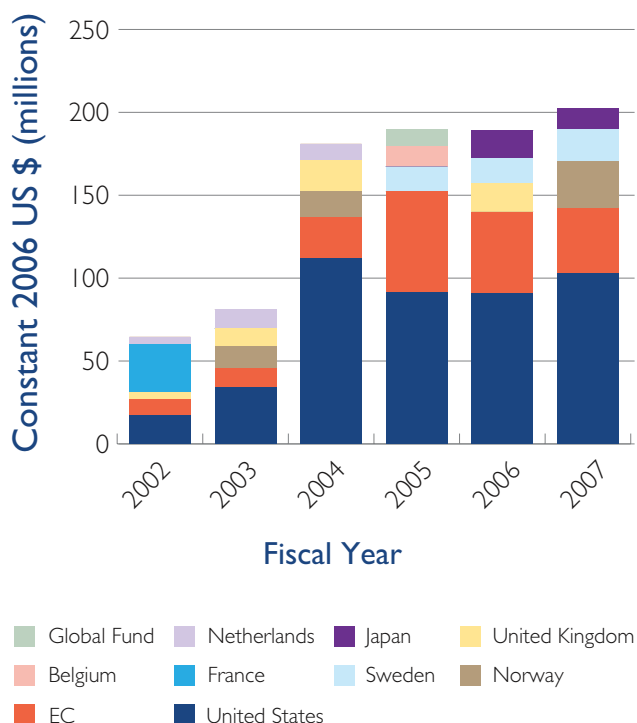
U.S. foreign assistance to a strategic ally

Prior to the military coup in 1980, Liberia received more U.S. foreign assistance on a per capita basis than any other African country. Today, Liberia remains among the top 10 recipient countries in per capita terms.

High levels of U.S. foreign assistance to Liberia reflect the historical ties between the two countries, going back to 1891 when Congress appropriated \$100,000 toward the establishment of the nation. Liberia remained an important partner during the Cold War. The United States signed a mutual defense pact with Liberia and built communications facilities there to handle diplomatic and intelligence traffic to and from Africa.

In the late 1980s, overall U.S. assistance dropped sharply from \$158 million in 1984 to only \$27 million in 1989, reflecting the United States' rising concerns over Liberia's deteriorating security and governance.¹¹ This also dovetailed with Liberia's declining importance as a Cold War ally and the United States' entrance into a period of fiscal austerity. Throughout the civil wars between 1989 and 2003, U.S. engagement was generally limited to humanitarian aid through the United Nations, NGOs and private contractors.

Figure 2: Major Donors of Gross ODA to Liberia 2002-2007¹²





Children playing in buildings destroyed during the war, Zwedru.

Since the end of the civil war, the United States has dramatically increased its foreign assistance to Liberia from \$29 million in FY2003 to \$323 million in FY2009, making Liberia once again one of the highest per capita recipients of U.S. aid. In addition, the United States has been a major player in the peacekeeping operations in Liberia through its contributions of monetary and human resources to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).¹³

Some observers attribute the U.S. Government's renewed interest in Liberia to its concern that failed states are breeding grounds for terrorists, and that Liberia may be one of the keys to maintaining stability in the region.¹³ Certainly, Liberia has shown itself to be a reliable ally: Liberia is the only African nation to agree to host the new U.S. regional command, AFRICOM.

“The United States should also continue to provide assistance to the people of Liberia in order to...ensure that Liberia never again becomes a source of regional military or political instability, a threat to the sovereignty or territorial integrity of neighboring countries, or a source of insecurity for those countries’ citizens.”

— H.R. 6655 Liberia Stabilization, Economic Empowerment, Development and Security Act of 2008

Improving U.S. development coherence

Sophisticated and complex U.S. engagement

The United States is bringing considerable resources from its foreign policy toolkit to ensure success in Liberia's rebuilding. With at least 14 U.S. Government agencies engaged in efforts such as training the Liberian army, providing health and education services and over half a billion dollars in debt forgiveness, Liberia may be a model of coherent development policy, encompassing security, trade benefits, development assistance and cooperation with other development partners.

According to the FY2010 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, the U.S. foreign assistance strategy in Liberia focuses on "creating a stable democracy...by strengthening security structures, changing the culture of impunity, systematic corruption and poor governance, closing severe gaps in access to quality education and health care, expanding economic opportunity, and helping to rebuild essential infrastructure."¹⁴

The U.S. Ambassador coordinates the activities of all U.S. Government agencies in Liberia through regular interagency meetings. In addition, several internal sectoral working groups meet regularly to coordinate activities and programs across different U.S. Government agencies on the ground in Liberia.

Analysis of current State Department and USAID programs in Liberia indicates a clear division of labor and expertise. The State Department is responsible for all the "Peace and Security" programs with training of military personnel overall implemented by the Department of Defense. Only one of the nine projects under "Governing Justly and Democratically" was implemented by the State Department, while USAID was the lead in all other development-related activities. Under this interagency coordination, USAID contracts the implementation of some activities to other U.S. Government agencies with specific expertise, such as the Department of Defense for training soldiers in HIV/AIDS awareness.

"Political and security matters should be left to the security experts and development matters to development experts."

— USAID/Liberia

U.S. engagement in Liberia: Selective activities

- Peace keeping contributions: Major contributor to UNMIL (State Department)
- Financial advice: Provision of technical financial advisors to the Government of Liberia (Department of Treasury).
- Debt cancellation: Cancellation of over \$390 million in bilateral claims on Liberia; provided over \$211 million to clear Liberia's arrears to the IMF and African Development Bank in 2007-2008; and provided \$5 million to give Liberia leverage funds for cancelling further debt.
- Trade benefits: Reinstated duty-free Generalized System of Preferences trade benefits in 2006; eligibility under the African Growth and Opportunity Act in 2007; signed a bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement in 2007.
- Contributor to improved economic governance: Engagement through the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP). (USAID)
- Lead donor agency on security sector reform: Charged with recruiting and training the new Liberian military forces (Department of Defense).
- Provision of legal services and capacity building of legal system (USAID, State Department and Department of Justice).
- Support to presidential, legislative and local elections (USAID).
- Education and health: Capacity building of the government, training of teachers and health workers, and provision of textbooks, and bed-nets (USAID).
- Forestry initiatives and agricultural productivity (USAID).
- Microcredit and business development services (USAID).
- HIV/AIDS awareness raising with Liberian Military (USAID/Department of Defense).

A strategic plan for the future?

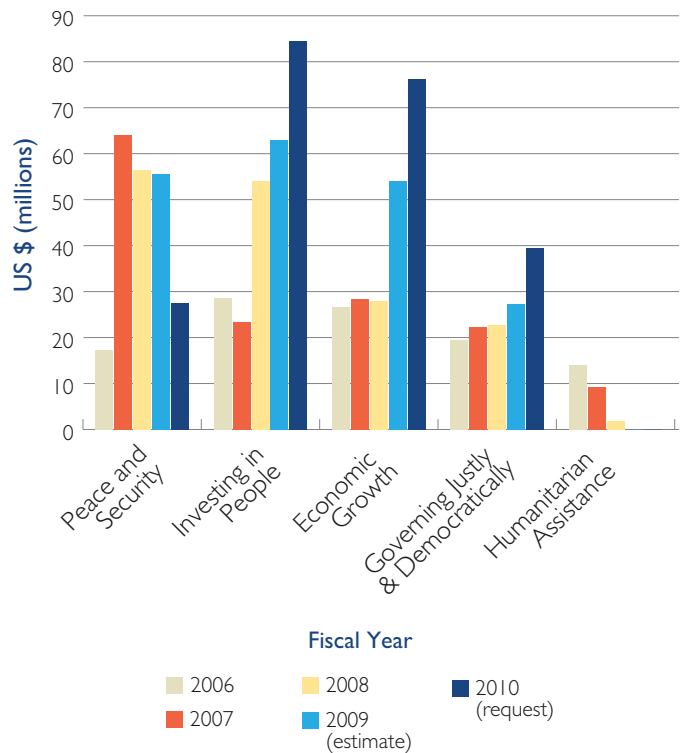
With so many diverse players on the ground in Liberia, the USAID mission in Liberia has been following a strategy prepared to cover the period of 2006 to 2009. However, mission personnel noted that despite their existing strategy shortly coming to an end, they have not initiated the development of a new strategy pending a Washington-level review of USAID's planning processes. As of the time of Save the Children's field visit, no date has been given for the completion of this review or when new guidelines will be sent to the field to facilitate the development of new country strategies.

A determined shift from Development Assistance (DA) to Economic Support Funds (ESF)

In an effort to address the need for flexibility in post-conflict Liberia, both the Bush and the Obama administrations pursued a strategy of requesting funds from the ESF account rather than the DA account.

During FY2008 and FY2010, no DA funds were requested for Liberia. In FY2009, only 7 percent of USAID and the State Department's Liberia budget came from DA funds. Congress has continued to appropriate some funds to the DA account, but ESF funds now dominate, increasing from 27 to 40 percent of the Liberia budget between FY2008 and FY2009. If the budget request is approved, by FY2010, ESF monies will constitute 65 percent of USAID and the State Department's budget for Liberia.

Figure 3: USAID/State Department Assistance to Liberia by Foreign Assistance Framework Category FY 2006-FY 2010¹⁵



ABC class at the Garmu Public and Elementary Junior High School in Garmu village, Bong County.



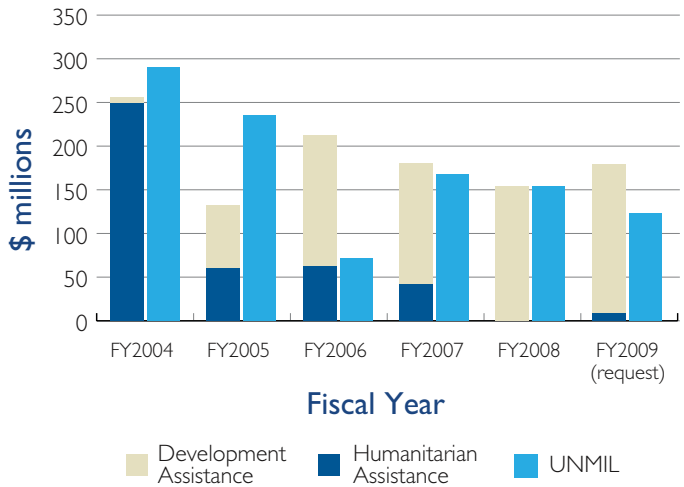
Transitioning from humanitarian assistance to long-term assistance

Post-conflict settings often witness a disastrous gap in services as humanitarian funding ends and NGOs depart before development and economic funds and government services become available for long-term programs. All too often, the loss of services and critical programs further delays development.

Within the health sector in Liberia, that scenario was largely avoided. NGOs and the government of Liberia put significant pressure on donors by providing thorough analysis, with projections, of what was likely to happen without proactive planning for the introduction of development assistance funding.

In April 2005, the United States developed an interagency transition health strategy designed to ensure continuation of services as donors providing emergency assistance phased-out and development donors phased-in. Drawing on the expertise of the Africa Bureau and the Bureau for Global Health, the West Africa Regional Program and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), the USAID mission worked with the State Department’s Bureau for Population Refugees and Migration (PRM) and other key stakeholders in Liberia to identify the steps necessary to transition from emergency activities to development programs, as well as an exit strategy from emergency activities that were being terminated. Some activities were transferred from State/PRM and USAID/OFDA to the permanent USAID mission in Liberia.¹⁶ This deliberate and proactive planning has largely prevented the more typical relief-development gap.

Figure 4: The Transition from Relief to Development¹⁷



“They [the agencies not represented in Liberia] should check with the Embassy and other agencies on the ground, which they have not always done.”

— U.S. Government agency in Liberia

U.S. Government agencies engaged in Liberia	
Physical Presence	U.S. Government Agency
✓	Department of State
✓	Department of Defense
✓	USAID
✓	Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
✓	Peace Corps
×	Department of Justice
×	Department of Agriculture
×	Department of Labor
×	Overseas Private Investment Corporation
×	Trade and Development Agency
✓	African Development Foundation
×	Trade Representative
×	Export-Import Bank of the United States
×	Department of the Treasury

Multiple U.S. Government agencies pose multiple challenges to development partners

The number of U.S. Government agencies supporting reconstruction in Liberia poses coordination and communication challenges to the development partners working with them. Dealing with different agencies increases the transactional and coordination costs for NGOs, Liberian Government departments and other bilateral and multilateral donors, thus raising concerns about the U.S. development model.

The U.S. Government agencies operating in Liberia have different logos and different reporting structures but, in the view of many NGOs, they appear to be funding the same activities. One NGO noted that its agriculture program in two different counties was funded by two different U.S. Government agencies with two different contacts—but for all the same activities.

The U.S. Government program in Liberia faces specific challenges coordinating with U.S. Government agencies that have no physical presence in Liberia. An example was given of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funding a local NGO that had been previously excluded for funding by USAID in Liberia.

Enhancing Local Ownership and Long-Term Sustainability

In 2008, the Liberian Government developed the Liberian Poverty Reduction Strategy (LPRS) for the period 2008-2011.¹⁸ The strategy has four pillars:

- expanding peace and security
- revitalizing the economy
- strengthening governance and the rule of law
- rehabilitating infrastructure and delivering basic services

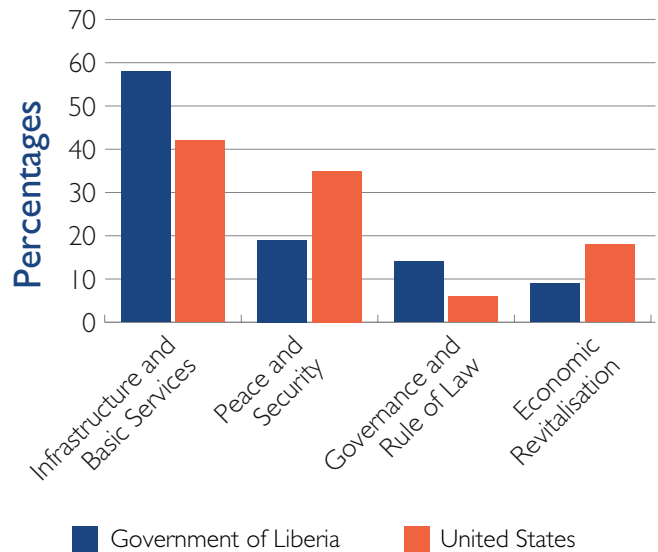
The strategy was developed after an extensive consultation process that the IMF and World Bank have described as “comprehensive” and “unprecedented” in Liberia’s history.¹⁹ However, several development experts have raised concerns that the government may not have the capacity to fully implement and finance such a strategy.

In support of a country-led determination of priorities, U.S. expenditures for foreign assistance largely aligned to the priorities of the LPRS (Figure 5). Both the Liberian Government and the United States allocated the greatest share of their annual budget to the infrastructure and basic services pillar, followed by peace and security as the second most important pillar. It should be noted that the United States spent far less on infrastructure than the Liberian LPRS recommended.

“The right emphasis is placed on peace and security which cannot be discounted as one of the major causes of poverty in Liberia.”

— *Multilateral donor*

Figure 5: Alignment of U.S. Government funding to the LPRS FY 2008²⁰



Building reliable country systems

A major principle of effective aid delivery is the use of the recipient country’s systems in the delivery of aid whenever possible and appropriate. After many years of conflict, many feel that the Government of Liberia has much work to do to eliminate corruption and strengthen its public financial management systems.

Recognizing the need for increased government capacity, the United States undertakes a number of capacity-building projects. Most prominently, it participates in the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP) through USAID, under which it provides technical assistance and training in areas like financial management and accountability, budget and expenditure management, procurement and corruption control to the Government of Liberia. In addition, the United States supports internationally recruited financial controllers for three state-owned enterprises²¹ and advisors in three government institutions.²²

The single most powerful lesson from GEMAP for the United States is the power of collaboration, coordination and harmonization of donor efforts in pursuing development goals. GEMAP has shown what can be achieved when donors work together rather than compete to fund separate projects and programs.

Coordinating with other donors to promote fiscal accountability and transparency

The multi-year Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP) was launched in September 2005 with the aims of improving the financial management systems in key revenue-generating agencies and institutions, improving capacity for public expenditure management, establishing a new procurement law, implementing a robust procurement system, establishing an anti-corruption commission and reforming the civil service and government structures.

This initiative is a direct response to the concerns of Liberia's international partners about the mismanagement of public resources that took place during the transitional

period under the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL). The agreement was signed by the NTGL and the various key international stakeholders (the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the World Bank, the United States, the United Kingdom, Ghana, Nigeria, Germany, Spain and Sweden).

GEMAP has made some significant progress in improving the quality of public finance management systems and the implementation of an integrated financial management system. As a result, government revenues have increased due to tax reforms and state-owned enterprises are improving their financial controls. However, more work needs to be done to bring these systems to international standards.

Moreover, apart from participation in GEMAP, the United States has also participated, in a limited fashion, in other non-U.S. controlled capacity-building programs with other donors. For example, in FY2008, the U.S. Government contributed over \$1 million through a subgrant to the Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Networks (TOKTEN) program, which is administered by the United Nations Development Program and aims to attract expatriate Liberians to return home to work. But while in some respects USAID's \$1 million dollar contribution is a positive sign for future successes of non-U.S. controlled programs, TOKTEN has remained severely under-funded and commentators expressed frustration that the United States did not contribute more.

The significant level of systemic or fiduciary risk makes development partners reluctant to provide even targeted sectoral support. In Liberia, only two donors, Germany and the World Bank, use the public financial management systems. Many donors, including the United States, are still wary of Liberia's financial management systems despite GEMAP's provision for expatriate oversight of financial expenditures in key ministries. To date, no donor uses Liberia's procurement systems.

While donors are understandably cautious, channeling small amounts of funds through targeted ministries or government systems seems a critical albeit risky part of capacity building. The Liberian Government has made a serious commitment to strengthen these systems and the United States should continue to support and fund their efforts.

“United States assistance is in the right direction and focuses on the right things since it is targeted at building capacity around processes, structures and systems around governance.”

— *Government of Liberia-Deputy Minister*

Inadequate engagement with Liberian local civil society institutions

While the United States has invested in strengthening national government institutions, it has not done as much to build local NGO capacity. Most donors use international NGOs to implement programs. However, there can often be a trade off between increasing access to services and building the capacity of the government and other civil society organizations, which may be more likely to create sustainable systems for long-term service delivery.

U.S. assistance has focused on working through international contractors and international NGOs to provide training to community development committees, peace councils and other community groups. Many partners in the development community and in Liberia's local NGO community have expressed frustration with the lack of U.S. interest in strengthening the capacity of local NGOs.

“Now is the time to empower local NGOs. The emergency is finished and development will need the local NGOs to play their part.”

— *Local NGO Network*

“While NGOs received U.S. Government funded training in advocacy, overall capacity and effective advocacy was extremely limited. It is recognized that more sustained technical expertise and complementary assistance are required if civil society is to be improved and effective in Liberia.”

— *USAID/Liberia*

Increasing Coordination with Partners

In Liberia, the government is at the forefront of coordinating the development program and the U.S. Government plays a significant role supporting these efforts. Donor coordination is important because uncoordinated donor efforts result in duplication, poor sequencing and waste.

The Liberia Reconstruction and Development Committee (LRDC) is the primary government-donor coordination mechanism. The Liberian president chairs the LRDC's Steering Committee and brings together government and donor representatives on a monthly basis to coordinate the national development agenda.²³ All major donors including the United States are represented on this committee. Subordinate to the steering committee are four groups based on the LPRS pillars that are chaired by government ministers.

Going it alone or working with others

The U.S. Ambassador is the vice-chair of the LRDC, underscoring the importance of the United States as a key government partner. Although U.S. participation at the LRDC is regular and influential, engagement with the technical-level donor coordination meetings is not as authoritative. Several commentators feel that U.S. representatives at these meetings do not feel empowered to speak or make decisions on behalf of their agencies without referring back to headquarters.

Three small multi-donor trust funds operate in Liberia: the Liberian Reconstruction Trust Fund, the Pooled Funding for Health, and the Liberian Education Pooled Fund. The pooled funding arrangements enable a number of development partners to provide assistance in close formal cooperation and to provide maximum efficiency in resource use and service delivery. Pooled funding mechanisms can also provide a common voice and presence for donors.

The United States does not contribute funds to any of these pooled funds despite being on the boards and steering committees of many of them. U.S. participation in pooled funds in Liberia would likely enhance its leverage and its influences in these sectors.

The U.S. collaboration with other donors on GEMAP as well as its unique cooperation with the U.K.'s Department for International Development (DFID) in the Liberian Community Infrastructure Program (LCIP) may point the way toward more fruitful cooperation in the future.

“We don’t put funds into pooled mechanisms, but we sit on the boards of those multi-donor funds in Liberia. We also fund tangential projects related to the various multi-donor trust programs.”

— USAID/Liberia

DFID and USAID working together

The Liberian Community Infrastructure Program (LCIP) was a U.S. Government-funded project to support the reintegration of ex-combatants and other war-affected groups into their respective communities. Funded by USAID, a contractor implemented the program through Liberian NGOs and Liberian private sector firms.

In 2006, DFID started operations in Liberia but did not have in-country staff to help oversee their programs. When DFID realized that one of its objectives in Liberia fit within the activities of the USAID LCIP program, DFID approached USAID to contribute funds to the LCIP.

USAID and DFID signed a formal agreement and from 2006 to 2007, DFID contributed \$1.4 million to LCIP (about 10 percent of the total project costs), funding specific components through subgrants of the LCIP. This formal agreement was unique at the time because USAID

does not typically pool funds or resources. The evaluation report stated that “as it is somewhat unusual for USAID to pool its resources with other bilateral donors such as DFID, it is worth highlighting this contribution to LCIP.”

This cooperation also allowed USAID to shift its support to large public works projects included in the government of Liberia's 150-Day Plan, while the community-focused activities continued thanks to DFID's contribution to LCIP. The benefits of this arrangement were noted by the evaluation team of the LCIP: “DFID funding made it possible for the project to pursue a notable and effective component of its implementation strategy. Without this outside funding source, the project's impact on beneficiaries would have been reduced.”

“It was DFID that approached us and we accepted.”

— USAID/Liberia

Increasing Accountability for Results

The majority of the international NGOs that have received funding from the United States are very grateful for the support, and the role that U.S. assistance has played in the reconstruction of Liberia. However, they have concerns about the monitoring and evaluation systems used by U.S. Government agencies. Implementers feel there is too strong an emphasis placed on measuring program outputs alone and less with the long-term impact these programs are having.

“It’s all about tracking the number of children, even though our interest is on how teachers interact with the children. We are interested in changing the teachers’ mentality and attitudes, but with this type of outputs we cannot capture this.”

— *International NGO implementing with USAID*

“It’s expensive to measure impact. As a result we measure the proxy of impact...the obsession with attribution by the U.S. Congress, is the problem— impact is not separately attributable to one institution in development.”

— *International NGO implementing with USAID*

The implementing partners found the collection and reporting structures to be very rigid and labor intensive, forcing some NGOs to spend more resources on “ticking the box” instead of program monitoring which could increase the impact of their activities. For instance, one partner implementing a program under the President’s Malaria Initiative felt that the United States is more interested in how many mosquito nets have been distributed than how many people are using them.

Requirements to demonstrate the immediate impacts of projects pressure development agencies to focus on short-term metrics or visible and attributable outputs, rather than on actual results—on what the “money is buying” rather than what the “money is achieving”.

Teacher Isaac Dawoor with k1 and k2 students.



Endnotes

1. Liberia Country Census, preliminary results 2008.
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19. IMF and IDA, *Joint Staff Advisory Note on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, 2008, p.1 <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2008/cr08289.pdf>.
20. (Source: USAID/Liberia classification of the CBJ FY2008 figures into the LPRS categories and LPRS 2008).
21. These enterprises are the National Port Authority, the Liberian Petroleum Refining Corporation and Roberts International Airport.
22. These are the Ministry of Land, Mines and Energy, the National Port Authority, and the General Services Agency.
23. Through the LRDC, the government sets priorities and ensures that donor activities are directed towards these priorities. In addition, donors present their portfolios for support to Liberia in each monthly LRDC steering committee meeting.



Tupee Ilene Burk participates in Save the Children's protection program for refugee children and youth from Liberia and Sierra Leone.

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