Community Cohesion in Liberia

A Post-War Rapid Social Assessment

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UNDP

COMMUNITY
DRIVEN
DEVELOPMENT

CPR

Summary Findings

At the core of Liberia's conflict lies a class of marginal young people who currently lack faith in any kind of institutions. They consider that family, marriage, education, markets and the administration of justice have all failed them. Many have preferred to take their chances with various militia groups. Successful peacebuilding, and reconstruction through community empowerment will, to a large extent, depend upon the dismantling of these institutionally embedded distinctions between citizens and subjects. A genuinely inclusive, appropriately targeted community-driven development (CDD) process could play a crucial role in shaping a different kind of society, but only if it incorporates marginalized and socially-excluded groups in the rebuilding process.

The rapid social assessment (RSA) reveals that the assumptions of social cohesion, community participation and consensus underpinning some CDD activities in Liberia are too optimistic given Liberia's dualistic legacy and should be reconsidered. Community in Liberia is a deeply contested notion, reflecting historical inequalities in access to land, and distinctions between persons considered to be "civilized" and "aboriginal". A more realistic set of assumptions is required. Donors need to work with the Liberian government to change ground rules in relation to land, labor and justice. Agencies need to invest in local-level conflict resolution and rights-based development activity to shape a new and more inclusive community dynamic.

The report includes suggestions on how to address these issues. A key point is to trigger a process in which rural people are challenged to devise more inclusive notions of community and social cohesion as part of the post-war rebuilding process. In order to contribute to stability in Liberia, CDD must firmly focus on the inclusion of socially marginalized groups. Further entrenchment of personal rule and the privileges of a rural minority will only hasten the return of war.

War in Liberia reflects a long-term agrarian crisis based on inter-generational tensions and the failure of rural institutions. Addressing the roots of the crisis requires changes to institutional frameworks that influence rural social solidarity, including marriage and access to land.

Promoting CDD activities based on generalized assumptions about 'community participation' and 'consensus' risks empowering certain groups over others. CDD processes should support, as far as practicable, community-led definitions of co-operation and management structures. It must also be recognized that some community-based ways of organizing serve to empower particular groups over others, and that external agency/NGO-initiated structures typically do likewise.

There is a danger in seeing CDD activities only in technical terms, e.g., as an exercise in simply providing infrastructure, or in transferring international procedures for participatory development. To avoid this, communities themselves need to engage in analysis of different forms of co-operation and solidarity to create social capital that encourages cohesion. This can only be attempted with the active involvement of Liberian groups seeking the return to constitutional rule.

Successful social reintegration requires support for local conciliation processes, and mechanisms to encourage open, informed debate around issues of justice and human rights. Peace will largely depend on the successful reintegration of ex-combatants and the larger group of dispossessed, uprooted young people vulnerable to future militia recruitment. Jobs and skills training are only part of what is needed. Processes of conciliation, and examination of issues of justice and rights, will also be important. Without support for community-driven peace-making activities, alongside CDD activities, social fund projects may do no more than rebuild some of the societal causes of conflict.

The report includes the following recommendations: (i) ensure equal opportunities for CDD participation; (ii) ensure consistent dissemination of information; (iii) ensure that vested interests do not dominate CDD processes; (iv) support community-led creation of representative structures; (v) address barriers to CDD in remote areas; (vi) enhance agrarian employment opportunities; (vii) promote participatory and accountable local governance; and (viii) promote rights-based and conflict resolution approaches to reintegration.

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Acronyms

ACS	American Colonization Society
CBO	Community-based organization
CDD	Community-driven development
CDF	Civil Defence Force (of Sierra Leone)
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
GDP	Gross domestic product
IDP	Internally-displaced person
IGNU	Interim Government of National Unity
INGO	International non-governmental organization
KCA	Kru Culture Area
LAC	Liberian Agriculture Company
LACE	Liberian Agency for Community Empowerment
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
NGO	Non-governmental agency
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OTC	Oriental Timber Company
RoSCA	Rotational Savings and Credit Association
RSA	Rapid Social Assessment
RUF	Revolutionary United Front (of Sierra Leone)
ULIMO	United Liberian Movement for Democracy
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	UN Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMIL	UN Military Mission in Liberia
VOA	Voice of America (camp)

Acknowledgements

The concept of developing a Rapid Social Assessment tool stemmed from the need to ensure early community-driven development projects were responsive to the complex social realities in war-affected areas. The parallel work of designing community-driven programming in an amorphous context required that the assessment both begin immediately and provide regular input to the design structure. The resulting phased, gradually deepening content of the RSA served to inform the design as well as the initial pilot community-driven development projects. The RSA as a tool will continue to be refined and conducted in other conflict-affected countries.

Map

Executive Summary

The civil war in Liberia has much deeper roots than the conflict begun in 1989. Community-driven development and peace-making strategies must take this historical legacy into account. Not all Liberians have enjoyed the same constitutional rights. Many rural Liberians had their values shaped by "customary" institutions deployed by the sate for the administration of subject peoples.

Stamped with rules first shaped in an era of domestic slavery these "deferential" institutions have been increasingly rejected by young people in recent times. Those less readily employed in towns have found a place in militia forces. The recent conflict—and the culture of impunity it sustains—can be regarded as holding up a mirror to Liberian constitutional dualism, which must now be decisively brought to an end if war is to be overcome.

At the core of the Liberian problem lies a class of marginal young people who currently lack faith in any kind of institutions. They consider family, marriage, education, markets and the administration of justice have all failed them. Many have preferred to take their chances with various militia groups under the "law of the survival of the fittest."

Successful peacebuilding, and post-war reconstruction through community empowerment will, to a large extent, depend upon the dismantling of these institutionally embedded distinctions between citizens and subjects. A genuinely inclusive, appropriately targeted community-driven development (CDD) process could play a crucial role in shaping a different kind of society, but only if it incorporates marginalized and socially-excluded groups in the rebuilding process.

Based on a methodology that elicits responses to findings and propositions arising from both fieldwork and literature review, the rapid social assessment (RSA) reveals that the assumptions of social cohesion, community participation and consensus underpinning (i) some current community-driven development activities in Liberia, and (ii) the social fund Project Operation Guidebook are too optimistic given Liberia's dualistic legacy, and require to be reconsidered.

"Community" in Liberia is a deeply contested notion, reflecting historical inequalities in access to land, and distinctions between persons considered to be "civilized" and "aboriginal". A more realistic set of assumptions is required. Donors need to work with the Liberian government to change ground rules in relation to land, labor and justice. Agencies need to invest in local-level conflict resolution and rights-based development activity to shape a new and more inclusive community dynamic.

Some practical suggestions how this might be arranged are included in the summaries of the report's specific conclusions and recommendations, summarized below, and presented in full in sections 5 and 6 of the main report. A key point is to trigger a process in which rural people are challenged to devise more inclusive notions of community and social cohesion as part of the post-war rebuilding process.

Overall, the report can be summarized as saying that in order to contribute to stability in Liberia CDD must be firmly focused upon the inclusion of socially marginalized groups. Further entrenchment of personal rule and the privileges of a rural minority will only hasten the return of war.

Conclusions

1. War in Liberia reflects a long-term agrarian crisis based on inter-generational tensions and the failure of rural institutions. Addressing the roots of the crisis requires changes to institutional frameworks that influence rural social solidarity, including marriage and access to land.

The militias engaged in the Liberian conflict are 'fed' by a large number of young people in the interior who are no longer able, or willing, to integrate within a traditional social system based on family land and social deference. Demobilizing the militias requires the provision of alternatives to returning to rural dependency. This implies major changes in institutional frameworks for rural social solidarity, as well as changes in the employment opportunity structure. The two most important rural institutional frameworks for healing a generational breach that is a fundamental cause of the conflict are **marriage** and **land**.

Marriage reform has already been undertaken via the *Act to Govern the Devolution of Estates and Establish Rights of Inheritance for Spouses of Statutory and Customary Marriages* (October 2003). The Act recognizes that, under rural patrimonial systems, women were treated, in marriage, as pawns in a game through which elders accumulated "power in people". The Act now enshrines in law women's rights to own the fruits of marriage. It illustrates clearly the fundamental changes that are required, and that they are achievable.

Access to land is equally necessary for social harmony. At present, marginalized youth (including ex-combatants) see only a choice between rural dependency and exploitation of their labor, and the 'freedom' of life in urban areas. Many of the most marginalized will only find work in the agrarian sector. There is scope for young people in small-scale co-operative food-crop farming and plantation work, but such groups would need training and access to land, e.g., *via* government grants of unused lands. The government of Liberia already enjoys the power to allocate relatively abundant supplies of public land and to confirm legitimate ownership.

2. Approving CDD activities based on generalized assumptions about 'community participation' and 'consensus' risks empowering certain groups over others. CDD processes should support, as far as practicable, community-led definition of co-operation and management structures.

There may be operational obstacles to CDD reaching its primary target group of communities in remote rural areas (such as non-existent rural banking systems), but rural communities have relevant social capital (trusted institutions and mechanisms of accountability) that might be utilized to overcome some of these obstacles. However, it must also be recognized that some community-based ways of organizing serve to empower particular groups over others, and that external agency/NGO-initiated structures typically do likewise.

There is a danger in seeing CDD activities only in technical terms, e.g., as an exercise in simply providing infrastructure, or in transferring international procedures for "participatory development". To avoid this, communities themselves need to engage in analysis of different forms of co-operation and solidarity to create social capital that encourages cohesion. This can only be attempted with the active involvement of Liberian groups seeking the return to constitutional rule.

3. Successful social reintegration requires support for local conciliation processes, and mechanisms to encourage open, informed debate around issues of justice and human rights. Peace will largely depend on the successful reintegration of ex-combatants and the larger group of dispossessed, uprooted young people vulnerable to future militia recruitment. Jobs and skills training are only part of what is needed. Processes of conciliation, and examination of issues of justice and rights, will also be important. Without support for community-driven peace-making activities, alongside CDD activities, social fund activity may do no more than rebuild some of the societal causes of conflict.

Recommendations

The following are summaries of recommendations presented in more detail in section 6 of the report.

1. Ensure equal chances of CDD participation: In RSA field work respondents repeatedly stressed the high likelihood of inter-community conflicts around access to CDD resources, particularly given past failure of governmental and non-governmental agencies to include remote locations in their respective activities. Informants understood that CDD resources will be limited. Their response was to stress the need for careful preparation, so that all communities had an equal chance to be included. It may be important to consider some kind of quota system, to earmark resources for currently inaccessible or insecure districts. Equality of opportunity to participate should be a core CDD principle.

2. Ensure consistent dissemination of information: Knowledge about options for post-war CDD seemed (from RSA fieldwork) to be extremely patchy. This implies need for improved dissemination of basic information and a consistent approach across a range of organizations supporting CDD. Community groups become perplexed by the apparently variant approaches of different donors. A national donor consortium should be formed to agree mutually consistent information about community reconstruction, and to plan to deliver this information in a systematic and coherent manner. It needs to be grasped that lack of an integrated approach risks communities becoming divided by a factional "politics of information". False promises and perceived favoritism over post-war community reconstruction would risk re-igniting conflict.

3. Ensure that vested interests do not dominate CDD processes: This report highlights a risk inherent in CDD, that vested interests (individual, elite group or political) will attempt to dominate 'participatory' processes through various means; usually by presenting themselves as 'the elected community representatives', by manipulating information, or by imposing their own agendas on the proceedings.

If this were to happen it would undermine public faith in CDD, and would do lasting damage to public perceptions of the key CDD actors, such as local government and local NGOs.

To limit the opportunities for particular groups to dominate, CDD processes must recognize this issue, and priorities community-led analysis and resolution of the problem.

4. Support community-led creation of representative structures: While it was consistently reported that communities prefer 'local structures' over externally-imposed structures, it was also observed by the RSA team that 'local structures' might serve to empower certain groups over others, and that there is a significant risk of CDD resources compounding this problem, particularly if representatives of those groups emerge as 'community facilitators' or 'leaders' of 'Community-Based Organizations'.

Consequently, one of the report's draft conclusions is that "Communities will need to engage in analysis of different forms of co-operation and solidarity, in order to assess, and re-make, social capital in ways that encourage cohesion and solidarity." CDD processes can facilitate this by prioritizing and supporting community-led debate about which type of structure(s) would provide balanced, effective representation of the development priorities of different groups within a given community.

5. Address barriers to CDD in remote areas: Despite the obvious barriers to CDD in remote areas, such as lack of banking infrastructure, the present report highlights examples of trusted community-level institutions and mechanisms that are accustomed to managing money and resources. It also suggests that a combination of support and strengthening of local institutions, and flexibility in social fund eligibility criteria, might overcome some of the organizational barriers to implementing CDD in remote areas.

If this proposition is accepted, then the challenge for LACE and its CDD partners is to devise a community engagement strategy that creates an ongoing discussion with remote communities about how

they might successfully meet LACE criteria. A task for ongoing stakeholder discussions is to suggest how LACE and its CDD partners might develop and implement such a strategy and process.

6. Enhance agrarian employment opportunities: LACE should actively seek requests for support from young people proposing co-operative small-scale farming and plantation work, or agriculture-related business and service provision activities. To succeed, this would require co-ordination with other actors, e.g., allocation of unused land by government and private landowners, and the provision of technical and marketing training e.g., by the business sector.

An appropriate lobbying strategy should be developed by LACE and other CDD partners to encourage the allocation of unused land, and identify potential sources of technical and marketing training.

7. Promote participatory and accountable local governance: County and District-level authorities will have a role in establishing the framework of legality and accountability within which LACE-funded CDD will operate. CDD offers opportunities to address public mistrust of local government. Community-level discussions and training for CDD should address issues of how implementation of community projects, and local management of resources, might be used to create functional relationships, based on participation and accountability, between citizens and local government.

8. Promote rights-based and conflict resolution approaches to reintegration: CDD should not be too narrowly focused on reconstruction activities to the exclusion of "software" skills that enhance social cohesion. The danger is that communities will sink their differences temporarily in order to qualify for a grant. The CDD process should be based on a strong understanding of, and sensitivity to, the underpinnings of conflict in the community. The procedures should be so arranged that communities will enhance their chances of support where they are willing to confront and resolve long-standing difficulties and grievances. Appropriate mechanisms require to be put in place, such as "peace and rights" workshops, in which communities are encouraged to address and resolve inter-generational tensions triggered by reconstruction activities under CDD (for example the unwillingness of young people to contribute free labor to a community project). It is important to have field agents with dual competence in facilitating both the hardware and software aspects of CDD. This requires humanitarian agencies in Liberia to incorporate participatory and rights-based based approaches (De Gaay Fortman 2004) and various methodologies of conflict resolution requiring participants to work toward collaborative solutions (Maynard 1999, Tillett 1999).

A specific program for rights-based and conflict resolution approaches to rural post-war rehabilitation should be devised and implemented as an aspect of CDD in post-war Liberia. Community-level discussions, initially about how CDD activities should be prioritized and implemented, should be broadened to include other conflict issues facing communities, particularly the return and reintegration of ex-combatants and their potential role in remaking communities.

COMMUNITY COHESION IN LIBERIA:
A POST-WAR RAPID SOCIAL ASSESSMENT

1. THE RAPID SOCIAL ASSESSMENT

1.1 Approach

The World Bank and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) commissioned a rapid social assessment (RSA) of Liberia during 2004 to provide guidance to a range of agencies addressing community reconstruction activities in post-war Liberia. These agencies include the Liberian Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE), a facility under the National Transitional Government of Liberia established in July 2004 to provide direct funding for community-driven development (CDD) through the World Bank and other donor contributions. The overall objective of the Rapid Social Assessment is to ensure the design and implementation of community-participatory programming supports socio-economic transition from war to sustainable development.

Specifically, the RSA provides:
- Rapid analysis of the underlying socio-cultural, institutional, historical, conflict, and political context of Liberian society; and
- Analysis of constraints and opportunities posed by the current context for conducting CDD operations, and for conflict recovery as a whole.

The sequenced design of the RSA study intends to inform donor support for Liberian post-conflict reconstruction under the Results-Focused Transition Framework as it develops. The idea behind a rapid social assessment is timely integration of the best available information within an ongoing policy debate, as post-war opportunities unfold.

In organizing the study careful attention was paid to securing timely feedback from relevant partners and stakeholders. Funding was provided by two donors (World Bank and UNDP), and practical support provided by Mercy Corps International, in part to ensure feedback from a range of operational sources, even while LACE (and the post-war CDD process for Liberia more generally) was in the process of being established. From the point of view of methods it was recognized that a social assessment exercise at an early stage in post-war recovery would offer only limited opportunities for field investigation. Thus a decision was taken to place more than usual emphasis on assessment and synthesis of existing literature. To draw the lessons of a surprisingly rich social science literature on Liberia set the RSA team a considerable challenge. The results, as reported in various appendices, served both to bring out the extent to which the current problems of Liberia are rooted in the country's history and to open up links to Liberian intellectuals who might be expected to play an important role in sustaining CDD after the current emergency phase has ended.

The RSA work plan was then fitted into three phases (preliminary assessment and literature review in May-July, fieldwork in August-September, reporting and feedback in October-November) tailored to donor planning horizons, with reporting and feedback from potential users incorporated at all three stages. The phased approach allowed some adaptation to stop-go conditions typically encountered in immediate post-war situations. The major drawback was that fieldwork fell in the middle of the rainy season and this prevented first-hand investigation in the southeast of the country. This often-neglected region is significantly different from other parts of Liberia in terms of history, ethnic orientation and social organization, and deserves to be followed up more thoroughly in a post-RSA phase. The RSA as it now

exists is thus work-in-progress, and other opportunities are being sought to add to basic findings over coming months. On the positive side the RSA has been actively present in the thinking of a range of donors, interim government agencies and community groups as each successive step in the Liberian peace process has unfolded. "Rapid" should thus be seen as signifying a process of knowledge formation genuinely integral with the current flow of ideas on community recovery in Liberia. An RSA is a pilot tool that actively invites—even through its gaps and imperfections—modification and completion by its users.

The main body of the report is divided into three sections: requisite background, core themes, and key questions (as proposed by the Terms of Reference). The report draws on material presented in greater detail in three appendices. Appendix A presents further discussion of two issues important to understanding current social dynamics in Liberia—social cohesion and land tenure. Appendix B summarizes the methodology employed for the fieldwork. Appendix C is a literature review covering the scholarly literature on social dynamics in Liberia, relevant to CDD. A summary of meetings held in Monrovia with the Technical Working Group to discuss agency best practice models for CDD, reports from stakeholder consultations, and field notes is available on request.

1.2 The Liberian Peace Process

The conflict in Liberia has been the eye of a storm affecting not only Liberia but also the three neighboring countries, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. The beginnings of the civil war are conventionally traced to the cross-border incursions into Nimba County (from western Côte d'Ivoire) by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, a faction of which Charles Taylor had become spokesman and leader, on December 24, 1989. Some people prefer to trace the beginnings of the war to the army coup in 1980 that overthrew the one-party regime of the True Whig Party. Others even see it as continuation of an unfinished struggle to find common ground between a settler state, founded in the 19th century on behalf of freed slaves from America, and various embattled groups of warlords and traders from the interior. The NPFL path to power was violently contested by elements in government forces and various ethnic militias. Regional powers became involved. Nigeria sent peace keeping troops, contesting Ivorian (and French) influence in the region.

A stalemate resulted, resolved by a peace agreement in 1996. This was followed by elections, won by Charles Taylor's NPFL. But the new president's enemies were numerous, and continued to organize armed opposition, with support from neighboring countries. Taylor was eventually sanctioned by the UN Security Council for seeking to destabilize these neighbors. War broke out again in 2001, when Guinean and Ivorian-supported militia—LURD and MODEL—gained ground in the northwest and southeast of the country respectively. An upsurge of fighting in and around the capital, Monrovia, in mid-2003, provoked international outcry, and forced Charles Taylor to step down from the Liberian presidency on August 11, 2003. A Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed between the warring factions, political parties and civil society organizations on August 18, 2003. A 15,000-strong UN peacekeeping force (UNMIL) began to deploy in late 2003. Disarmament and demobilization of the armed factions gathered pace in 2004, and by September about 70,000 ex-combatants and associates had passed through the cantonments. Each combatant collects a benefit of $300, and 20,000 weapons have been recovered. The peace remains fragile, but refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are beginning to go home.

The entire country has been affected by 14 years of intermittent conflict. Between five and ten per cent of the population of about 3 million has been killed. Over a million people have been displaced. Some have been forced to flee as many as five times. It is estimated that 80% of the country's housing stock has been damaged or destroyed in fighting. Sexual violence and atrocity have been widespread. Trauma and ruination, grief and loss, are faced by many. The countryside outside Monrovia, the capital, is not—as one British journalist recently claimed—"entirely empty", but the rate of return from displaced camps

around Monrovia and the refugee camps in neighboring countries is, as yet, slow. In a representative settlement in LURD-controlled Lofa County we found only 35% of a pre-war population of about 2,000 Loma and Mandingo civilians had yet resumed occupancy. It is clear, therefore, that social dislocation in Liberia is huge.

Community-driven development supported by, among other mechanisms, a social fund funded by the World Bank and others is intended to assist the recovery process at the local level. This requires discussion of what kinds of community cohesiveness Liberia possessed before the war, and now possesses, and how this cohesiveness was, could be, and is, being formed. The present study offers answers to these questions, as a basis for providing guidance on CDD operations.

2. APPROACH

2.1 Socio-Cultural, Institutional, Historical, Political Contexts

> "Thus began in a tangible way, the work of founding an African State with republican politics, slave psychology, caste privileges, Christian religion and western civilisation" (Brown 1941, p. 10).

The White leadership of the American Colonization Society (from 1822) envisaged the development of a property owning settler society subduing an African wilderness. Little thought was given to integration of the settlers with local populations. Notions of African-Americans "coming home" to Mother Africa were a much later development. Local populations were seen, initially, as foreign. The institutional foundations were laid for a society regulated by American conceptions of property and administration. Jeffersonian agrarianism proved impractical. Survival required engagement in trade, in a wider region in which the Atlantic slave trade remained an active force until mid-19th century. Even though the settlers, having once been enslaved, resisted the slave trade, the regional assumption that commerce and violence went hand-in-hand persists in some quarters.

From the outset, trade-minded Americo-Liberian settlers saw their destiny in terms of forging a regional trading alliance with Mandingo merchants from the Niger basin. Many of these early efforts were thwarted, however, by chiefs among the Gola and other interior groups, whose power depended on slaves, clients and exchange of women in marriage. These rulers regularly used war to divert or embargo trade. Use of mercenaries from groups in the deeper interior was a common practice. Mercenaries had no family connections in the places they were employed to control, so were less likely to intrigue against their paymasters, or to sympathies with local populations. Atrocities committed at this time show some similarity with recent violence (Jones 1983). In the battle for monopoly control of trade routes, secret societies or "sodalities" (notably Poro) may have functioned both to help maintain "trade secrets" and mediate trade disputes. Interior rulers were sometimes challenged by popular uprisings—such as the Zawo revolt among the Vai in mid-19th century, an occurrence apparently involving slaves and Muslim students (Jones 1983).

With generally rather hostile relations prevailing between Monrovia and adjacent interior peoples in the 19th century the pattern of expansion of the infant republic tended to be coastwise, especially southeast of Monrovia, where neighboring villages among the highly decentralized peoples of the coast north of Cape Palmas tended to be rivals (though maintaining alliances with interior groups on the edge of a largely unpopulated rain forest). From Robertsport to Harper, settlers inserted themselves in the gaps, and a number of dualistic settlements emerged, with local people ruled by custom, and settlers by Liberian law.

From the end of the 19th century the British and French intensified their claims over territories around the headwaters of the Niger, and at various points threatened the boundaries of Liberia, especially in the north and northwest. Monrovia was forced to seek a more inclusive approach to interior peoples. Notably under the presidencies of Arthur and Edwin Barclay this involved co-opting local rulers (some of whom resisted for a time) via a system of indirect rule (rule through state-franchised chiefs), as employed by the British in Sierra Leone. An aspect was that local chiefs—in return for co-operation with the Liberian state—were allowed to continue gerontocratic (age-based) control of labor and marriage, ensuring perpetuation of a system of subordination amounting to domestic slavery for a majority of male and female youth. The intervention of the British (who had recently banned domestic slavery in Sierra Leone) at the League of Nations forced Presidents King and Edwin Barclay to limit some of the powers of interior chiefs, as well as checking abuses in the recruitment of indentured laborers for Fernando Po, during the 1930s. Gola chiefs were said to have wept with despair when their domestic slaves abandoned them.

In other areas, although legally free, many young people continued to labor on farms on behalf of elders, due (in particular) to the workings of traditional marriage systems. Impoverished young men found it hard to pay bride wealth. "Big men" allowed or encouraged their many young wives to sleep around, and assiduously pursued damages against any young man they caught. Court fines were often commuted to labor service in "women damage" cases. The state, meanwhile, policed boundaries between the *kwii* (the civilized, i.e., those ruled by settler law) and "aborigines" (those ruled by custom), and applied loyalty tests to those individuals or groups who aspired to become *kwii* (whether through seeking to have their land rights recognized by the state or through educational attainment). Today, Land Commissioners continue to administer a dualistic land tenure system. In a significant recent reform (discussed in greater detail in the section on gender below) the distinction at law between the rights of "civilized" and "traditional" women in marriage, inheritance and property has been abolished (November 2003). Differential treatment of land and marriage were the twin pillars upon which the "dual" system rested; thus reform of marriage law represents a major step toward a single social system for all Liberians.

The brief history outlined above is an important key to understanding many of the conversations we have had with village "elites" and "commoners", and ex-combatants, during RSA fieldwork. The continuing marginalization and exclusion of those deemed "uncivilized" was a common complaint. Specifically lack of education or jobs were seen as major causes of the war. The coup in 1980 represented (an ex-combatant asserted) the opportunity for the non-*kwii* to achieve a more level playing field, but any reforming zeal was soon spent, as "big men" reverted to 19th century type, and pursued the monopolization of trade. This tactic is favored by the country's still rudimentary transport network (as Liberians say, if you go, you must come back, i.e., most places in the interior can be reached by only one road). The Executive Mansion under Doe revived the establishment of trading alliances with the Mandingo (Muslim merchants of Guinean extraction). The Taylor faction built some of its recruitment on a rival template—the historical hostility of the Mano and other interior groups to Mandingo traders. The war itself was much focused on "gates" (roadside check points), and the terms of trade they allowed. We gathered one dramatic life story concerning a Gola "big man" with large scale farming interests in the interior, noted for his diplomatic skills in bridging between the factions, who made money in the early days of the war by bringing food into a besieged Monrovia using his extensive family networks to up-date his information on rapidly shifting local security conditions, but who was in the end assassinated in a plot by jealous trade rivals.

The different groups of fighters we talked to could easily fit into a picture that would be no puzzle to historians of interior conditions in the 19th century. As with the activities of Mende mercenaries among the Vai in the 1870s young fighters were often imported from distant parts of the country to fight in areas in which they had few or no social contacts, loyal only to the leaders who were their sole source of food and pay. But not all were mercenaries, some fought for a cause. There is a Libyan-inspired student

radical thread to some militia recruitment that cannot entirely be dismissed. Some young fighters—perhaps resembling the Zawo insurgents of mid-19th century, or the RUF in Sierra Leone in the 1990s—were open to the preaching of wandering scholars of Libyan radical persuasion. Yet others (for instance, some elements in LURD, like their CDF allies from Sierra Leone) mobilized to defend local ethnic interests. Finally, in some instances, war became an economic end in itself, pursued by kinless, anomic youths, distant from their leaders. One such group, camped in the Salala Rubber Plantation in Margibi County, was led by Nixon Gaye, one of the Special Forces sent to invade Sierra Leone in 1991; author of many atrocities, the teenage Gaye was eliminated by his own backers when he proved too unstable to control. A number of Liberian settlements trace origins to war camps founded by not dissimilar bands of 19th century warriors, who largely lived off the land and what they could extract from passing trade.

Among ex-combatants interviewed, the majority (perhaps three quarters) feel they could and should go home, and are keen to absorb training (in crafts and trades) to help them rebuild their communities. A minority is not keen to return. Perhaps half of this smaller group sense educational or employment opportunities in the city, and wish to grasp a chance to be *kwii*. The others admit they carry a burden of atrocity that makes it hard to return to places where they are well known. Some Mandingo ex-fighters from LURD say that ethnic hostility to their group was a factor in their first taking up arms—and that this hostility has intensified in the last few years; they now consider that their lives will be in danger if they disarm and resettle. As in the 19th century, the Mandingo presence in the Liberian countryside remains a problem to be resolved. At issue is continued Mandingo identification with a homeland in the Upper Niger valley (Republic of Guinea). One informant bluntly asserted that to be considered citizens all Liberians should play by the same social rules—so why did the Mandingo still marry local women but forbid their own daughters to marry local men? The likely answer is that this is a means to maintain the cultural identity of a trading diaspora, and so induce ethnically based trust through which trade prospers (cf. Cohen 1974). But it means the Liberian Mandingo will continue to be seen by others as not fully committed to the community, and thus a flash point for further violence.

It is worth noting that we encountered evidence of a sizeable group of Gio "hunters" going to ground in forested terrain in Lofa County, close to the Guinea border, in August 2004. Seemingly, they carried modern weapons. They were reported to be NPFL loyalists. A further round of cross-border struggle between the Mano and Mandingo may be taking shape, perhaps playing into the politics of presidential succession in the Republic of Guinea, and thus emphasizing the urgent need (discussed below) for a region-wide solution to the entire set of "Mano River" conflicts.

A general conclusion is that civil war in Liberia has much deeper roots than the conflict begun in 1989. Current peace making needs to take account of this historical legacy. The social exclusion of many rural youths caught up in war reflects the dualistic history of the Liberian state. Denied access to institutions that protect the rights of the civilized, many up-country youths remain vulnerable to exploitation under traditional codes rooted in an era of domestic slavery. Thus,. peace building through community empowerment generally will depend on further dismantling institutionally-embedded distinctions between citizens and subjects. Dualistic marriage laws have been scrapped. Perhaps the dualistic land tenure laws ought to follow suit. The continued ambiguous civil status of certain groups remains a challenge, however. The Mandingo claim Liberian citizenship but construct a distinctive and distant social identity. This involves marrying local women but preventing Mandingo women from marrying out of the group. [Male] "Congos" (settlers)—as was argued in the stakeholder workshop in July 2004—secure land resources in the interior, similarly, by making informal marriages among village women, so that they benefit from both traditional and modern access to land. The charge that dualism is maintained because it benefits those who can play by both sets of rules is recurrent over more than a century.

An historical orientation also helps usefully reassess the nature of the armed factions. It helps us dismiss the idea that the violence is a feature of recent state collapse. Trade war is a recurrent aspect of state

formation in Liberia. Different factions still compete to control "gates", as in the various trade wars of the mid-19th century. In a country with rudimentary communications networks factional monopolization of trade is readily organized and yields impressive rewards. Reducing incentives to armed monopolization of trade will require better transport connectivity and information exchange. The rapid spread beyond Monrovia of cell phone networks and internet connections would help. It is certainly striking (in both Liberia and Sierra Leone) that so many rural young people express a deep interest in acquiring computer skills. Often an impractical dream, it nevertheless conveys something of their desire to shrug off both traditional patrons and the controls asserted by self-appointed gatekeepers of civilization. If adult Liberians flock to Pentecostalism, seeking a hot line to God, many disadvantaged youth home in on computers as their hot line to global opportunity.

History also offers a perspective on the current plight of ex-combatants. We should not too easily accept the idea that all fighters belong to a drugged or criminal underclass. Protecting communities from raiders has long been a duty of young people in the Liberian interior. Forming young people into a warrior age grade (i.e., an age-based cohort) was an essential aspect of community life in several parts of the country (especially in the southeast). Our evidence about the war is that many fighters were encouraged to take up arms by their families or villages (often as a protective duty). The fighters feel it is their misfortune that they are all, to some extent, criminalized by what amounts to an internationally imposed peace, irrespective of reasons for fighting. They tell us their greatest felt need is for skills training, to allow them to re-establish their worth by performing a useful role in community rebuilding. Much of their current frustration centers on the slowness of such training programs to get off the ground. Stigmatization will risk driving them back to war, some ex-combatants claim. If peace is to be sustainable all impoverished young Liberians need to feel part of society. This requires an education system open to all, and allocation of jobs on the basis of skill and effort, rather than through connections and patronage.

2.2 Current Context: National and Regional Economic, Political and Social Aspects

2.2.1 Economic Context: War-Lordism and Grass Roots Economy

Liberia is a very poor country, if not quite so impoverished (except for the temporary effects of war) as neighboring Sierra Leone. The extreme poverty of the many is masked, in per capita income statistics, by the great wealth of a few. Liberia was Africa's first one-party state. After near-bankruptcy in the 1930s the settler-dominated True Whig Party, under Tubman, restored Liberia's finances through partnership between foreign investors and the Presidency in resource extraction. Where warlords in the 19th century fought rivals to keep specific routes under their control, the President channeled all flows of income (notably taxes and royalties paid by foreign mineral and timber concessionaires) through the Executive Mansion, building roads to the interior and rewarding power brokers loyal to president and party in return. This "open door" between Monrovia and the interior led to "growth without development". Government-funded chiefs protected coastal elites from potential social upheaval in the interior. Frustrations generated among a younger generation with this autocratic system eventually culminated in the bloody Doe coup. Destruction of the True Whig hegemony ushered in a reversion to warlord rivalry. Each faction sought its own share of the cake. Charles Taylor was particularly successful in controlling the lucrative timber trade, exporting through Buchanan $53 million annually mainly to France.

Once established in power Taylor sought to follow Tubman's example, and centralize wealth flows through the Executive Mansion. Pajibo (1999, p. 58) commented that "Taylor thinks he is Tubman reincarnated". The Liberian Constitution of 1986 requires natural resources to be managed "in such a manner as shall ensure maximum feasible participation of Liberian citizens under conditions of equality", but the granting of concessions was in fact undertaken by presidential decree. The main concessionaire—the Oriental Timber Company (OTC)—exported timber worth $36 million in 2000 and $43 million in 2001. From 1999 timber was the Taylor government's main source of support, accounting for 50% of

export earnings and 20% of GDP. Total Liberian timber exports in 2001 were estimated at $80 million (Blundell 2003). But timber revenues were not enough by themselves to secure hegemony. Tubman, Tolbert and Doe had all found it necessary to court two powerful business groups, the Lebanese and the Mandingo. Taylor was seen as hostile to the Mandingo, and a Mandingo faction, LURD, took over the northwest of the country, with some support from Guinea and Sierra Leone. This denied Taylor wealth from diamonds and alluvial gold (including cross-border trade from Sierra Leone) as effectively as any international sanctions regime. Even as he was being pressured to leave office Taylor was said to be seeking some accommodation with LURD and the Mandingo community. A conclusion would be that the economy of Liberia cannot be governed without the support of its powerful diaspora business elites.

UNMIL-imposed peace meanwhile today favors the revival of the grass roots economy. Reconstruction demands artisanal skills, and petty trade seems set to revive. Skills training (for would-be artisans) and capital for petty trading, however, both seem to be in short supply. It seems clear that the reintegration of ex-combatants is constrained by difficulties in identifying and contracting skills trainers. Repeatedly, when we asked ex-combatants about their plans, they envisage seeking re-acceptance through contributing to the rebuilding their communities, but are frustrated over lack of training options. Seemingly, they lack clear information about what to expect.

When we asked women questions about how they could be best assisted to overcome the effects of the war they stress the importance of their "market" (i.e., petty trade) in providing basic family necessities. Many are, in effect, sole "bread winners", because husbands (who once earned a cash income) remain unemployed. We visited a large, well-organized market at Compound No 3, Grand Bassa County (adjacent to the Liberia Agriculture Company's extensive plantation, about an hour north of Buchanan on a good logging road rehabilitated by OTC). The impressive, well-managed market building (renovated after earlier destruction) was well stocked with fresh produce (including fresh dressed chicken and wet fish). The dry goods, clothing and hardware stalls roundabout seemed equally well stocked. But the market women complained about slow turnover, tight margins and hard bargains driven by Lebanese wholesalers in Monrovia who supply them goods on credit. When the women peddle in the villages, people are ready to take items but are slow to pay. The LAC plantation is not yet fully operational, and the pool of wage earners is small. Everyone is waiting for the economy to pick up. Cash is in short supply. Accessing credit was thought to be a priority for women traders to regain business momentum.

It has been suggested that since timber is such an important government revenue earner it is urgent to lift UN sanctions on timber exports to kick-start the economy. A prior requirement is that the Forest Development Authority be fully operational, with staff trained, and accountability procedures in place. It seems unlikely that re-opening logging operations will be as important to the revival of the grass-roots economy as sometimes portrayed. The timber sector only employs 7,000 people, and the now defunct OTC imported many of its skilled workers (600) from Southeast Asia. Provisions for "community" involvement in the forest sector have been revived, but practical examples of what this might mean are hard to find. On the other hand forests may have an unrecognized importance in resolving some of the problems of ex-combatants. An estimated 5,000 MODEL fighters, for example, are camped in the Sapo Forest Reserve, fending for themselves through a mixture of pit sawing, hunting and mining for alluvial diamonds and gold. They claim to have paid for a mining license from government, but this is denied. The case is not without interest. Squatting will not be thought a very impressive example of community development, but it is certainly worth asking what it would take to bring such a group of squatters within the rule of law. Africa has many historical examples of successful communities that began as armed camps, or "maroon" villages, in an earlier age. Is it possible to envisage self-settled ex-combatants applying for a LACE grant to develop sustainable, legal use of forest resources?

2.2.2. *Political and Social Context: Beyond Coercion and Deference*

Some commentators have drawn attention to the coerciveness of government under the hegemony of the True Whig Party. For Yoder (2003) political authoritarianism has had a stultifying impact on the development of civil society. Ellis (1999) notes that "proclamation of new ideas or cultural practices" was regularly accompanied by coercion of rural populations through, for example "the creation of highly despotic paramount chieftaincies and forced…labor mobility" (p. 293).

Gibbs (1965), writing about the Kpelle, offers a different perspective. Some of the authoritarianism comes from within. Poro is a factor. "The fear and respect for authority and the awe and deference to the great societies as an institution are inculcated during …initiation" (p. 221). Additionally, he notes, Kpelle society is incipiently class-based, based on the distinction between "rich people", "children of the soil" and "clients". Wealth is measured (for a man) not only in terms of money and goods but also in control over women and children. Control over marriage exchanges was central. In fact, the differences between the three classes can be summarized (for men) as "wife givers", "wife keepers" and "wife borrowers" (p.215). In earlier times, he notes, the three classes were, in effect, freeborn, slaves and pawns.

It is something of a shock to find that "children of the soil" (the free peasantry, we might otherwise suppose) are in fact descended from a "middle class" of domestic slaves. The vestiges of this are evident in the continuing cultural expectation that rich men redistribute wealth, and the ordinary folk show deference. Writing about the Vai in mid-19th century Jones (1983) characterizes the Zawo revolt as a slave uprising, but this was not against the system as such (he points out). Mary Douglas (2004), quoting Bernard Williams, suggests that the ancient Athenians could no more envisage a society without slaves than a goldfish can imagine life without water. The Zawo mutineers rose up to enslave others.

The deferential system—rooted in a culture of dependency and subordination—is more strongly developed among the peoples of northwestern Liberia than in the southeast of the country, where more egalitarian traditions prevail. But the hegemony of the True Whig Party was particularly shaped by its long-term struggle against the incipiently class-stratified societies of the northwest. The resulting political culture of authoritarianism and deference remains a factor affecting community-driven development today. The following comment submitted anonymously to the team after the first stakeholder meeting on the RSA (and relating to earlier discussion on ethnicity and conflict) seems germane: "one of the root causes of the Liberian conflict has to do with the institutionalization of a social class system where a minority group of influence control and alienate the majority; this minority controls political power and wealth/resources [to] the exclusion of the majority". The RSA research teams encountered similar sentiments during fieldwork:

> **Box 1:** "The elections will change nothing; they will bring their brothers and sisters from America and plug them in to the political system, then leave us aside to fight amongst ourselves. They think we are useless people, just floating people. We are not fighting for liberation any more, only for jealousy, because the country is not for everyone, only some people enjoy it". *LURD combatant, Zorzor Town, Lofa County, 11/8/04*

Where deference has been overturned it is only through violence by young "commoners" aspiring to rule by AK47. Clearly, this is no real change. Old gives way to new deference based on fear of the gun, and offers no plausible pathway to a society based on consent, fellow feeling and rule of law. The UNMIL intervention has stayed violent factionalism, and only now (with fear lifted) can it be expected that a new democratic culture might begin to take shape, given necessary support. In question is whether CDD will be a force for good or ill in helping shape that culture.

At issue will be the extent of the social fund's own efforts at inclusiveness and accountability to the silent, deferential classes. So many times we were told by villagers "yes people come, and call meetings, and tell us to organize, but we never hear from them again", or "we are so many villages in this clan, but the NGO only ever came to the headquarters, and never even knew about the people in the outlying settlements, who became resentful because nothing was ever sent for them". We will discuss below evidence that existing community-development practice in Liberia tends to empower brokers and patrons associated with the system that war has undermined, rather than the distant, silent and excluded. In future, CDD will have to be arranged so that it stimulates participants to build new cultures of fairness, inclusiveness and accountability. By no means does this mean trampling on elements of the traditional culture. Fieldworkers trying to build a culture of rights as part of the process of distributing humanitarian aid in the war zone in Sierra Leone decided (once they felt people had sufficiently discussed and agreed upon the injustices associated with a non-inclusive distribution) to ask what they might call the system of justice beginning to emerge. Villagers readily found the culturally appropriate phrase in Mende. It was that everybody now was "upper class". The equivalent to the Kpelle term cited by Gibbs—*toh nu* (upright or outstanding person)—is to say we are now all "children of the chief". Everyone, it is implied, is "outstanding" when included within the field of "human rights". Durkheim sees this as a cultic transformation—specifically, the emergence of a "cult of respect for the individual" (Durkheim 1933 [1893]). Life becomes secure only when all persons are regarded as sacred, even those who seem insignificant or abject. This will be a transformation of the political and social context of some magnitude in post-war rural Liberia.

2.2.3 Regional Context: What Goes Around Must Come Around?

In the past 15 years armed conflicts have affected six adjacent coastal countries in West Africa, and Liberia is reckoned the eye of the storm. This reflects two decades of intermittent Libyan intervention in the region. Disillusioned with pan-Arab politics, Col. Gaddafi turned to his African "backyard" and, under a policy of pan-Africanism, cultivated a number of would-be insurgents in the West African region. Ghanaian radical intellectuals were prominent among those attempting to develop a Green Book-based idea of popular insurgency against the one-party regimes and military dictatorships then dominant in West Africa, only to see their ideas taken over by a military opportunist, Jerry Rawlings. Charles Taylor and associates involved in founding the National Patriotic Front of Liberia were also among beneficiaries of Libyan backing. A small group of Libyan-trained Liberian soldiers—including Taylor's tactician, Prince Johnson—helped overthrow Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso in 1987. Some degree of encouragement seems to have come from Ivorian president, Houphouet Boigny, who later turned a blind eye to NPFL guerrillas gathering in Danane, in western Côte d'Ivoire, to begin their insurgency in Nimba County on December 24, 1989. Houphouet-Boigny had his own grievances to settle with the Liberian military dictator Samuel K. Doe, and the French business community in Abidjan, having helped to log the remaining forests in Côte d'Ivoire, eyed potential concessions in southeastern Liberia with interest.

Once started, war takes on a life of its own. The Liberian conflict drew upon a complex historical and social legacy, including a history of ethnically-based "trade war", a cultural legacy of youth mobilization for community defense, valuable and easily transported and smuggled "point resources" such as alluvial diamonds and gold, readily exchangeable for cheap, redundant stocks of ex-Cold War small arms, and a population of at-times willing young recruits, lacking education or jobs, and desperate for a taste of modernity after being raised in the "traditional" half of the Liberian dualistic state system in which many of the predicted failures of social cohesion under a "forced division of labor" are apparent.

Unsatisfactory borders, imposed on a weak Liberian state during the colonial period by British and French intrigue, divided many traditional communities. A rudimentary national road system traversing thickly forested country meant that a number of these borders were open forest wildernesses, defined by rivers, and largely undefended. Insurgents skilled in bush survival could pass to and from the three neighboring communities more or less at will, mining a rich vein of intra- and inter-communal tensions, to secure local

civilian allies. Logistics reverted to the ways of the Liberian state in an earlier era—local civilians (including many women and children) were conscripted to head-load materiel along forest tracks and cook and provide sexual services for the combatants. The harsh labor regime was enough to persuade young women and children with aptitude to seek a place in the guerrilla, it being better to carry a weapon than a box on the many hours of forest march.

The same kinds of conflict then took root on the other side of the border in all three neighboring countries, feeding on the same set of tactical resources and social conditions (especially mobilization of large numbers of poorly-educated, unemployed and socially-excluded youth) though in each case developing a specific dynamic, in articulation with national politics. In Sierra Leone war became a challenge to the hegemony of a diamond-rich mercantile elite; in Guinea it articulated regional and ethnic tensions in the national army; and in Côte d'Ivoire land, religion and citizenship for large populations of migrant "strangers" are at issue.

The various national governments have not been averse to hitting back at their perceived source of woe by arming cross-border insurgents of their own. Taylor's support for the RUF—"vanguards" were mainly trained in Liberia, and assisted in 1991-92 by a contingent of ex-NPFL "special forces" led by a Nimba County youth, Nixon Gaye—was countered by President Momoh's assistance to the anti-Taylor ULIMO forces. The Guineans responded to a Liberian-supported insurgency in 2000 in the forested southeast of the country by assisting LURD, a movement mainly comprising Liberian Mandingo, who (as one of their fighters told us) felt threatened by Taylor's people but unwelcome in Guinea. LURD also incorporates elements from the government-backed Civil Defense Forces in Sierra Leone. In Côte d'Ivoire the Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand Ouest (MPIGO), based in Danane, the former NPFL rear base, has challenged the government of Laurent Gbagbo in the forested west of the country, with support from the Taylor presidency while President Gbagbo appears to have helped launch the anti-Taylor Liberian faction MODEL.

A factor is the willingness of a floating population of experienced combatants to move from conflict to conflict. In 2002 former RUF commanders were recruiting young men in the Sierra Leone diamond fields on the promise of $1,000/month to fight in Côte d'Ivoire. The wages are in fact much lower (perhaps $100/month), and dry up completely if the commander is killed, leaving young fighters and their dependants vulnerable either to re-recruitment, or forced to labor for starvation wages in a strange environment. Among a group of ex-combatants in Gbarnga threatening violence for not being paid an expected advance of wages for their road cleaning work—an advance they needed to support themselves over the Independence Day holiday—were some Sierra Leoneans, with no family locally to whom they could turn for feeding. In Peye Town in Margbibi County we met two Sierra Leonean wives of former combatants. Scattered by war across the region, ex-combatants, or associates of fighters, are especially vulnerable to exploitation. The boys are sometimes found working for subsistence alone. The girls disappear into exploitative and abusive "marriage" or survive by prostitution. Other ex-combatants—having hung on to looted resources perhaps—move regionally, seeking the best disarmament opportunities. We encountered Sierra Leoneans, excluded from demobilization packages at home, seeking better luck in the current Liberian scheme. MODEL fighters are said to have hidden weapons along the eastern border, perhaps to rejoin the war in Côte d'Ivoire, but more likely to take advantage of a much more generous disarmament scheme in that country.

Has the wheel come full circle? Rumors and press reports in August 2004 (sufficiently serious to have elicited comment from the Liberian interim government) alleged attempts to recruit Liberians for a planned insurgency in Ghana, at an earlier stage the West African intellectual base for the Libyan-backed cult of Green Book revolution (Yeebo 1991). Ghana has long since been regarded as the West African beacon for democracy and institutional reform. If regional instability is now lapping at Ghana it is clear that, put bluntly, donor support for community-driven recovery in Liberia ought also to include some

consideration of the larger causes of endemic war within the region. If one element is an increasingly large group of rootless, unemployed youth, vulnerable to militia recruitment, then finding jobs for these young people and binding them into settled communities with clear national loyalties becomes a priority. This will require regionally-co-ordinated approaches, based on:

- realization by West African governments that supporting cross-border insurgency is a game that all can play but no one wins;
- regional co-ordination of DDR processes, including attempts to locate, repatriate and rehabilitate all the scatterlings of conflict;
- further progress in developing a regional capacity to monitor and secure national borders;
- regionally endorsed international sanctions against businesses dealing with cross-border insurgent groups;
- development of "smart" (i.e., historically and ethnographically sensitive) conflict resolution capacity in fragmented border-zone communities; and
- regional and international support for skills training and mobility (including effective ECOWAS citizenship and "Green Card" permits to obtain work in Europe).

2.3 Relevant Legislative and Regulatory Considerations

Ezekiel Pajibo, Director of the Centre for Democratic Empowerment in Monrovia, argues that the legislature, which continues to function, has limited legitimacy, since it largely comprises factions attaining influence through use of force (Pajibo 2004). Lawyers advise that constitutional reform must await a new elected government. However, the senate continues to pass new laws. The act constituting LACE is an example. Equally significant for community-driven development is the act passed in November 2003 legislating women's marriage rights, rights to property, and access to their children after divorce or widowhood. This removes the dualism of customary and statutory marriage. It implies major long-term change, not only in terms of gender empowerment, but also in access by village "rich men" to what Bledsoe (1980) terms "wealth in people." There seems to be awareness of the changes on the ground. Villagers in Peye and Peters Town, Margibi County, confirmed that a widow could inherit land, if married to a "son of the soil." But since marriage and inheritance issues play out over a lifetime it will be many years before the new act modifies the power base of rural elite males.

CDD cannot take place in a vacuum. If there is misappropriation of LACE funds, for example, the police and local courts will have to act. How much of local government is functional? At least some key local government officials are working. County Superintendents are currently posted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to six Counties. In the other cases UNMIL has only recently deployed and/or the Monrovia-approved incumbent has not yet taken up the post. The factions appointed their own officials, and these are either awaiting confirmation or replacement. In Buchanan we met the acting County Superintendent for Grand Bassa County. He has to work from war damaged buildings with few facilities or records, and communications with Monrovia are very limited.

3. CORE THEMES

3.1 Stakeholders

Who are, or should be, stakeholders in the process of community-driven recovery in post-war Liberia? An initial list will certainly include the following:

- Returning displaced and refugee populations
- Individuals and groups who remained in zones of conflict (stayees [remainees])
- Strangers (some of whom are locally-settled IDPs) and clients
- Outlying villages

- Community and religious leaders (including women's and youth organizations)
- Demobilized ex-combatants
- Civil society organizations
- Political representatives
- Government officials (especially the Ministries of Interior, Rural Development, Health, Education and Agriculture)
- Media
- International humanitarian and development agencies
- Local NGOs and citizen-based (civil society) groups
- Public sector and commercial service providers (e.g., local contractors)
- Police

The entries in this list are mainly self-evident. Further remarks are needed about "stayees", "strangers" and clients, outlying villages, civil society organizations, and media. The issue of community leadership is addressed below, in the section on institutions.

3.1.1 Stayees

We met communities where people had been forced to flee fighting on up to five occasions. After a time not everyone runs away. The old or handicapped (polio victims, for example) may have no means to escape. Some are killed in crossfire or in acts of cruelty by hyped-up combatants. Some starve. Others survive, though in conditions of extreme deprivation. The more times a community has been displaced, people told us, the more likely it is that at least some people will decide not to bother to run. Depending on terrain, some groups may prefer to seek refuge in caves, mountains, or deep forest recesses to an IDP camp. A forest botanist, Don Small, surveying the Gola Forest on the Sierra Leonean side of the border in the early 1950s identified a number of forest clearings that he determined were once hiding places during times of warfare (Small 1953). The strategy remains viable. Some groups become "stayees" not by hiding in the bush but by siding with the invaders. Local Mandingo populations did not flee LURD advances, since LURD was a Mandingo-led movement, and they felt protected. Stayees can face a variety of problems when IDPs and refugees return, depending on why they stayed. We were given examples of the special difficulties faced by the handicapped, elderly or unattached children if their relatives are not among the early returnees. Neighbors try to help but may have higher priorities among their own dependants. Sometimes the community will help the mentally disturbed by building a small kitchen in the bush, but it was admitted that detached and handicapped stayees frequently die of their privations. Forest stayees are often the first to re-emerge, and may protect an empty settlement from squatters, or begin the restoration of basic facilities, only to resent the resettlement assistance supplied to returning IDPs. Petty jealousies undermine community cohesion at a crucial point in the recovery cycle. Stayees who side with invaders can spark ethnic tensions. In one Lofa County settlement we visited, pre-war tensions between Loma and Mandingo sections of the community were exacerbated because the Mandingo (who alone stayed behind when LURD invaded) had not respected an earlier agreement about land boundaries within the town.

3.1.2 Strangers and Clients

As in many parts of West Africa Liberian villagers not tracing local descent are classed as "strangers" (i.e., as temporary residents under the protection of a village land owner). The rights of strangers are often tenuous. They depend on being in good standing with their landlord. Liberian "native" land tenure being a concession by the state to "customary" users barely recognizes the rights of strangers. There is nothing resembling a legally-enforceable, guaranteed short-hold tenancy agreement. Locally settled IDPs classed as strangers will do well to keep their mouths shut during community consultations. During a

meeting in Wohrn (a chiefdom headquarters in Margibi County) three members of the team facilitated a plenary and three breakout discussions for youths, females, men and elders, while the team leader carefully observed who spoke and who did not. Much of the discussion was led by members of the local Mercy Corps "Reflect" circle. When we asked why some women had not spoken, it was explained that some did not understand the visitors' non-Liberian English, and were embarrassed to join in the discussion. When later we asked why the same people had said nothing in break-out sessions (involving only Liberians) it was admitted the silent ones were IDPs, with no right to speak in a community discussion, on the grounds they would move on when their homes became safe to re-settle. CDD ought to involve even transient strangers, especially where the welfare of their children is involved. The issue of their involvement in CDD should at the very least be made an issue for discussion in facilitation sessions. Longer–term (settled) strangers often have the status of "work[ers] or clients" (Gibbs 1965, p. 214). Clients often in effect belong to claques bound to "praise the [big] man's name" (Gibbs 1965, p. 215). They remain silent in meetings (if they attend) since it is not their place to have opinions different from their patron. There are grounds to suspect that some of the silent ones in our meetings were clients (see section on land tenure below).

3.1.3 Outlying Villages

In our field meetings it was typically the case that villages in which we held meetings were the accessible headquarters point for a (so-called) clan. Clans in Liberia are territorial units, below chiefdoms and above towns, not groups linked by kinship or a shared sacred object (totem). Our methodology involved arranging meetings a day ahead and asking for all relevant outlying villages to be informed, and to attend the meeting the next day. In one case, Borkeza village, in rural Lofa County (a 40 minute walk from the Guinea border), only 3 out of 17 villages were represented. It may have been the case that the other villages could not attend at short notice, or that they may not have been invited by those the message was left with or, as is likely in this particular instance, that many of the satellite villages were not yet repopulated (Borkeza has only been resettled in recent months and consists mainly of temporary shelters while returnees are preoccupied with survival issues). However, it was a point repeatedly made in meetings that government and agencies talk only to more readily accessible populations. It is clear that, unless elaborate and time-consuming efforts are made to cover all groups, the more remote villages will not be invited. This causes problems; it was made clear that to not include all stakeholders is to invite jealousy, rumor and sabotage. Consequently, the main project will almost certainly fail, but making the effort to go there (if on foot, so much the better) already signals inclusiveness, and bodes well for possible success.

CDD in Liberia will only be as good as the time and effort it invests in basic communication, the quality and accessibility of its information, and the thoroughness with which the information is disseminated. Outlying villages must be recognized as special category stakeholders.

3.1.4 Civil Society Organizations

During our investigations a knowledgeable long-term observer of the Liberian scene pointed out that CDD in Liberia seemed in danger of excluding involvement of the educated "middle class". This raises an important danger. Although LACE is a Liberian institution, everyone knows that the social fund is endowed by the World Bank. It would be a mistake—at a time when the country is trying to move beyond patrimonialism—for the World Bank or other CDD donors to be perceived as courting direct relationships with rural communities (as if assuming the historical role of the Executive Mansion as patron-in-chief of interior community development processes). This might be read as an attempt to institute some kind of neo-colonial trusteeship.

It is important to involve national organizations campaigning for human rights, democracy and better governance, and develop for them a role as mentors and scrutinizers of LACE operations. They must be counted important stakeholders in Liberian CDD processes.

3.1.5 Media

A related point can be made about the media. Broadcast and print journalists need to be briefed about the CDD process, and given opportunities to follow a range of stories as the process unfolds. We involved TV in the Monrovia stakeholder discussions. Buchanan community radio covered our discussions with CBOs, and the Mercy Corps' Community Radio Team recorded our meetings in James Town for broadcast.

3.2 Participation and Consultation Mechanisms

Each community in which we made enquiries—even those only very incompletely settled—had procedures for participation and consultation. In each case there is a government structure (County, Clan and Town administrations, police posts, and government-appointed or locally-selected chiefs). In six of the more settled Counties local officials were present, and mainly confirmed in post, although buildings and equipment are often damaged or looted, and pay was slow to arrive or non-existent (a recipe for return to rent-seeking behaviors). In addition, communities have a range of informal committees for deciding on local development issues, including market committees, school parents associations, and a range of self-help work sharing and savings clubs.

It was several times remarked in RSA consultations that NGOs tend to set up parallel committee structures. Sometimes this is because they seem deliberately intent on bypassing local structures; at other times villagers say the NGO field agents simply failed to enquire what structures already exist, and to examine whether they might serve their purposes.

A particularly unfortunate aspect is that NGO-formed consultative and participatory structures often lead to the neglect of the more outlying and vulnerable settlements in a group. In part the issue is incomplete knowledge of the terrain. But it is also a product (it was implied) of the assimilation of the NGO presence to an old-established authoritarian political culture. The NGO—as a quasi-official entity—requests committees to be formed, and this is interpreted as a command. Little sense of ownership or inclusion emerges. Several times it was reported that NGO-established mechanisms fall into disuse when project funds are exhausted.

Many of the local self-help and development organizations described to the RSA teams in Lofa, Bong, Margibi and River Cess, had been formed in the 1970s and 1980s. While most NGO-initiated groups have collapsed, local groups have either persisted or, disbanded during the war, have now been reformed during resettlement.

Generally, it was pointed out that pre-existing mechanisms for participation and consultation are more likely to continue after a period of NGO investment than purpose-built committees. For instance, in Peters Town and Paye Town, Margibi County, RSA respondents said that between 1992 and 2004, NGOs (mainly international, but also national) had requested the establishment of no fewer than eight project committees, each of which had folded at the end of the respective project (with the exception of one ongoing project). One individual, who had been a member of five such committees, said that the NGOs seldom, if ever, asked about the existence of local structures, or other NGO-initiated structures:

Box 2: "They just tell us who they want in committees. So we just recycle the same leadership from one committee to another, and then tell the NGO that we 'elected' the people in the way they asked. We think of these committees as 'ready made jackets' that we have to wear. They don't promote our interests, and have nothing really to do with our needs; they are mainly to do what the NGO wants to do. We have to wear the jacket because we fear losing the support of the NGO, even if we are angry that we have to do things we wouldn't normally do, and plant things we wouldn't normally plant, we do not want to miss the things we need if eventually they come with them. For the things that are important to us, we mobilise our own groups and do the work that way". *Participant, Men's and Elders focus group, Peters Town, Margibi County, 8/8/04.*

CDD is an open invitation for these local, long-term mechanisms of participation and consultation to become engaged in making projects for submission to agencies such as LACE. Thus it is important to examine critically our informants' (implied) claim that existing structures are necessarily better because of their longevity. The interests represented need to be identified.

In some areas committees doubtless continue to reflect the interests of the upper echelons (both male and female) in the incipient class system described by Gibbs (1965). But additionally, there are signs—perhaps especially in rather strongly multi-cultural communities encountered in Grand Bassa and Margibi Counties—that existing committees tend rather effectively to mediate the interests of a range of groups endowed with "family land". This includes the class of former domestic slaves referred to by Gibbs (1965) as "sons [and daughters] of the soil" (p. 214). Strangers and clients remain outside the system of consultation. It was only when talking to ex-combatants, however, that criticisms of the way rural communities work as a system were voiced. Allegations of injustice, beatings, labor exploitation, and political thuggery were at times made to justify decisions never to go back.

An implication of this apparent silencing of fundamental criticism is that CDD needs to rethink its approach to learning about community structure and assessing both structural and cognitive social capital. At present agencies working in Liberia at community level rely mainly on group consultations (on best practice methods see www.worldbank.org/cdd).   This reflects the "inter-family" conversation of landowners but is deaf to the much harsher judgments of the (in part absent, and less readily vocal) client classes. Establishing who is absent and excluded should be a first step. Guidance from theory will be helpful. Delanty (2003) advocates an enlarged conception that recognizes community is no longer bounded by place, but defined by communication. This allows (in the Liberian case) recognition of the existence of distant components—specifically, diaspora and socially excluded elements. Empirical questions should then be asked about how distant elements communicate. Currently, the possibilities are changing (at least for diaspora elements) as cell-phone connections spread within post-war Liberia. But the excluded have other less obvious means of asserting their community involvement, and these also need to be recognized and monitored. Utas (2005) describes, for example, how ex-combatants used occasional church attendance and gifts as a way of signaling their continued (distant) presence and eventual intention to seek reintegration. Bringing these rather cryptic clues to light will require a more subtle, intensive, and expensive mode of investigation (approximating closer to established anthropological field methods) than the current set of participatory research tools. It will be better to create the capacity locally (e.g., through re-establishment of local social research institutions) than by buying in external expertise. A second step will then be required—how to give voice to distant elements, not least, the excluded and disadvantaged youth. This requires negotiation with community leaders whose current power reflects their ability to define the community and its membership. Agencies funding CDD have a strong potential bargaining position in such negotiations, but currently a problem is that they know too little about who might be there, and there is too little agreement among Liberians about who ought to be there. Commitment to, and resources for, resolving these issues (using, for example, some of the

established methods of mediation and conflict resolution, cf. Tillett 1999) is a pre-requisite for other forms of investment in community reconstruction.

3.3 Social Diversity and Gender

3.3.1 Social Diversity

Ethnographically, Liberia can be divided into the more hierarchically organized societies of the north and northwest, corresponding to areas in which Mande and Mel (Atlantic) languages are spoken (Kpelle, Vai, Gola, etc.), and the more decentralized, egalitarian societies of the southeast (Kru, Bassa, Krahn, etc.). The differences are not absolute. Common institutions—such as co-operative labor associations (*kuu*), sodalities and masquerades—are widely distributed. But leadership tends to work differently in the north and southeast. Leaders come from an upper stratum of society (*toh nuuwai* among the Kpelle). In some cases, people of commoner or slave origins are said to be initiated separately or excluded from the higher grades of sodalities.

Leadership in the southeast is based more on competition and achievement between rival big men. Chiefs may have ritual significance but tend to lack executive authority; organization of youth by age cohort has considerable significance. The Liberian state has imposed general features on local leadership, since the chief is a paid official of the state, with certain fixed duties in maintaining order and reporting to government. State interaction with northern and northwestern peoples has been more intense over time, and has tended to set the general pattern. The documentation of the isolated and sparsely populated interior southeast is much less rich. Accessibility has always been an issue. UNMIL deployed last in the southeast, and this limited RSA fieldwork. The Krahn/Kru language group spreads across the forests of southeastern Liberia and western Côte d'Ivoire, and further work seems necessary (perhaps in co-operation with an RSA of Côte d'Ivoire and UNDP's plans for a regional conflict analysis) to assess cross-border issues affecting conflict in both countries.

3.3.2 Gender

The social roles of men and women are strongly differentiated throughout rural Liberia, in symbolic and ritual terms. Genital cutting, in initiation, is sometimes represented as removing the last traces of gender ambiguity. Poro and Sande (male and female initiation societies encountered widely in the northwest) alternated in possession of sacred bush. When Sande is in session the female elders have authority to control the movements and behavior of men. Traditionally, a Poro session lasted for four years and a Sande session for three—three and four are numbers symbolizing women and men respectively.

Ritual and symbolic differentiation underpins complementarity of roles. Men clear and burn the bush for farming, and climb palm trees and fight war. Women nurture rice plants and children, and are forbidden (or refuse) to slaughter goats and chickens. Gender solidarity is often high, in rural Liberia, as a result of bonds created through initiation, and women are as prominent as men at forming rotational labor and farming co-operative savings groups. But a development that has shocked many Liberians in recent years is the breakdown of the taboo, for women, on killing and fighting in war.

> **Box 3:** "I joined the rebel forces to fight inequality in the country, and because of this issue I also encouraged my three children to join. The war here is like ringworm; unless you treat it or cure it properly it will surely reappear, sometimes in the same place, but other times, surprisingly, where you might not expect it". *Elderly female ex-combatant, VOA Camp, Margibi County*
>
> "They (government forces) killed my parents and my brothers in front of me, and then raped me. I joined the rebels for protection and revenge." *Female ex-combatant (LURD), 22 years, Gbarnga, 13/8/04*

This rapid, and, to many, very adverse blurring of gender roles needs some analysis. The history of the region makes clear that beneath symbolic and ritual complementarities there have always been very major economic and political inequalities between (most) women and (a few) rural elite men. Polygyny lies at the heart of this difference. Vai chiefs in the 19th century (involved in the Atlantic trade from the Galinhas and Cape Mount, and perhaps wealthier than interior chiefs) sometimes had between 20 and 40 wives, and a few had more than 100. A document from 1812 gives the reason: "if you ask them why they have so many women they will tell you clearly they have them to work for them" (Jones 1983, p. 189). Jones adds that 18th and 19th century observers were struck by the amount of arduous work done by women, both in farming and in plastering houses, processing oil palm, salt making and other non-domestic work. He remarks "in agriculture, female labor complemented the work of male slaves" (p. 189). Thus gender relations among the Vai encompassed control, by a male elite, of the labor of both women and male slaves (or today, to subordinate male youth). The picture was true for much of rural interior Liberia.

Chiefs accumulated women for more than their work. They also controlled and redistributed women's sexual and reproductive services, favoring the making of political alliances, clients, and reproduction of a slave class. "In the nineteenth century, as in the seventeenth, chiefs were given wives as a token of respect, or to strengthen a friendship" (Jones 1983, p. 189). Slaves could only marry if they were given a wife by their master. Clients were sometimes a product of the fact that a chief had too many wives to control. "Adultery cases outnumbered all others in judicial proceedings: in 1850, for instance, all but two of the thirty-two prisoners held in chains at Gendema were there for adultery with Prince Mana's wives" (Jones 1983, p. 189). Typically, a poor young man might work off a large fine for "woman damage" by laboring on the farm of the chief with whose wife he had had a relationship.

The situation remains recognizably similar in many parts of rural Liberia today. Chiefs and elders still build alliances through exchanging women. Descent groups compensate each other at marriage by refundable bride wealth transfers, with the effect that a woman fleeing an unsatisfactory or abusive relationship risks losing access to land, property and children, if her family was unwilling or unable to refund the marriage payment. Wealthy men accumulate multiple wives, and still bind clients to them by monitoring extra-marital affairs. In RSA fieldwork young men reported being fined for women damage cases, and that (more generally) elders wielded power over them by fining them large amounts for petty misdemeanors or on trumped charges, commuting impossibly large fines to labor service on the farm or plantation of the plaintiff or Justice of the Peace. In short, marriage (and rural justice more generally) operates as a thinly disguised system for extraction of unpaid youth labor, a system that the youth focus groups in Peters and Paye Towns referred to as "jungle justice".

The *Act to Govern the Devolution of Estates and Establish the Rights of Inheritance for Spouses of Both Statutory and Customary Marriages* approved by the House of Representatives October 7, 2003 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003) alters the situation radically, for both rural women and impoverished male youth. Specifically, it prohibits compulsory bride wealth transactions (dowry) ("any husband who collects or attempts to collect dowry from the wife or parent by use of force, directly or indirectly, has committed a felony of the first degree" [Section 2.2]), forbids compulsory labor by the wife (Section 2.4) and renders it illegal for parents to choose their daughter's husband or "to compel the daughter or other female relative to marry a man not of her choice" (Section 2.10). Additionally, "no customary husband shall aid, abet, or create the situation for his customary wife to have illicit sexual intercourse with another man for the sole purpose of collecting damages" (Section 2.7), and it is unlawful for "any customary person or husband to compel or demand any female of legal age, whether or not she is his customary wife, to "confess" or call the name of her lover...in order to collect damages from the said lover..." (Section 2.8). In short, the act specifically recognizes and legislates against some of the major ways in which male elders in the rural areas have maintained control over the reproductive powers of young women and the surplus labor of dependent young men for several centuries. In principle, the act signals a

major change in gender relations and relations between elders and youth in the Liberian countryside. It remains to be seen how well and quickly this law will be implemented under an elected government from 2005.

Women have suffered greatly from sexual violence in 14 years of armed conflict in Liberia. In addition to supporting calls to address sexual violence as part of the healing process (Maynard 1999, pp. 189-90) we would also note the need to address a predisposing factor—extreme poverty. Some young men explicitly link their involvement in the Liberian war to the fact of being too poor to marry (Utas 2003). Marginalized youths sought to free themselves, through violence, from a deeply entrenched marriage system, through which elders exercised control over female and male alike. Sexual violence became—for some young men—a kind of revenge on a system that humiliated them and denied them the opportunity to form more stable family bonds. Marginalized young women also joined the militia ranks, some becoming feared killers. When asked about their reasons, some remark that they chose violence to protect themselves from (sexual) violence. Protection is a different motivation from revenge, of course, but it too came at the price of harming others. The new law on marriage envisages reproduction and a household division of labor shaped by co-operation and respect, not fear and control.

3.4 Three Important Rural Institutions of Relevance to CDD

3.4.1 Sodalities

Universal membership (via initiation) of adults in gender-specific closed associations (sodalities) is one of the most striking features of village society in much of rural Liberia. Poro (for men) and Sande (for women) are found throughout the northwest. The Poro Belt overlaps a somewhat separate masking tradition found among the Gio and other groups in the north and northeast. The southeast has its own initiation procedures and cults, but serving broadly similar purposes. These include instructing young adults in the duties proper to their gender identity (warfare, procreation), the shaping of inter-family bonds among cohorts of initiates, and respect for local leaders, traditions and sacred symbols. As Gibbs (1965, p. 219-20) writes "The masquerade is no mere frivolity: it generates the deference and fear that must surround [the Great Masked Thing] if the Poro is to carry out its social control functions that link it to political institutions."

Initiation has been disrupted by the war, and there are some communities in which Poro and Sande may well be dormant or defunct (see discussion of social capital below). But in other areas initiation traditions remain strong or are being revived. Poro sacred sites have been attacked in fighting, and Muslim Mandingo neighbors of the Loma stand accused of iconoclasm, as do some Pentecostal groups.

An important aspect of the Poro Tradition is its sociology of knowledge. Initiates are taught the tremendous importance of secrecy—specifically, knowing when and when not to speak. The societies impose substantial fines for breaches of rules, including revealing of secrets. There is some evidence that in the past Poro was used to preserve "trade secrets", co-ordinate war, impose peace and maintain a common cultural front against an expanding Liberian state. It also helped maintain the quite strongly hierarchical village structures of the societies of the northwest. Harris, an Anglo-Jewish trader among the Vai in the 19th century (and a Poro member) wrote "I have been present at porras [sic] where no person but an undoubted chief has been admitted" (Jones 1983, p. 180). Even so, as Jones comments, "the Poro elders knew that they depended on the young men (whatever their Poro status) when it came to hard labor or warfare" (p. 180).

Because of secrecy, the status of the abundant literature on the sodalities in the region is not immediately clear. Non-initiates are not supposed to know, and initiates are forbidden to tell. Gibbs (1965) remarks

that "there is no reliable study based on detailed observation of the activities of the Poro and Sande, but the general features and functions are known" (p. 219). According to Ellis (1999) corruption of the rituals associated with the sodalities (including capital punishment and human sacrifice) has impacted on patterns of violence in the Liberian war, but some wonder about the accuracy of the largely missionary-derived sources upon which he establishes his case. Others see the sodalities as a challenge to open governance. The discipline of silence and the "language of secrecy" (Bellman 1982) seemingly undermine participatory development, with its discursive requirement for consultation and honest expression of points of view.

3.4.2 Chieftaincy and Rural Justice

Liberia is administratively divided into 15 Counties, in which the main representative of government is the County Superintendent. S/he and her/his officials engage with a set of chiefs, whose positions are a kind of hybrid between civil servant and constitutional monarch. The main figure is the Paramount Chief, a salaried official who mediates between government and people, on behalf of several district chiefdoms, termed clans (though in Liberia this is purely a territorial designation). Each clan is ruled by a district chief. Under the clan chief there are various town chiefs and quarter elders. Most chiefdoms and clans owe something to tribal custom. Gibbs (1965, p. 216) suggests that the unity of a [Kpelle] chiefdom derives from "dialectal differences, hazy tales of common origin or migration, former common enemies, and allegiance to common chiefs who were historical figures" (Gibbs 1965, p. 216). But in some cases (especially in the vicinity of Monrovia) the local unit is an arrangement between the settler government and local power brokers, taking account of shifting trade alliances and migration in the first half of the 20th century. These synthetic chiefdoms tend to be ethnically highly mixed. One chiefdom (Mecca) was created as a territory for the Mandingo, who otherwise tend to be scattered widely in northwest and northern Liberia, as a result of trading activities.

Chiefs are "elected", i.e., their appointment is approved by government, after being nominated by elders. The main task of chiefs is to preserve order, hear disputes, collect tax, recruit labor, and maintain paths and access roads, while also conveying orders from County Superintendents and other government officials. The Paramount Chief is advised by a council of district chiefs. The Paramount and District Chiefs are generally quite remote. Villagers generally feel that they are more in touch with Town Chiefs than his/her superiors. Quarter elders hear the lowest level of disputes. Some are designated as Justices of the Peace.

We heard considerable skepticism in our field discussions concerning all levels of the local administrative system. Young people frequently complained about the way village elders manipulated cases against them to levy fines, which were then commuted to "free" farm labor.

Box 4: "This war was caused by poverty and injustice. Our (youth) poverty is caused by having no education, no training, no money and no jobs. They (Town Chiefs) fine us too much for any small thing. Because we are poor, we cannot pay. So somebody 'buys' our case, and then we have to work for that person, and for the chief. This means we cannot work for ourselves, so we get poorer, so some have to steal to survive and, when they get caught, they get fined again. We don't call this justice, we call it jungle justice, and the only outcome will be back to war." *Youth Group participant, Peters Town, Margibi, 8/8/04*

When discussing the idea of CDD a number of people were unhappy with involving some officials in County Administrations, whom they accused of being partisan or corrupt. The poorest young people—"wives" with fewest marriage rights and the "workmen and clients" of Gibbs' scheme—have used their exit options. Many enjoyed a kind of social freedom in the militia, but lack the education and skills for

successful life in the city. The grumbling we heard in the villages seemed mild by comparison with the complaints about chiefdom and village governance muttered by ex-combatants. It seems unlikely they will successfully settle in the environment where they fit best——rural areas—without major overhaul and modernization of traditional rule and customary justice.

3.4.3 Land Tenure

Liberia has a dual system of land tenure. The government owns and administers public land. Aboriginal communities are permitted to maintain lineage-based communal tenure. Communal tenure is a functional necessity for rotational bush fallowing systems of dry-land rice cultivation. This system of farming is declining rapidly in many parts of the country, and in such areas communal tenure can now be considered to be obsolete. From the mid-20th century., increasing amounts of land have been acquired, surveyed and deeded under a fee simple system, supervised by the Executive Mansion.

Increasingly, aboriginal families and communities familiar with the administrative procedures of the Liberian state have applied for deeds of ownership. In Peters and Peye Towns, Margibi County, we were told that "family reserve" lands were surveyed and deeded during the 1940s. Informants in Tomu (Bong) and James Town (River Cess) reported familiarity with the same "family reserve" arrangements and that some land is deeded. In granting recognition of land ownership the state applies the criterion of degree of assimilation to the values of "civilized" (i.e., settler) society.

How deeding of land has affected social cohesion within and among rural communities is an important question for CDD. Further research will be needed to determine levels of variation in deeded ownership, within communities and across the country. It seems likely that deeding will correlate with prosperity, closeness to Monrovia, levels of education and size and degree of political influence of descent groups. Seemingly, modern land registration has been used by the state as a mechanism of political control. The need to seek Executive Mansion approval invites loyalty to the government of the day. It is also alleged that Land Commissioners have been manipulated in preparing claims. But this is no argument for reverting to undocumented custom. The requirement is to make existing procedures more explicit, accountable, and accessible to the poor and landless.

Under the Liberian constitution the state allocates unassigned land. Thus land reform is not the issue. What is more to the point is whether action may be needed to assist excluded groups to claim land rights under the existing statutory system. To gain access to land under family reserve a young person must be in good standing with the elders who "rule" the descent group. Big men aim for their children to become *kwii*, settled in the city. Returning to the village to claim family land is probably only an issue for when they retire.

Some part of the rural population, however—and possibly a large number (especially among the more hierarchical societies of the northwest)—belongs to leading families not by descent but by attachment. As Gibbs (1965) describes for the Kpelle: a *toh nuu* [literally, upstanding, i.e., prominent, person] may allow some of his polygynously-married women "to become consorts of poor men of the lower class who become his *tii keh nuwai* [workmen or clients]…another source of labor to work on the patron's farms…[and] a ready-made claque…sure to praise the man's name" (p. 215). It can be considered an axiom that those who belong to such claques will never "speak their minds". This is one reason why consultations over CDD—based on e.g., the standard World Bank methodology of group consultations for assessing social capital and the strength of local institutions (see www.worldbank.org/cdd [follow links to SOCAT])—will tend to underestimate dissatisfaction with the way existing communities work, and mask the possibility that some young people might prefer not to go home, but to become settlers, and found new communities on government granted land.

Another factor tending to obscure the land issue is that elders tend to include all rural youth under the optimistic scenario they speak for their own children. An elder in Peters Town (Margibi) said that while the labor and spirit of youth might be missed in the village, it is more useful to have young people in urban areas, because of remittances from wages, or because they are points of contact when villagers go to the city on business or for medical care. Most ex-combatants we talked to had aspirations for urban life; they mainly want skills training so that they can integrate into the city. It was at times hard to see if they were being pulled (by bright lights) or pushed (by fear of falling into clientage).

Only a small percentage of the ex-combatants we interviewed (about one in ten) seemed seriously interested in returning home to do agricultural work. This group is important, nevertheless, because if successful it would influence the aspirations of others. DDR should certainly include training for farming (e.g., oil palm planting and rubber out-growers), but land access problems hamper the most severely socially excluded groups (those who feel they cannot settle back "at home" or who would have only week land rights were they to return). In Buchanan, the association of unemployed school leaders already plans to ask the Land Commissioner for a land grant to begin co-operative farming activities. A large group of MODEL squatters is currently self-settled in the Sapo forest, and negotiations for their disarmament should include attention to possible sustainable forest-based activities.

Whether or not land grants can be used to tie down and integrate the floating populations of young people from among whom much militia recruitment took place is an issue for government, since it alone controls the mechanism for making such grants. Even so, it is important for programs pursuing CDD to understand the land issue. Silence on land must be seen as structural, and not (alone) an issue of communicative competence. Bringing out the hidden importance of the land issue requires more penetrative investigative methods than the discourse-based consultations currently favored by CDD. Second, if government did try to settle footloose youth, e.g., by land grants to school leavers or ex-combatants seeking to occupy forested land outside gazetted reserves CDD, would need to find ways to fund new as well as existing community groups. A bias toward actual as opposed to potential communities risks rebuilding some of the causes of the war.

3.5 Social Capital for CDD

The basic idea of social capital is that people have institutional resources and understandings, organizational capacities and network linkages beyond the immediate family group, and that these can be invested in social development (specifically, in the Liberian case in post-war recovery). To assess the social capital of community groups is to ask what such groups could invest in CDD beyond labor and/or cash required to qualify for a grant. But there are basic disagreements about whether social capital is readily available and easily multiplied or subject to hoarding and in short supply. According to one view, social capital is seen as something that is potentially accessible to all, for example networking in business (Lin 2001). (Networking may not always be a plus for society-at-large; criminal organizations are also often highly networked.) A second standpoint emphasizes the idea that cliques, classes or controlling elites hoard social capital, and use it to reproduce their advantage over others within a group (Bourdieu 1977). Both notions seem applicable to social capital in Liberia, depending on the form of organization under scrutiny.

Informal labor and savings co-operatives (generally known as *kuu*) and sodalities (gender-specific closed associations based on initiation and secrecy) are the two main long-established organizational formats within which social capital is generated in Liberia. Both types have rather simple material requirements, but involve considerable cultural complexity. Thus they are best regarded as generators of cognitive rather than structural social capital (i.e., their value lies in the possibilities for trust and co-ordination based on the shaping of shared assumptions and ways of perceiving the world, than through infrastructure).

The start-up costs for the simplest *kuu* are negligible—for a group of villagers to come together and agree to work on members' farms in turn, or to rebuild houses with thatch and wattle-and-daub requires only that the idea remains in members' heads and they honor their obligation to turn up for work on set days. The recipient of labor for the day is generally expected to prepare a decent meal, and in very impoverished circumstances that may be difficult. The handicapped and single-parent households may not be able to meet even this simple entry requirement, and so lose the benefits of timely, group-energized work.

Rotational savings clubs (RoSCAs) require the wherewithal to make a regular cash investment to create and sustain a pot borrowed by each member in turn, and again in very cash-starved circumstances of immediate post-war recovery it seems that not all potential members have even the modest weekly or monthly subscription required. Men, women and children in rural Liberia readily form labor clubs for gender- or age-specific activities, and often link work sharing to other cultural, sporting, religious or social welfare activities. Women tend to be particularly interested in RoSCAs, since they highly value petty trading activities, and the pot is a way of "buying a market" (acquiring an initial stock of trading items).

As discussed in the literature review *kuu* are general throughout Liberia (although with a lot of local variation in combinations of activities, extent of formal organization, sanctions applied to defaulters, etc.). Because they have few start-up requirements beyond familiarity with and confidence in the basic idea, they re-emerge quickly upon re-settlement. *Kuu* groups were reported or evident in all the villages we visited, including LURD-controlled parts of Lofa County where demobilization is in a very early stage. People agreed that some highly vulnerable classes of people, such as the handicapped, were excluded from *kuu*. But the vast majority of villagers are free to take part. The village elite tend not to participate directly, but sometimes hire work groups for cash (a *kuu* with a reputation for hard work is preferred to casual labor, and it is a useful source of cash for a group seeking to start RoSCA activities in addition to laboring). Since the form is so widespread and important throughout Liberia, LACE needs to consider under what circumstances it will entertain applications from *kuu* groups (would applications to capitalize women's RoSCAs qualify, for example?).

Sodalities have somewhat higher start-up costs. Unlike the imposing Masonic Temple in Monrovia, wrecked in fighting, the premises of the sodalities are areas of sacred forest, and thus not very vulnerable to destruction in fighting. In some parts of Lofa County, however, ritual objects necessary to the functioning of Poro (notably masks) have been destroyed or looted by the armed groups. Sande—the women's sodality—has some dependence on village-based premises, because of its control over reproductive knowledge; it is in effect the organization of the traditional birth attendants, and destruction in villages will have had an impact on this aspect of its work. No one talks openly about Poro and Sande, but it seems likely that the sodalities are at a low ebb, affected to some degree by the fighting, and that there is a backlog of parents hoping to initiate children. Part of the problem is that initiation is a major expense in village terms, and parents as yet lack the rice or money they will need. We heard reports that in some areas no children have been initiated for 10 years or more, but we did see fresh society girls in Grand Bassa County.

The sodalities are examples of social capital in which it can be argued an elite hoards institutional resources to the disadvantage of a non-elite. Descriptions of Poro from the 17th century to the 19th century—including some by traders who were members—suggest that the Poro was internally stratified, and that decisions were taken only by a high-ranking elite (Jones 1983). Men of slave or client origins seem either to have been initiated separately in low-status lodges, or were disbarred from higher ranks. The fear and deference inculcated in ordinary members at initiation sustained a respect for secrecy that was important in war or the maintenance of trading advantage, but may also have protected the decisions of the elite from scrutiny or challenge by the rank-and-file.

Liberians also belong to a range of modern organizations, considered as influential in the formation of community-level social capital. These include religious groups (often linked to education and health) and associations based around sport and entertainment, especially in Monrovia. Monrovia also has many ethnic associations, some of which (e.g., among the Kru community) have played an important role (since the 1920s) in providing jobs, land and social welfare. Monrovia is today a city of IDPs, and everywhere people complain of poverty and lack of resources. Family survival is a main concern. Outside the official IDP camps many IDPs live with urban-based kin. Providing for these new dependants absorbs much of the time and effort that might otherwise be invested in other forms of associational life. Social welfare, and other associational activities thus tend to be at low ebb.

It might be considered, therefore, that formation of modern social capital is inhibited. Counter evidence is provided by the evident continued expansion of Pentecostal churches in Liberia, despite (or perhaps because of) the war. Ever since the work of Max Weber and R. H. Tawney there has been a debate about whether certain forms of religion create or reflect growing individualism, but there would probably be a consensus that individualism is on the rise (both globally, and in post-war Liberia). Whether the success of the Pentecostal churches is seen as proxy or cause, it would be a reasonable working assumption that the cognitive social capital associated with individualism will continue to gain ground at the expense of collectivist cognitive frameworks (e.g., inculcated by the sodalities). This has important implications for CDD. If the basis for community cohesion changes, then assumptions about what kind of entity CDD seeks to empower also need to change. The vertically integrated, place-bound community, in which a collectivist moral order impels community co-operation in CDD, may have to be supplemented, in post-war Liberia, by more extended definitions (cf. Delanty 2003) embracing a wider range of virtual and interest-based groupings (with overlapping memberships). People may play the game—and re-invent place-based community, if that is what CDD operations require—but their heart may not be in it (and management will suffer). Better, perhaps, to change CDD rules and operations so that they accommodate occupation-based associations and faith-based groups, to permit better use of the specific forms of individualized social capital such groups are likely to inculcate.

3.6 Vulnerability and Social Risk

We wished to find out through RSA fieldwork, which groups and categories of individuals are at exceptional risk in the post-war recovery process. This is a different question from asking who has suffered most from the war. The answer to that second question is generally well documented—civilians in general, and women, children and the elderly from the more isolated communities, in particular. An answer to the first question requires some knowledge of the resettlement process. The more general aspect of this topic (flash points for future conflict) is discussed below. Here we focus on what we learnt about individuals or groups most likely to be excluded from or marginalized by recovery processes.

Villagers often had a very clear idea of the identity of the most vulnerable. Families were split up by conflict. The able bodied would tend to flee as a group, eventually to find refuge in a camp, but not all household dependants were able to make it. The disabled, or the elderly, might detach themselves from the group through their weakness and immobility. Children might have been absent on an errand at the moment of flight, finding their way back to their home village only after a rebel group had taken charge. These contingencies have resulted in groups of detached or isolated dependants, often with special needs, in most villages. Neighbors try to help—children may be fostered, a kitchen may be built in the bush for the mentally disturbed—but family priorities come first. The detached need their families. UNICEF has done a great deal of family tracing work for registered child ex-combatants, but non-militia related detached dependants must await the eventual return of their families.

A second aspect is that war has created a new category of strangers—detached camp followers. The militia group is not just an army. It is a social formation. Unsupported by the state (as with a regular

army) the militia group lives off the land. This means not only raiding for supplies, but also creating its own local social organization, for food supply, transportation, and eventually reproduction. Curious or quaint names (combat wives unit, small boys unit, revolutionary land army, and the like) disguise the truth that the functionaries have been seized and enslaved as cultivators, cooks, messengers, porters and wives. Many of those so seized already belonged to a class fraction liable to end up as clients and junior wives. Some had already escaped their villages, in either a spirit of rebelliousness of resentment at traditional oppression. They had few options for protection or flight when the militia forces arrived.

Young people are flexible and adapt, to survive conditions that might kill an adult. A girl gang raped by fighters might decide to try to build a more stable relationship with a particularly strong member of the group to ensure her own survival and protection. Leading fighters became polygynists on the scale of some of the war chiefs in the 19th century. A favored wife of a fighter might then become a trusted consort, in effect in charge of a large domestic group. Vulnerability sets in when the fighter is killed, joins another force (maybe fighting in another country), or abandons his group for demobilization.

Abandoned militia dependants are found throughout rural Liberia and in neighboring countries. The problem of reuniting them with their families is complicated by the extent to which all militia factions have been involved in cross-border operations. We heard about Liberian fighters who brought back a new captured girl friend from every raid into Sierra Leone. The factions themselves moved their slaves and concubines over quite large distances as the fortunes of war ebbed and flowed. A senior member of the RUF women's wing interviewed in Kailahun in 2003 told us she thought that there were thousands of Sierra Leonean girls—abducted by the movement over a period of 10 years, and presumed dead by their families—scattered across the remoter villages of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, with no resources, or too ashamed, to contact their families (Richards et al. 2003).

We encountered two such Sierra Leonean girls, abandoned consorts of fighters, and others who had been taken as wives (some while refugees, others during the insurgency in Sierra Leone) by combatants, living in Peye Town, Margibi County, suggesting the problem is real. It has already been suggested that strangers and clients are at the bottom of the social pile in rural Liberia, invisible to the state, and dependent for their rights and protections on the good will of a patron. But the hijacked scatterlings of war are at the bottom of the bottom pile. Among their few options, these abandoned girls can accept a village marriage if offered, but they will have fewer protections than usual since their families do not know where they are, or how to approach an unfamiliar system in trying to protest abuse. The girls will be fortunate if they can ever salt away enough money to search for their families unaided. The options for a boy are to become a laborer attached to a village big man. Attachment between a displaced laboring camp follower and a village big man might provided food but no wages—domestic slavery, in effect (Richards et al. 2004). Fearing a useful client might abscond, patrons sometimes give dire (and exaggerated) warnings about the danger from lynch mobs, or war crimes prosecutions should a client decide to go back home. It appears, however, that UNMIL has been more accommodating of fighters' dependants than UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone. Even so, the current 3:1 ratio between demobilizing ex-combatants and guns suggests that only immediate dependants are included. A thorough survey will be needed to identify the scale of the problem of detached camp followers in Liberia and the wider region.

3.7 Conflict Analysis

This section offers a brief analysis of important factors underlying the conflict in Liberia, and identifies some current flash points around which (if un-addressed) war may revive. Options for community conflict resolution are italicized.

Mercantilism (the attempt to link the fortunes of the polity to control and expansion of trade) was important in the founding of Liberia, and continues to be a main focus for political thinking. The True Whig Party's hegemony over trade and resources was destroyed by the Doe coup, and no new hegemonic project has succeeded since. In part, this is because Charles Taylor, although raised in a settler-mercantilist way of thinking (as an economist), came to prominence (rather paradoxically) with Libyan support, and thus imbibed (even if only temporarily, and rhetorically) some of Gaddafi's stress on anti-merchant, youth-oriented populism. Unlike Rawlings in Ghana, Taylor lacked the resources (or fortune) to capture and stabilize a populist revolution, adroitly to move (as did Rawlings) to an agenda of democratic/neo-liberal reform. In allowing his rural supporters to attack Mandingo interests Taylor eroded one vital leg in the system that had propped up the True Whig hegemony, and which Doe tried to maintain. Liberia collapsed into a violent conflict for control of key trading routes, resembling the struggles of 19th century war lords. The controlling emphasis of the True Whig regime on ethnic competition as a resource through which to divide and rule was succeeded by a free-for-all in which ethnic sentiment became a license for outrages intended to terrify and suppress. Taylor's enemies—both the Mandingo and elements in the marginalized and exploited southeast—mobilized against him, and the most recent phase of the war commenced. Ethnic tensions—especially between the Mandingo and some of Taylor's rural support in the north—are now an entrenched aspect of the Liberian crisis. Mercantilism is a continuing factor in the conflict and requires to be addressed through institutional reforms designed to strengthen business competition and limit monopoly stemming from overlap of business opportunities and the holding of political office.

CDD in post-war Liberia will have to take account of these continuing ethnic tensions. In particular there seem to be special problems with the re-incorporation of ex-combatants from LURD (a Mandingo armed faction) at the community level. Apparently in response to earlier anti-Mandingo harassment by Taylor loyalists from Nimba County, and the burning of Mandingo property in Lofa County by Taylor-linked forces led by the RUF fugitive, the late Samuel Bockarie ("Maskita"), LURD fighters have attacked civilians and desecrated Poro shrines in Lofa County, and taken over the property of non-Mandingo refugees. LURD fighters are reluctant to disarm, because they suspect they will not be accepted back into their home communities. Even before the war these settlements were strongly segregated into Mandingo sections and sections housing other groups (Kpelle, Gbande, and especially Loma). They now fear civilian revenge, and war crimes prosecutions (it is a widespread fear among ex-combatants we talked to that the photograph necessary to make their entitlement ID card is entered into a record system to be used eventually in war crimes prosecutions, on the model of the Special Court in Sierra Leone). LURD fighters have even less reason to disarm since a sizeable group of "hunters" from Nimba (but in reality probably un-disarmed Taylor loyalists) took up positions in forested areas of Lofa County in August 2004. It seems they are pre-positioning themselves for a further burst of anti-Mandingo activity, perhaps across the border in Guinea, where the President is reputed to be in poor health and a succession battle may loom. The negligible progress toward disarmament in Voinjama and the clear evidence we picked up that few local communities are likely to forgive-and-forget, or even re-admit former LURD fighters can only be described as worrying. A second zone of especial ethnic tension at the community level is to be located between Nimba and Grand Gedeh Counties, where Taylor-loyalist and Doe-loyalists communities adjoin. An aspect of earlier violence was a degree of ethnic cleansing (notably, atrocities against partners and children of mixed Krahn-Gio/Mano marriages). Again the slow pace of disarmament (in Ganta and Zwedru) is a cause for concern. Attempts must continue to seek rapprochement between

the Mandingo community and other groups in Liberian society, and to encourage feelings of secure citizenship among all Liberians.

War in Liberia (as in other parts of West Africa) has been fed by a demographic-structural factor—the large percentage of impoverished young people in the total population, and the failure of corrupt and impoverished governments to invest sufficiently in education and jobs training to equip these young people for employment. Access to education is rationed by distance from the capital and inability to catch the eye of politicians building patrimonial networks, at a time when glimpses of the wider world, though films, TV and internet convey to young Liberians images of success based on merit and self-reliance (not least, the images of military and technical self-reliance conveyed by Rambo-like film characters). The ex-combatants insist that the war will only end if a higher profile is given to education, skills and jobs. In many cases they suggest this is also the key to their community integration. Most want to go home, but they sense people will only accept them if they are engaged in remaking that which fighting destroyed. Hence, construction skills appeal enormously. They want, literally, to make peace. But equally, the lack of skills training capacity, and delays in establishing viable skills programs are among the major flash points for a return to war. Some factions are taking the law into their own hands, and making their own employment as squatters in mining areas or forest reserves. Skills training to enhance the self-employment prospects of the most vulnerable and socially excluded groups of young people (including those most liable to militia recruitment) must be prioritized, and linked to national reconstruction requirements (e.g., rural road repair).

Finally, we need to take note of the failure of rural institutions to cope with the current demographic imbalance, resulting in a large number of the least skilled young people drifting in remote rural areas, a "reserve army" for recruitment to war. Many—perhaps most—of these young people have lost faith in a rural society that offers incorporation only through farm or plantation labor on properties owned by the families of big men. At times the laborer does not even earn a wage, it being extracted in lieu of fines levied by elders. Youths sleeping with the wives of chiefs are still fined heavily for woman damage, thus continuing their client status. Frustration stems from their inability to found families, and be respected for their own achievements. Labor for the large, commercial plantations is seen in hardly a better light. The benefits are thought to go, disproportionately, to foreign companies and their political protectors. This explains the continuing appeal of the militia (as a kind of lottery of self-empowerment, for those desperate enough to gamble with their lives) and the reluctance of some ex-combatants to envisage a return to a rural life they associate with social subordination and humiliation. Better access to land might prove a key lever for change, but only if a bias in land tenure in favor of traditional elites is addressed. Some young Liberians (unemployed school leavers) told us they plan to apply for land grants for group farming, under a system in which the state distributes all unused land (Liberia has vast reserves of forested land, some of which could be used for agro-forestry activities). Such experiments ought to be encouraged. Success might help ex-combatants to see agrarian opportunities in a new, more positive light, free from historically rooted associations between farm work and punitive social control. In Liberia CDD will need not only to assist established stratified communities to rebuild but also to encompass ex-combatants and other disadvantaged young people in their attempts to found new communities based on principles of co-operative self-help. Government should use its power to allocate land to settle unemployed youth, and attention in governance reform should be paid to the administration of rural justice, e.g., the implementation of laws (including the new marriage law) designed to check labor exploitation.

4. QUESTIONS ADDRESSED

4.1 Levels of Poverty and Vulnerability

During field work we assessed priority needs of the poor and vulnerable both through noting (or collecting information on) basic conditions, such as frequency of displacement, levels of destruction, functionality of basic services, and the extent to which the armed factions were still active (un-demobilized), and through asking different groups of informants what their main needs and the main risks to which they were subject. This material supplements the ongoing documentation by various donor agencies (e.g., UNWFP 2004a,b,c) and community aspects of the needs assessment framework established by the interim government and donors (NTGL/UN/WB 2004).

Following up on contrasts between survey documentation and qualitative field impressions can be enlightening. The WFP food security assessment of Bong County released in May 2004 (UNWFP 2004a) suggested substantial food insecurity in Tubmanburg, contrasting sharply with field impressions (May 2004) of numerous stores well stocked with provisions and lively market activities. The contrast can be explained in two ways. The WFP report was based on surveys undertaken three months earlier, in a fast-changing context. More importantly, Tubmanburg was (in May) still under the control of a largely un-demobilized LURD. Although a LURD official stated the combatants were respecting the international ban on diamond exports—inspecting, rather than actively mining, their pits—it was conceded that alluvial gold mining was taking place. Clearly, armed fighters with gold mines in the interior had money to spend not only on food but also on the miner's gear and luxury items typical of diamond districts throughout the region. Obviously, the food security problem was to be found among subject civilian populations, both in the town and in the wrecked and barely re-settled adjacent villages, and perhaps especially among civilians with few or no family or ethnic links to the mainly Mandingo LURD commanders and Sierra Leonean special forces.

We found other examples of apparently lively food markets (e.g., at Compound No. 3 in Grand Bassa County), only to be told that trading capital and turnover were much smaller than in more settled times. In a country with substantial mining operations, plantations and logging reserves a significant portion of the population of the interior is dependent on waged labor. Cessation of this type of work during recent episodes of conflict (and a ban on timber exports) has pushed wage earners back into the subsistence sector. Some formerly "waged" families have gone back to previous places of work, to protect assets and perhaps to be in line for re-employment. The vulnerability of women and children in such households, meanwhile, needs to be flagged. Where a man was a wage earner the woman of the house would tend to trade. Traders tend to lack the full set of well-honed survival skills of a true subsistence-oriented group. Women in Compound No. 3 stressed to us the importance of their "market" in the absence of a husband's wage. It was widely repeated that a good way to reduce mother-and-child vulnerability would be to restart *osusu* (RoSCA) groups (a main source of capital for trading activities). Credit for trade would not only stimulate economic activity; it would also reduce mother-and-child vulnerability.

In general terms, it is clear that female single-parent households should be classed as among the most vulnerable, but even so the risk varies. A mother with two or three older children, temporarily separated from a husband while he protects assets in the interior, or prepares a house for the family's return home, is (for example) much less vulnerable than a household comprising very young orphan children cared for by an elderly grandmother, and displaced in a remote interior village without access to the wider kin group. A single indicator—e.g., percentage of female-headed households—is thus of little use in indicating the true level of vulnerability, without further information on the wider family context. Not surprisingly, people are reluctant to divulge the requisite family information, since it is likely to affect the level of humanitarian assistance that they can access. One option is rights awareness training, to build capacity in the community itself to administer emergency assistance to the super-vulnerable. This will

need very clear community agreements about causes of instability, vulnerability and conflict as a pre-requisite (Archibald and Richards 2002).

We explored some local perceptions of risk and vulnerability in village-level discussions which at times amounted to a brief pre-test for the viability of rights-based community risk management in current Liberian conditions. There was considerable local awareness that levels of displacement varied, within as well as between communities. Urban elites sought international refuge, often (especially where settlers maintained family connections) in the United States. Some villagers were displaced only once or twice, and have been relatively well cared for as refugees or camped IDPs. Others survived locally, and have been displaced up to five times or more (depending on the precise history of episodes of fighting, such as having the bad luck to be located near a much contested road intersection).

At village level, it was recognized that the war had created a group of super vulnerables. These were at times identified to us as the weak, handicapped, mentally sick, elderly or chronically depressed that lacked, or had lost the heart or strength to flee repeatedly. They hung on in areas controlled by fighters as best they could. Many died, but those who survived are weakened by privations, out of touch with families (who perhaps presume them dead) and dependent on the charity of more recently returned neighbors, who feel a sense of guilt at doing too little for them, amidst the clamor of family obligation. There seemed to be potential to develop a discourse on community rights and duties linked to actual resource disbursements. Rights-based (locally managed) humanitarianism could be a way to invest in the formation of post-war community cohesion.

Broad regional variations in poverty in Liberia are generally understood, in the interior, to be a product of the imposition, but incomplete development, of the Liberian settler state. Tubman's open door policy produced growth without development. Money from interior resources drained through the Executive Mansion, into the pockets of government supporters or overseas business partners. Informants were sometimes explicit they had hoped this pattern would be reversed by an up-country stalwart, Samuel K. Doe, and were disappointed to see wealth accumulation hardly changed. To this day, interior communities see themselves as impoverished, neglected and not fully part of the national terrain. We heard ironic comments on Independence Day ("independence from what"?) and the national motto—"love of freedom brought us here"—changed to "love of freedom met us here". The general perception is the further from Monrovia the greater the neglect and deprivation. Ex-combatants often saw this in terms of their perceived inability to access education and jobs in the far interior. Sometimes poverty and isolation were linked to poor national communications (the road system remains rudimentary, and Monrovia radio cannot now be heard even in Buchanan, little more than 100 miles distant). One official in Grand Bassa County chided us for carrying out a social assessment at all. He wondered "why do you need to ask us questions, when you can see poverty, neglect and damage all around you?"

The war had added its own geographical pattern of disadvantage. It was recognized that areas where ethnic hostility was greatest had suffered some of the worst levels of destruction. This type of ethnically-driven destruction was perhaps most prominent in parts of Lofa County, as a result of tense relations between the Mandingo-backed LURD and local groups (especially the Loma), and in the border zone between the Krahn and Gio communities of Nimba and Grand Gedeh Counties. Some parts of the southeast seem relatively less harmed by actual fighting, if more generally impoverished and vulnerable as a result of years of isolation and neglect (at times the two effects are not readily distinguished—only 4 of 12 health posts remain operational in Maryland County, and a health post can be as severely disabled by a lack of salaries and supplies as it can by having its roof blown of in a fire fight). Although supported by southeastern groups, ULIMO-J had been formed among refugees in Sierra Leone and much of its fighting was in Cape Mount County, and around Monrovia. The more recent "southeastern" faction, MODEL, launched its campaign from Ivory Coast, but focused fighting on the better connected parts of the road system leading from Danane (in Ivory Coast) to Zwedru (in Grand Gedeh). Enjoying some local

support it appears to have been able to deploy relatively unopposed through the more remote parts of the southeast. Villages in interior Grand Bassa County were among the least disturbed or furthest recovered settlements we saw.

On causes of war, explanations diverged between civilians and ex-combatants, and by faction and region or group. Civilians tended to flag big man political competition, ethnic rivalries, and external involvement as factors. Some blamed the political ambition of Charles Taylor. Others thought that the social exclusiveness and external orientation of the Mandingo was an important source of tensions. Variously, it was alleged that the Mandingo shifted wealth back to ancient homelands in Guinea, sought to expand Islam in Liberia, desecrated local shrines, and failed (by preventing their daughters from marrying "native" men, while themselves marrying local women) properly to integrate on a local level. Mandingo fighters in LURD, by contrast, referred to attacks by Taylor loyalists, and the general level of civilian hostility that made it hard for them to claim land and settle. Many LURD fighters had joined (as refugees in Guinea) only after experiencing persecution in Liberia and the hostility of local Guinean populations, fearful the Liberian presence would bring more of the "shoot anything that moves" counter-insurgency tactics adopted by a notoriously rough Guinean military in 2000.

As a whole, ex-combatants focused on the marginalization of youth as a cause of the war. They were particularly adamant that the issue of education and jobs should be clearly understood as a cause of the war.

> **Box 5:** "Without education, and without jobs and money, there will always be problems here. We all want to move away from war, but with no jobs and no money we will do anything for $100. There are people who want to manipulate us. We should stand against them for a better Liberia, but if we have no money, then they will always be able to manipulate us. *LURD combatant (male, 28 yrs), Zorzor, 11/8/04*

A majority of ex-combatants wanted to "go home", but only if they had the training and skills to help rebuild. One way to view this is as a demand by youth for stake in community rebuilding on its own terms. The age of deference, several combatants made clear to us, is dead. A number of combatants referred to the self-sustaining aspects of war, once it had begun. Some women combatants mentioned that they joined to protect themselves from harassment and rape. But few of those we talked to—civilian or ex-combatant—seemed to doubt that poverty was an important cause (as well as result) or war, even if explanations then diverged (according to group and faction, and as between civilians and ex-combatants).

4.2 Communities in Liberia

4.2.1 What is Understood by Community?

The basic subdivision of local government into chiefdoms, clans and townships has already been outlined. Communities (so defined) are products of an interaction between local practices and the Liberian state, under indirect rule. The lowest level in the system—the town (ship)—is basically a congeries of descent groups working contiguous or adjacent areas of land. Citizens of a town, and strangers recognized as resident under the authority of a landed patron, reside in a main centre and a number of subsidiary villages, and are generally linked by inter-marriage. The land is held under customary concession, or deeded as family reserves. (Enlargements in the way community may come to be conceived in post-war Liberia have been discussed in the section on social capital above).

4.2.2 Trust: Perceptions of Local State and Non-State Institutions

Regime change in 1980, and subsequent decay of the state, has meant local institutions most strongly associated with the state, i.e., Counties, Chiefdoms and clans, are viewed as dysfunctional or partisan. Administrative staff is in post in a number of areas, but actual posts may be little more than a few decayed buildings and a flag. Records, furniture, equipment and even windows have been looted, and the capacity of officials to move about and supervise the activities of chiefs and other agents of local government seems very limited.

Fieldwork discussions conveyed some strong skepticism in villages and townships about local government. In particular there was concern about the role local officials might play in supervising community-driven development, particularly whether or not they would handle monetary resources or bring community agents to court. The first circumstance should not arise; LACE operational procedures envisage direct community financing. But the second issue is a legitimate concern. Community groups may need to seek the sanction of local courts to deal with misappropriation. Disaffection with the local institutions of the state is, therefore, not an issue that can be swept away by the rhetoric of participation. So far as we could see, disquiet had two sources. One worry was that factions had nominated officials to posts. This ought to be addressed by free and fair elections. Other comments conveyed a more general skepticism about whether, indeed, any state agency can be trusted. A long history of the Liberian state imposing itself on local people by force, and extracting labor and other resources is seemingly recalled at such moments.

The troubled history of state-civil society relations in the Liberian countryside cannot be ignored, because CDD involves interaction with state institutions and the administrative and legal framework of the state. The crisis of local confidence in state institutions requires to be addressed directly, e.g., through donor support for citizen consultation in the reform of local government (cf. Richards et al. 2004). Popularly accountable local government is, in effect, a concurrent requirement for the success of CDD within a framework of constitutionality.

When we reach the most local level (the township) we arrive at community in the sense of an associational entity with some sense of collective identity and common purpose based on residence. The township might be considered the basic unit of a rural civil society. In the northwest, townships generally comprise several (perhaps 5-10) descent groups, linked by marriage alliances. In the southeast individual descent groups tend to establish separate settlements, but with marriage alliances linking numerous small townships. Where the land has been deeded the descent group has a recognized corporate status administering a family reserve. Perhaps because there is land to administer (and many family members to scrutinize decisions) town administrations seem to be more functional than predatory.

Gibbs (1965) points out that among the Kpelle a town chief is considered a model for emulation—a "big person" respected for skills in problem solving and conflict management, and holding the community interest at heart. An indication that the town and its chief are, indeed, popular institutions emerged from an interesting debate in one of the breakout sessions of the first Stakeholder Event. This concerned whether town chiefs were elected or appointed. According to the Ministry of the Interior the constitutional position is that they are appointed. From County Superintendent downwards the Executive proposes, and the Legislature scrutinizes and approves appointments (although it was conceded scrutiny has been limited or non existent in recent times). A young NGO worker insisted, however, that no town chief could take office without his candidature being subject to popular approval. This might involve some form of election, he claimed, in which supporters of rivals lined up behind their candidate of choice. He was in effect claiming the town chief enjoys a grass-roots democratic backing unknown to the Monrovia-based authorities. Regularizing this democratic support might seem a useful point of entry for

donor support for local government reform. In general, it suggests that there is a potential for a degree of community cohesion at township level relevant to CDD.

4.2.3 CDD and Current Interim Political Arrangements

Analysis above suggests the war in Liberia is no aberration but the implosion of a defective system, in which a forced division of labor has for many years undermined social cohesion. It seems unlikely that CDD activities, by themselves, could reverse these problematic tendencies, determined by the interaction between the Liberian state and local rulers over many years. But without such reversal investment, CDD is likely only to feed the established tendencies—authoritarianism, and extractive rent-seeking behavior, for example. Thus it is hard to see a do-no-harm option. Either the system is overhauled in a major way, or CDD feeds the *status quo*.

There are powerful Liberian voices arguing for major change (cf. Pajibo 2004). A current problem is that the life of the interim government is short, precluding constitutional reform. So scope for a thorough overhaul of local government before CDD kicks in is limited. There is scope, however, for exploring—through action research—some of the major options for reforms to be tackled when an elected government takes power. CDD should be coupled to such active exploration of reform options, and involve key actors, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and national civil society groups, as well as CDD groups. A start could be made with a series of workshops to follow up on issues identified in the RSA.

The partners in the process (communities, civil society activists and government) having found themselves, should then agree on a series of experiments (under LACE funding rules) to explore in what ways new kinds of social contract governing state-civil society relations within the field of community development could be rendered effective and operational. Issues of inclusiveness and accountability should be posed as problems for the partners to approach and resolve, around real-time reconstruction objectives. Inclusiveness might be approached, for example, through problems communities already admit—e.g., how to protect the interests of the handicapped and elderly, prevent exploitation of young clients, or incorporate transient strangers within CDD-type programming.

National civil society groups could be tasked with monitoring these experiments and drawing general conclusions, including those relevant to constitutional reform. They could also work out ways of framing lessons learned in a wider human rights perspective. Local government officials should seek to elaborate for themselves new roles in community conflict resolution, and as facilitators of CDD. Further analysis of whether "elected" town chiefs offer a viable model for the "new official" at higher levels in the system might be undertaken (whether or not, as indicated, their role is shaped by a degree of popular legitimacy and accountability).

Since this activity would be aiming not only at a degree of technical success but also generating useful new *in situ* knowledge about options for system reform, all relevant variables should be thrown into the experimental matrix. In particular, critique of "cultural assumptions" built into community processes (brokerage of dangerous knowledge, the language of secrecy, prescriptive marriage alliances, etc.) should not be shirked. Social funds have recently discovered cultural knowledge (Rao and Walton 2004), but Douglas (2004) argues that it is important not to treat culture as a thing in itself (a fetish, in fact). Where culture disguises the privileges of a few and discriminates against the common interest it deserves to be queried. Thus an issue in Liberia is whether to activate old community cultures or seek to invent new cultural understandings in the course of implementing CDD.

4.3 Trust

How is trust built? The basic principles are discussed in a short essay on social cohesion (Appendix A). Successful institutions cannot be imported and imposed. They emerge from repeated social interaction, long-term commitments, and understandable processes. Supporting conditions for people to feel valued by society and respect and trust their social institutions are an open opportunity structure and free division of labor. Collective representations help solidify institutions, through their capacity to engage and focus sentiment and the emotions. The resultant sense of group confidence and well-being can foster collective action, but it can also be abused.

Ethnic sentiment is often a useful basis for collective action in Liberia. The Kru—highly segmented in their communities of origin—have been notably successful in mobilizing ethnic sentiment for urban collective action around land ownership, employment and social welfare. Likewise, the Mandingo have successfully used religious solidarity and ethnic markers to sustain successful long-distance or large-scale trading ventures.

But where the confidence in more general, regulatory institutions are weak—where there is constitutional or market failure, or justice and security services are partisan—ethnicity becomes a source of conflict. The solidarity that guarantees successful collective action becomes a focus for attack by rival groups. Desecration of sacred symbols goes hand-in-hand with an intensified use of the cultural markers by rival groups. Transaction-cost reducing ethnic trust is replaced by tribal warfare, an element in the Liberian conflict.

The antidote will be found in building agreements about shared national institutions—particularly at issue in Liberia are citizenship terms for trading diaspora, the removal of legal limitations associated with a legacy of constitutional dualism, an urgent requirement to rekindle respect for the constitution and the rule of law, and investment in an impartial justice and security system. Unless such a framework is in place at national level it should be clearly understood that CDD risks heightening community sentiment and empowering collective action in ways that might feed tribal war.

4.3.1 What Local Institutions are Trusted/Distrusted?

The evidence has already been discussed. Broadly, it is the domestic, face-to-face institutions that are trusted (family land-holding groups, town chieftaincy, moots, co-operative self-help labor and savings club [*kuu*]). Higher level administrative institutions, formal customary justice and statutory courts, the army and police, tend to be seen (against a long history of imposition of state authority by force) as (at best) an unpleasant necessity, or (at worst) as thoroughly untrustworthy or corrupt.

Different interest groups rate some of the face-to-face institutions more or less highly. Descent groups secure in holding family land will rate local land tenure and the administration of landed assets by elders, more highly than will clients and strangers. Children and youths look at the family as a more benign institution when they have well-placed and supportive parents than children who are fostered, adopted or orphaned. Post-war quantitative research on ex-combatants in Sierra Leone shows that militia faction membership is strongly correlated with weak family support. In other words, children who lost mothers in childbirth, whose fathers died young, or stem from unacknowledged "outside" relationships seem particularly at risk of militia recruitment, perhaps (as they themselves often claim) because they then found it especially hard to secure support for education. One villager was very firm in directing our attention to irresponsible fatherhood as a cause of the war in Liberia:

> **Box 6:** "The war started long ago, in the house. The men took too many wives and had too many children. Then they abandoned them because they could not support them. The children grew to be angry; they wanted revenge on their fathers and the war was the opportunity they needed." *Village elder, Borkeza village, Lofa County, 11/8/04.*

Customary marriage (as we have pointed out) looks very different from the perspective of the elderly polygynist and the young people (men as well as women) whose lives and relationships are shaped by decisions over which they have little control. Requiring the permission of a patron to marry causes resentment. In extreme cases (as argued) young men who are unable to find sponsorship to marry at all are tempted down the path of sexual violence. Reform of customary marriage has been legislated in Liberia, but it may be many years before new rights prove justiciable, or social practices change.

It could be argued that the core of the problem in Liberia lies in the emergence of a class of marginal young people who lack faith in any kind of institutions. Their view is that they have been failed by family, marriage, education, markets and the justice system, and adopt the "law of the survival of the fittest."

4.3.2 What Social Capital and Local Skills Might Contribute to CDD?

The concept of social capital is contentious. Some argue that it is a useful label for resources (e.g., network connections) enabling high levels of social interaction (Lin 2001). Others suggest the term covers the means through which elites hoard the cultural knowledge to ensure their own successful group reproduction (Bourdieu 1977). Either way, the concept covers both a legacy of organizations and the ability to mobilize collectively.

There is nothing inherently good about social capital. From a strictly sociological point of view (i.e., free of normative assumptions) the organizational capacity found in cultural cliques, armed gangs, mafia-like protection rackets, and trading monopolies seems hardly different in kind to the organizational capacity found in moots, *kuu*, urban provident associations, football clubs and religious congregations. Similarly, ability to mobilize collectively takes a number of different forms, none of which can be readily valued independently of a normative framework. Since the pioneering work of Georg Simmel (c. 1910, Simmel 1950) it has been understood that secrecy is, in its way, as effective as open accountability in forming and enlarging social groups.

It is simply a fact of social life in Liberia that the language of secrecy is a rather important modality for much collective mobilization. Participatory development in a cultural climate emphasizing the building of social capital around secrecy seems likely to foster a process of consensus management favoring cliques—specifically elders and ranked lineages, and males in particular.

LACE imposes a normative framework that clashes with the language of secrecy. CDD selects for social capital formed around openness and accountability. Intervention will be more effective if there is strong input from media and a variety of civil society groups in management and monitoring of processes, and if there are explicit attempts to grant voice and agency to marginalized and excluded groups. The reasons for silence must also be studied and understood. If a culture of secrecy at times favors "arrangement" (conspiracy) then it matters more that silence (and non-attendance) be monitored, and that the results of this monitoring be brought under public scrutiny, than the marginalized be obliged to speak too soon. What they say can be held against them. Often, they know the safest course is only to say what it is expected that they should say.

Silence and absence are indicators that can be brought within the scope of a rational accountancy. It is a simple observational task to monitor who speaks in meetings, if less simple to work the identity of those not present. In one case (as described) we used a simple head count of voiced and voiceless to trigger explanation from community brokers of their role. This brought forward useful information about a hitherto hidden dimension—that the voiceless were transients, and transients were not supposed to be there.

An obvious practical step is to take such a conversation in the direction of a discussion of citizenship—does the constitution not grant all Liberians "rights to be there"? An enlarged sense of community might emerge from any such discussion (or alternatively, explicit recognition that landownership and landlessness creates two classes of citizen) CDD provides a context in which such discussions of citizenship and inclusion can begin. A grant to rebuild a school, for example, requires a community contribution. This implies prior discussion about who pays (in labor or in kind). Transients or returning ex-combatants might offer labor or other inputs, and thus signal their commitment to settle. Specifically, CDD must pay detailed attention to setting up and facilitating community discussions of this sort, leading (perhaps literally) to the signing of a new social contract. It is important to ensure that in disbursing funds expeditiously there is also sufficient scope for citizenship negotiations to take place, because these are the spaces in which positive social capital will be formed or revived.

Some of our informants were quick to point out obligations on the other side. So often, they say, NGO or donor parties visit, but rarely for long enough to reach all the local stakeholders. They ask many questions and promise or imply great things. Then nothing is heard again. There is no record of meetings, who attended, what the parties agreed. In the worst cases, the visitors collect "registration" fees or solicit gifts, and disappear without leaving a contact address. Rushed, incomplete and under-funded facilitation does no more than convey the impression that this carve-up between the recognized authority and local elites still applies.

The methodology of the RSA commits us to a time-consuming iterative, interactive, feedback-oriented knowledge formation process. LACE needs to maintain the same approach. Perfunctory awareness raising, for example, hardly conveys to local communities—of whom LACE expects much—that only the best of their skills and social capital is now required. Specifically, LACE needs to establish and monitor performance targets covering its own dissemination and feedback activities. These targets should be agreed with communities, using participatory methods.

One innovation that has proved successful elsewhere is to endow each community with a log book, into which all visits by agency personnel are inscribed, covering purpose and action points arising (for example what the agency and community proposes next to carry out, and when). Illiteracy is no barrier to calling for a regular public reading of the book by any persons doubtful about what has been agreed or when it is to be achieved.

Similarly, it is valuable to open a registration book or census file into which the names of all community members should be inscribed. The document should be regularly revised to keep track of rapid changes of community membership typical of a post-war period. There should be an appeals process to deal with people excluded or wrongly inscribed.

Suitably bound, both log and census should be displayed in a place of honor in every plenary or committee meeting. Thus endowed with a degree of sacred significance, these documents will come to stand in local perceptions as proof of identity and existence, and a reassurance that the assisting agency knows not only the group but the members of which it comprises. The contractual relationship between agency and community is reinforced, along with the message that the contractual entity is more than a committee, thus contributing to an emergent sense of "due process" in CDD.

4.3.3 What Are the Major Gaps?

We have little or no knowledge of militia social capital. It is assumed that most or all will fall in the box marked bad. This might be to under-estimate a potentially useful resource. Not all fighters are inhumane killers. Some have exercised heroism and courage in support of companions, and it is conceivable that some of that spirit among former comrades could be harnessed for CDD. *Kuu*-like groups for agricultural purposes figure strongly among some groups of ex-combatants in Sierra Leone (Richards et al. 2003). Some youths joined the militia in Liberia to protect their communities, and with local blessing.

It would be important to find out about specific recruitment patterns and kinship linkages among ex-combatants, specifically to encourage group re-integration linked to LACE-funded community reconstruction activities. This implies careful follow-up work with demobilized ex-combatants. Suitable opportunities for the necessary interviews occur in the context of registering ex-combatants for skills training packages, or in monitoring their subsequent progress, before reintegration decisions are finalized. A number of relevant survey instruments exist. It would be relevant to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches (cf. Richards et al. 2003, and Humphreys and Weinstein 2004).

Even the footloose formed family groups within their militia (female combatants often have children) and for those who will find it difficult to rejoin original communities we should enquire whether there are prospects to form new communities. It would be particularly interesting to know more about the community social capital of ex-combatant mining groups, such as those reported to be squatting in Sapo Forest, and ex-combatants tapping rubber in the Salala Rubber Company plantation in Margibi County.

4.4 Leadership and Local Management Capacity

4.4.1 What Leadership and Local Management Capacity Exists for Managing Small Projects?

Groups we talked to were highly motivated to rebuild their communities, and often excited about the opportunities promised by CDD. They were generally confident that they had enough leadership and management to undertake CDD, although paper requirements may pose problems in some communities, and training of committees in duties, and criteria of accountability, is an important pre-condition for success. Suspicion of well-educated outsiders was expressed on several occasions. At times, we were made aware of this directly, e.g., when "knowledge brokers" (community facilitators and leaders of NGO-initiated village development committees) made attempts to impose themselves on meetings as "translators" (proceeding then to "mistranslate", i.e., impose their own agenda).

This highlights a major danger with CDD—of reinforcing opportunist leaders to the detriment of the robustness and longevity of the CDD process in Liberia. CDD needs to aspire to broader and more inclusive leadership and management. To ensure sufficient checks and balances will require a detailed understanding of local leadership patterns and capabilities. Donors of CDD will then have to address apparent deficiencies, e.g., by offering training, by ensuring weak and marginal groups are represented, by pushing self-appointed leaders toward tests of popularity, etc.

One task is clear at the outset. There is need to map current and emerging patterns of leadership and management potential, to ascertain projects have sufficiently inclusive leadership groups. There are three aspects. First, there is need to ascertain (with the help of County administrations) which local leaders are recognized by government. Not all officials are back in post, and at times there are disagreements about de facto office holders (e.g., faction- or even self-appointed chiefs). It is a recipe for trouble if CDD resources are captured by leaders imposed during the war and lacking any kind of central or popular mandate. A second aspect is to ascertain patterns of informal leadership. For community development

purposes it is important to know the identity and status of those who speak on behalf of youth, women, strangers, market traders, etc. It is essential to be in a position to make some assessment of the degree to which these informal leaders exercise real influence (or whether, by contrast, they are no more than stooges of the main office holder), and of the size and limits of their constituencies. One approach to mapping informal leadership is to utilize the sociometric instruments available e.g., from the World Bank web pages on CDD. These could be applied during community consultations. It should be realized, however, that public consultation is not a good way to ascertain true social facts regarding another type of leadership important in rural Liberia—namely covert leadership. Sodality leaders, for example, do not show their hand in public, and yet cannot easily be ignored. In this regard there are few substitutes for detailed contextual information. This implies training a cadre of participant (i.e., residential) observers for CDD in Liberia, and it might serve the interests of all agencies undertaking CDD in Liberia to approach local institutions of higher education with a view to assessing whether the relevant social science training capacity currently exists.

As noted, local groups we consulted about CDD were confident that they did have management skills, and would make efficient, honest managers of projects in which they had a direct interest. But just as there is need for reliable ways of mapping leadership patterns, to ensure checks and balances, it will prove an equally important challenge to develop contextually appropriate ways of measuring local management skills, in order to know where to intervene to build capacity. The approach should not be dogmatic. It is often (wrongly) assumed that illiterates cannot manage the purchase, storage and issuance of input supplies. They can, but have to develop their own appropriate management methods. At times, these are slow and add to transaction costs, but the benefit is in not having to pay contractors. An entire committee attending the purchase and traveling with the materials can overcome doubts over prices and amounts supplied. Storehouses can be equipped with multiple locks, in which each stakeholder representative holds one key, so that all stakeholder representatives have to be present for withdrawals. Charts representing quantities used and remaining can be posted in a public place for all to see.

Additionally, any approach must be designed to take account of local variation. In general terms, the more hierarchically organized north and northwest of the country is more comfortable with directions issued by an organizing committee than the more egalitarian southeast, where instruction from above is often resisted or resented (but counter-balanced by an especially strong tradition of aged-based peer-group co-operation).

Leaders need to be able to show a clear interest in the outcomes of the project. Community planning sessions should address this issue overtly, and be encouraged to select their committees and committee chairs accordingly. A plantation owner with all his children at school in Monrovia is not necessarily the best person to lead a project to rebuild a school his offspring will never use. But a trader who would benefit directly from better communications does make a plausible leader of a community project to repair a road or bridge—the motivation to succeed is clear. Villagers know that an innumerate middle-age woman with children settled in the village is the safer manager of a RoSCA pot than a village primary school teacher, who might be re-posted at any moment. The woman is unlikely to have anywhere to abscond to with the money, and would quickly be confronted by enraged members. A teacher about to be re-posted knows he/she can disappear. It is better to appoint the middle-aged woman as chair, and ask her to keep the money and use the teachers' talents only for record keeping. The extent to which town chiefs are trusted more than chiefs higher in the government administrative system seems to reflect similar considerations. The performance of the town chief is hands on, and judged daily. Among groups like the Kpelle, the town chief is the very model of a local "big person", alert to townspeople's needs, decisive in dealing, skilled in talking, shrewd in judgments, and rewarded by grateful villagers in both respect and tribute. Such a person is less likely to be able to shrug off the stigma of a failed project than a more distant and less visible chief, or an official liable to transfer.

4.4.2 What are the Dangers in Reinforcing Certain Leadership Elements or Group Interests?

The big issue addressed throughout this report is the danger of CDD unintentionally rebuilding a strongly clientelist rural society, entrenching the privileges of a tradition-oriented land-owning elite. If we take the comments of ex-combatants seriously, this seems a recipe for feeding militia with excluded youth. A problem, then, is how to make CDD also favor the needs and interests of women and youth from non-elite backgrounds. Participation, by itself, is unlikely to be enough. An issue is how to counteract typical consensus formation processes, in which a public meeting may determine one set of priorities, only to be undermined by a session in which conspiratorial male elders "hang heads", re-imposing their own agenda (cf. Murphy 1990). Requiring women and youth from non-elite backgrounds to be strongly represented on committees is part of the solution. In fact, we would suggest that agencies pursuing CDD in Liberia meet with community groups to establish guidelines to cover this issue (how many representatives might make an effective difference, from which kinds of backgrounds, and how they are to be chosen). Follow-up work is then needed (by social scientists) to establish the backgrounds and effectiveness of the representatives chosen, and what kind of support they might need. Training to reinforce their activism seems important, but progress may at first be unimpressive, pending government action on opening up rural opportunity structures to the highly marginalized, e.g., through skills training and land reform.

4.5 How Community Obligations and Contributions are Perceived

Fieldwork confirmed that the strong culture of community co-operative organization, for agriculture, community self-defense, savings and commerce has survived the war. Most if not all adult rural Liberians have some experience with *kuu* groups, and many are now being revived for house-building and farming purposes. There is confidence in co-operative labor as a way of achieving common goals.

But not all co-operative labor is organized for or by members of the group. Chiefs or sodalities have a traditional right to command young men to offer their labor for community work—road maintenance, for example. This is a possible source of resentment, especially where not all those liable for such work take part. The children of the rural elite may be exempted from community labor by being away at school, for example. If those with client status escaped extreme poverty and subordination by joining a militia they are hardly likely to be enthusiastic about rejoining an unpaid labor crew commanded by community elders for CDD.

What is striking about some of our conversations with marginalized young people (school leavers as well as ex-combatants), however, is that they evince a desire to take part in community reconstruction, for which they ardently desire appropriate skills training. It is clear, however, that they mean on their own terms, i.e., they need to be recognized for any skills and effort they freely contribute. This underlines the importance of skills training in demobilization specifically, and in empowering young people more generally. But it also suggests that agencies engaged in CDD will have to be prepared to devote considerable time and resources to consultation with community groups in order to agree e.g., ground rules for contributions, burden sharing, sanctions on free riders, selection of committees, representation of minority interests, etc. We specifically recommend that the start-up period for LACE include piloting a number of such consultations, with the results quickly being shared and reacted upon by other CDD agencies in Liberia. These consultations will be testing grounds for how to deal with the most complex, controversial issues in CDD, and will require some elements of rights awareness training and conflict resolution. A central and thorny problem (given the historical sensitivity of Liberian youth to issues of forced labor) will be how to mobilize and reward labor contributions in CDD. Communities ought to be able to contribute "free" labor, but to do so they may have to address some of the historical injustices associated with clientage. It can be envisioned that some consultations might centre on the labor issue. A successful consultation process might lead on to clear agreements that investment of labor time in CDD establishes local citizenship rights, or cancels an ex-combatant's "debt to society", to be followed by

suitable rituals of readmission and reconciliation. Consultation events might, in fact, develop links with the national Truth and Reconciliation process. It would certainly be worthwhile to explore the possible involvement of justice activists in this stage of CDD.

CDD operational procedures must take account of the contribution of forced labor in Liberia to the undermining of community cohesion. A firm line needs to be drawn between self-directed collective action, as exemplified by *kuu*, and coerced community labor commanded by chiefs. This distinction touches on one of the major arguments about causes of the war in Liberia. Durkheim (1893) described the pathologies that undermined a sense of society. He considered anomie—a sense of lack of limits, encountered when there is rapid socio-economic change, whether positive or negative—increases the likelihood of suicide or homicide (DiCristina 2004). Some hold the war in Liberia to be anomic. Ellis (1999) ascribes this to the corrupting influence of money on religion, but Durkheim also argued that a forced division of labor paved the road to violence, since coercion undermined fellow feeling and affection. The emphasis, in our conversations with ex-combatants, on education and skills, suggests strongly that lack of chances for individuals to demonstrate what they can do for the community, through application of talent, is still the main social pathology feeding the war. This implies an open opportunity structure is the key reform to attain the objective of a society based on tolerance and mutual respect.

4.6 Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

4.6.1 Moots and Conciliatory Rituals

There exist important local methods for informal resolution of conflicts relevant to CDD. The analysis by Gibbs (1963) of the difference between the judicial procedures in the customary courts of chiefs and informal family moots among the Kpelle is a classic of the Liberian literature, providing inspiration for the emergence of Alternative Dispute Resolution in the United States. Gibbs' basic point in analyzing the Kpelle moot—equivalent processes can be found throughout the region—was that customary courts arrived at judgments, and judgment is not always the best basis to settle intimate quarrels. An unsuccessful litigant—often the less powerful party—was left "in the wrong", but judged according to hazy customs rather than clearly defined legal standards, and saddled with hefty fines and other expenses. Moots, on the other hand, aimed at conciliation, with expenses, apologies and restitution agreed to the mutual satisfaction of the parties. Conciliation tended to close cases, whereas customary judgments left lingering wounds, and (at times) stimulated a thirst for revenge. We found that Liberian communities continue to evince an enthusiasm for conciliation, and express skepticism about statutory and customary processes, claiming court judgments to be often clouded by factionalism and corruption.

An important aspect of a moot is its ritual aspects. Prayers invariably frame events. The presence of ancestors and other spirits may be invoked by libations. Settlement involves gestures of supplication, forgiveness or incorporation—"holding the foot", an embrace, ritual purifications, a collective meal. The war has stimulated aptitude, in particular, for conciliatory ritual. Many informants argued (including some of the fighters) that re-admission of ex-combatants to communities should be based on a moot-like process—perhaps combining confession or some discussion of injustices and atrocities perpetrated, to be followed by a ritual process enacting cleansing and re-incorporation.

There are some obvious dangers that resources channeled into this area would unwittingly support the reinforcement of a pre-war status quo. A number of informants suggested that the appropriate person to initiate a reconciliatory moot for ex-combatant reintegration would be a parent begging the elders on behalf of a child. This raises a thorny issue—not all ex-combatants have parents, and the process may seem to some to enact the renewal of oppressive patrimonial relations between elders and youth. The challenge would be to draw upon local capacity for moot-like processes but to enlarge the content of the discussion, as it were, to cover some more general issues (debate around root causes of the conflict,

historically-inherited patterns of injustice, and restoration of constitutionalism). This seems a point at which national civil society groups pressing for human rights and governance reform might become involved in the CDD process, as facilitators of moots designed to explore constitutional failures and structural grievances driving dissidents from their communities in the first place. Our recommendation is that these developments could be linked to the consultation process proposed to address problems of stakeholder representation in CDD. In effect, we propose a hybrid event, which engages with issues of justice and reconciliation in connection with making direct arrangements for CDD (cf. Archibald and Richards 2002).

4.6.2 Innovation in Local Processes of Conflict Resolution

There are some useful models for conflict resolution drawing on a hybridization of local moots and ritual process and more generalized rights-based ways of thinking. An-Naim (1999) argues in favor of "inducing" general concepts of human rights from Islamic community practices in Africa. Attempts have been made to link practical distribution of food aid in rural communities recovering from war in central Sierra Leone to community analysis of human rights standards, vulnerability and root causes of conflict (Archibald and Richards 2002). The conflict resolution agency, Conciliation Resources, working on the Liberian border in southeastern Sierra Leone, facilitated local development of a successful system of volunteer village-based peace monitors, to dampen petty quarrels and acts of revenge involving RUF ex-combatants returning from Liberia, before they got out of hand.

The intervention was linked to the practical rehabilitation of co-operative fishing activities in the area, and also included a series of facilitated community discussions about the local and larger causes of the war in Sierra Leone. Some of the cross-border tensions dated back to the Zawo slave revolt of the 1850s, which led to the ultimately unsuccessful rebels seeking refuge in Tewo chiefdom on the Liberian side of the border, and establishment of a pattern of cross-border family alliances invoked in political disturbance in the 1980s and war in the 1990s.

This community consultation methodology was adopted for a much wider series of consultations about community grievances feeding the war, sponsored by the British Government and managed by the Governance Reform Secretariat, 1999-2000. This is a precedent that might well be studied with profit by LACE. Several lessons emerged. First village people engaged with the process in surprisingly frank and open ways, and much information came to light about the depths of governance failure and injustice feeding the war. The oppressed but defiant state of women and youth was made every clear. Second (more negatively), structural anomalies dating from Sierra Leone's own dualistic legacy from indirect rule were reproduced in the consultations themselves (traders, clients, migrant laborers and IDPs were treated as transients, and excluded from the consultations). Third, there was no government or donor follow-up, although this had been promised in encouraging people to speak. The government placed community-level reform at the back of the queue of issues to be addressed in rebuilding the state. Donors also lost interest, perhaps failing to see how to operationalize necessary linkages between frameworks of legitimacy (the justice sector) and the more material aspects of CDD. Social fund activities in Sierra Leone have yet to address the agenda of issues opened by this interesting experiment in community willingness to address deep problems through moot-like consultations. Liberia could build on some of the lessons learned. The consultations advocated above envisage linking CDD to community explorations of injustices feeding the war. LACE should fund some experimental consultations along these hybrid lines as soon as possible (as a way of stimulating community debate and reflection as well to answer some questions about basic CDD operations). The way would then stand open to link CDD with justice sector reform, within the triangle human security-human development-human rights (De Gaay Fortman 2004).

The war in Liberia, although intermittent, ran for a longer period than in Sierra Leone, the number of ex-combatants as a percentage of total population is larger, and factional complexity and inter-communal violence have been more marked. Thus there are probably more young people with real difficulties to gain re-admittance to their home communities. Community exploration of deep causes of the war—together with rituals of reintegration, linked to community reconstruction activities—might help Liberia establish a robust and sustainable tradition of CDD, but CDD alone cannot generate social harmony. Additionally, much attention now has to be paid to the elimination of constitutional dualism. The basis for social harmony must be the social incorporation of all Liberians on a basis of equal rights of citizenship under the constitution. It may not only be dissident villagers and ex-combatants who need ritual "washing".

5. CONCLUSIONS: THE PROBLEM OF COMMUNITY IN LIBERIA

Community in Liberia is the product of an as yet incomplete convergence between a settler state and a somewhat diverse range of African polities in which, historically, rights and freedoms were guaranteed *ad hominem*, i.e., by the protections offered by powerful patrons to their clients. The foundations of the Republic were laid on the assumptions that Liberia would be a land of homesteaders, on the lines of frontier society in North America. But unlike in America, the settlers were few in number, and native populations numerous and well adapted to local hazards, rather than vulnerable (as in the North American case) to the diseases of the settlers. Settler society had to adapt to local populations, rather than the other way round. At the end of the 19th century British and French pressure in neighboring colonial territories meant that Liberia had to attend to its borders, and enforce its presence in the interior. The activities of the Liberian Frontier Force introduced a high norm of violence into the relations between state and interior "civil society".

Thereafter, accommodation with powerful and difficult local rulers followed the British model of Indirect Rule. In neighboring British Sierra Leone the indigenes became protected subjects, and only in Freetown did a small Creole elite battle for constitutional rights and institutions similar to those enjoyed by their colonial rulers. A similar kind of dualism underlay the expansion of the Liberian state. Constitutional government applied to settlers; rule of "aboriginals" continued under those local patrimonial customs that the state was prepared to license. This dualism affected all areas social life, and its continuing effects are seen in the agrarian economy in patterns of land ownership, attitudes to labor, treatment of women, demands for social deference, and (not least) in inter-generational tensions. Only in regard to marriage and women's property rights has dualism been definitively brought to an end, and that only recently (2003) due to the dedicated efforts of women lawyers and legislators.

Under William Tubman, from the 1940s, a presidency financially weakened by near-bankruptcy in the 1930s continued to adapt itself to prevailing political values in the interior, and channeled new sources of wealth from plantations, minerals and logging through the Executive Mansion to establish a neo-patrimonial style of personal rule. The presidency had re-modeled itself on the lines of interior chieftaincy, and some senior figures in government subsequently sought admission to major interior sodalities. Africa's first one-party patrimonial state was much imitated elsewhere on the continent in the decades after decolonization. Tubman's successor (William Tolbert) was deposed in a coup by soldiers from the interior, but the values and tactics of personal rule were continued. The Libyan-inspired Charles Taylor both fought a war and an election, to attain the presidency in 1997 by the latter route, but again ruled through centralizing the flow of resources through the Executive Mansion, redistributing many assets to clients on a personal basis. Other big men continue to battle to control this wealth in his absence, and the interim government is only with difficulty reasserting constitutionalism. Not surprisingly, rural communities—even as they re-settle—continue to be shaped around clientelist values. The big challenge for CDD in Liberia, in the context of post-war reconstruction, is to avoid bankrolling

grassroots patrons, and to find ways of supporting Liberians and Liberian institutions committed to constitutionalism, and to the extension of constitutional protections to all Liberians.

War in Liberia reflects a long-term agrarian crisis based on inter-generational tensions and the failure of rural institutions. Addressing the roots of the crisis requires changes to institutional frameworks, which influence rural social solidarity, including marriage and land reform.

The militia are "fed" by the large number of young people in the interior no longer able (or willing) to integrate within a traditional social system based on family land and social deference. Where parents are deceased, or through poverty cannot give their children a start in life, militia membership is a major (if unstable) alternative to becoming an exploited rural client. Demobilizing the militia also means providing viable alternatives to returning to rural dependency. This implies major changes in institutional frameworks for rural social solidarity, as well as changes in the employment opportunity structure.

1. Marriage and land are probably the two most important rural institutional frameworks for healing a generational breach that is a fundamental cause of conflict. Marriage reform has already been undertaken (November 2003 law). This recognizes that under rural patrimonial systems, women were treated, in marriage, as pawns in a game through which elders accumulated "power in people". Now, their own rights to the fruits of marriage are recognized in law, as are the rights of young men "too poor to marry" under traditional systems, setting a uniform national framework for reproductive partnerships based on mutuality and affection. This may go far to address some of the appalling sexual violence associated with the period of war.

Better access to land for marginal groups in society, probably equally necessary for social harmony, might prove more complex, because (unlike marriage) it touches upon a vested interest shared by settler (civilized) and traditional interior elites. At present marginalized youth in Liberia (including ex-combatants) see only a choice between rural dependency, including plantation work, in which their labor is highly exploited, and the freedom of life in the urban areas. They aspire (at least) to the life of a free artisan in town, but because of poor or non-existent educational background many of the most marginalized will only find work in the agrarian sector. The issue is how to ensure this offers them the social freedom they say they crave (i.e., to be recognized for their own achievement, rather than as the anonymous loyal client of some rural big person). There is some scope for young people in small-scale co-operative farming and plantation work (Firestone is interested in investing in rural out-grower schemes, for instance) but cohorts will need training, and the government will have to use its powers as ultimate owner of unused land, to make land grants. Liberia still has land to allocate, especially around forest reserves in the very thinly populated southeast.

2. Approving CDD activities based on generalized assumptions about community participation and consensus risks empowering certain groups over others. CDD processes should support, as far as practicable, community-led definitions of co-operation and management structures.

While there remain major gaps in back-up facilities and capacities for community-driven development (e.g., a more or less non-existent rural banking system, and widespread illiteracy and innumeracy) Liberian communities are not without relevant social capital. It is important, however, to distinguish between good social capital (*sensu* Putnam) and bad social (or cultural) capital (*sensu* Bourdieu), and to be aware that some community-based ways of organizing entrench privilege and personal rule, although presenting themselves in consensual terms. Communities themselves will need to engage in analysis of different forms of co-operation and solidarity, in order to assess, and re-make social capital in ways that encourage cohesion and solidarity and that lead to actions considered positive for society. This will be a political process—since powerful vested interests are at stake—and can only be attempted with the active involvement of Liberian groups supporting the return to constitutional rule. There is a danger in seeing

social fund activities in Liberia only in technical terms, e.g., as an exercise in the transfer of international procedures for participatory development.

3. Successful social reintegration requires support for local conciliation processes, and mechanisms to encourage open, informed debate around issues of justice and human rights.

To an important degree, peace will hinge on the success of reintegration processes, for ex-combatants, and for an even larger group of dispossessed, up-rooted young people vulnerable to future militia recruitment. Many ex-combatants want to go home, and express willingness to undertake specific steps to achieve social reintegration. Jobs and skills training are only part of what is needed. Processes of conciliation, involving both examination of issues of justice and rights, and rituals of reintegration, will play an important part. Communities and ex-combatants express useful ideas about ways to proceed, especially in terms of rituals of reintegration. In terms of rights and justice, the two groups have rather separate agenda for what needs to be addressed, if alienation and war are to be remedied. Modalities and mechanisms to bring together these different agendas will have to be devised, drawing upon the agency and cultural inventiveness of the respective parties, and the framework of constitutional rights. Without specific support for community-driven peace making activity—whether prior to or integral with the process of community-driven reconstruction—social fund activity may do no more than rebuild some of the societal causes of conflict. Willingness to engage in conflict analysis and conciliation should be a condition for receiving CDD grants. This means going beyond existing participatory methodologies, to ensure that applicants for CDD grants have identified marginal and excluded groups and are willing to absorb them within a new and expanded post-war community. It is an urgent requirement to establish some best practice models for attaining this objective in Liberian rural conditions. These models should incorporate local ideas and practices. Funding should be attached, e.g., to LACE grants, to support this requirement.

6.   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT

The draft recommendations are presented in the form of suggested LACE program activities, and on the basis that they: (i) require stakeholder consultation and comment; and (ii) will, on receipt of the stakeholder comments, be redrafted as practical program recommendations in the final RSA report. As LACE-funded CDD aims to build social capital in Liberia, the draft recommendations assume that local NGOs will be regarded as an integral component of Liberian social capital, and alongside LACE staff, play an important role in implementing, and ensuring the success of CDD.

The draft recommendations focus primarily on the initial stages of LACE-funded CDD, and the activities of international and local NGOs active in the field of CDD. They relate to:
- Equality of access to information about, and participation in, CDD;
- Avoiding dominant interests;
- Community-led analysis of local social capital;
- Barriers to CDD in remote rural areas;
- Enhancing opportunities in the agrarian employment sector;
- Participatory and accountable local governance; and
- Conflict resolution and reintegration of ex-combatants.

6.1 Ensure Equality of Access to Information and Participation in Operational Areas

LACE-funded CDD prioritizes "poor communities…particularly in remote areas of the country'[1]. The Operation Guidebook (the guide for communities to obtain financing from the agency) states that the Guidebook "should be widely available to communities". Equality of access to information about the CDD process, and equality of opportunity to participate, should be established as core CDD principles.

RSA respondents stressed the likelihood of inter-community conflicts around access to CDD resources, particularly given the history of governmental and non-governmental agencies failing to include those in remote locations in their respective activities. To minimize such problems, respondents advised that clear information about LACE and CDD be available to those in the remoter locations within each District.

Accessible information formats, such as briefing packs, leaflets and radio broadcasts that provide clear and concise information about CDD, should be developed. The dissemination strategy will be important, and detailed consideration must be given to:
- Who would be the key actors in devising such a strategy; for example, would County and District Officials work together with LACE staff and NGO representatives to identify communities to be targeted?
- Who would be the key actors in implementing such a strategy; for example, LACE staff, Country and District officials, local NGOs, international NGOs, community radio networks—what might be the particular strengths and weaknesses of each, and how might they best complement each other?
- How would the strategy be implemented in remote rural areas; for example, if information dissemination meetings were to be held in targeted communities, then how could it be ensured that each satellite village of each Headquarters Town was identified, informed, and given sufficient time to send representatives to the information dissemination meeting?
- What would be the process for identifying prospective participants, and which organization might assess the capacities of the prospective participants (for example, LINK)? What support/resources would that organization require?

6.2 Avoid Dominant Interests

This report has highlighted a risk inherent in CDD, that vested interests, be they individual, elite group or political, will attempt to dominate 'participatory' processes through various means; usually by presenting themselves as the elected community representatives, by manipulating information, or by imposing their own agendas on the proceedings. If this were to happen it would undermine public faith in social fund activities and do lasting damage to public perceptions of key CDD actors, such as local government and local NGOs. Local NGOs, as a social capital entity that LACE should seek to strengthen, have much to lose if the CDD process goes awry.

How would stakeholders suggest CDD actors might assist communities to avoid vested interests dominating CDD procedures?

6.3 Support Community Definition of Co-Operation and Management Structures

Social mobilization and representative group formation are important elements of the CDD process; they also emerged as important issues during RSA fieldwork consultations. It was consistently reported that communities prefer local structures to externally imposed structures, but it was also observed that local

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[1] Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment, Community Empowerment Project, Operation Guidebook, p. 6.

structures might serve to empower certain groups relative to others, and that there is a significant risk of CDD resources compounding this problem. This report has also noted the potential for CDD resources to inadvertently entrench the privilege and power of elite groups, particularly if representatives of those groups emerge as 'community facilitators' or 'leaders' of 'Community-Based Organizations'.

Consequently, one of the report's conclusions is that communities will need to engage in analysis of different forms of co-operation and solidarity, in order to assess, and re-make, social capital in ways that encourage cohesion and solidarity. Such a process would start with community identification of an appropriate (i.e., open, participatory and representative) forum within which such a discussion could be conducted, how it should be facilitated, and what external support might be required. External support for such processes will be vital, which raises the issue of LACE selection of adequately skilled implementing partners. In particular, decisions must be made about:

- Which type of implementing partners are best placed to fulfill such a role: local NGOs with knowledge of local social structures, or international NGOs with their preferred organizational approaches to such issues (REFLECT approach etc.).
- How would such NGOs be identified, and their existing capacities assessed (i.e., *via* LINK)?
- Identifying the additional skills they will require, and from where those skills might best be sourced.
- Whether agencies should be at liberty to pursue their own approaches to implementing CDD, or whether a broad common framework for the process should be developed. In either case, monitoring and evaluation criteria will be crucial, and LACE must develop criteria to evaluate the social impact of CDD as well as the construction and financial management components.

6.4 Address Barriers to CDD in Remote Areas

While the priority target communities for CDD are mostly located (in) particularly remote areas, the lack of formal rural banking systems in remote areas, and high levels of illiteracy and innumeracy among the populations, may preclude remote communities from receiving grants under the criteria outlined in the Operation Guidebook. However, despite these barriers, the RSA has highlighted examples of trusted community-level institutions and mechanisms capable of managing money and resources. It has been suggested that a combination of support and strengthening of local institutions, and flexibility in eligibility criteria, might overcome some of the organizational barriers to implementing CDD in remote areas.

If this proposition is accepted, then the challenge for LACE and its CDD partners is to devise a community engagement strategy that creates an ongoing discussion with remote communities about how they might successfully meet tailored criteria for CDD. The task for participants in the Stakeholder Workshop is to suggest how LACE and its CDD partners might create such a strategy and process.

6.5 Enhance Opportunities in the Agrarian Employment Sector

Section 5.1 highlighted the importance of increasing agrarian employment opportunities that will offer a degree of social freedom to marginalized youth, including ex-combatants and non-combatants. The report suggests that LACE should actively seek requests for support from young people proposing small-scale co-operative farming and plantation work. To succeed, this would require the allocation of unused land by government and private landowners, and the provision of technical and marketing training to the groups. CDD/LACE should develop policy and lobbying positions on such issues, for example:

- The Good Governance Commission, Chaired by Ellen Sirleaf Johnson, has a mandate to consider issues related to land allocation; the Board of LACE and the donors should present the final RSA

report to the Commission with a view to discussing the possible allocation of land to co-operative farming groups.

- Such co-operative farming groups have potential to supply commercial interests by, for example, producing rice for Firestone workers, or planting rubber in an outgrower scheme; the Board of LACE and the donors should develop proposals for presentation to major commercial producers.
- Identify potential sources of technical and marketing training for co-operative farming groups.

6.6 Promote Participatory and Accountable Local Governance

Respondents repeatedly stated their distrust of County and District-level governance structures, and their opposition to CDD resources being handled by local authorities. However, County and District-level authorities will have a role in LACE-funded CDD, and this presents an opportunity to address public mistrust of local government.

Stakeholder Workshop participants might consider, by what mechanisms, the implementation of CDD, and the potential for joint management of its resources, could be used to create functional relationships, based on principles of participation and accountability, between citizens and local government. Again, it will be important to include in this discussion the Good Governance Commission chaired by Ellen Sirleaf Johnson.

6.7 Promote Conflict Resolution and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants

Experience elsewhere (e.g., Sierra Leone) offers a number of lessons in how to facilitate community discussions of local development activities, encompassing sensitive issues such as social marginalization, reform of local justice systems, community conflict analysis, and how to deal with potential problems posed by the reintegration of ex-combatants into local society.

RSA field work respondents, ex-combatants and non-combatants, spoke of problems they anticipate when some ex-combatants attempt to return to their areas of origin; ex-combatants in particular spoke of the need for a process of facilitated 'brokering' to ease their return. This implies arranging participatory planning processes to prepare the different groups—both ex-combatants and non-combatants—to think through what CDD might entail when the parties meet up on the ground.

A series of workshops in camps and cantonments can be envisaged, aiming to build awareness of CDD as an inclusive process. These would be organized by refugee/IDP and DDR agencies, with inputs from other agencies, as part of preparations for return/reintegration. Training would be needed not only in mobilization for development but also in conflict resolution. This latter might include elements of a truth and reconciliation process, and ritual mechanisms for forgiveness and community re-admission. Workshop participants would be challenged to think through how CDD activities might be broadened to include peace making and rights and justice as correlates of material restitution. Ex-combatants would find scope to envisage a potential role not just in reintegrating with but also in remaking their communities. Specific questions for consideration might include: what local capacities exist to implement such an approach? What support and training might they need? What kind of curriculum is required? How might the initiative be organized and managed, and by whom?

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

CDD in post-war Liberia is an attempt to reverse nearly two centuries of dualistic community formation processes. To establish conventional progress monitoring indicators (in terms of, for example, schools built by community action) would send the wrong sort of message (i.e., that donors are interested only in

results, and not the quality and sustainability of the social capital formed in the process of post war rehabilitation). As the RSA reveals, if CDD in Liberia injects resources under the assumption that community is somehow natural and unproblematic then it risks doing little more than capitalizing a return to war. Thus it is suggested that during the start-up phase of CDD in post-war Liberia the main emphasis should be upon indicators of progressive change in the basic quality of consultation processes, e.g., the processes through which agencies such as LACE operate, and through which community groups mobilize to apply for CDD grants.

Three major monitoring and evaluation (M&E) criteria suggest themselves:
- Effectiveness of agencies such as LACE in lobbying government to provide the changed framework needed to support healthy CDD in Liberian conditions (e.g., improved access to land by poor and marginalized groups, or reform of administration of local justice), in communicating the purpose of CDD as widely as possible, and in supporting (and responding to) the formation of participatory competencies (e.g., by investing in areas such as conflict analysis).
- Clear evidence concerning the survival or resurrection of long-term and self-sustaining, self-managed social capital in the Liberian interior through which CDD could be achieved (e.g., labor co-operatives and RoSCAs), and the absence of strong counter-indicators, concerning e.g., involvement of power elites in opportunistically stimulating mobilization for CDD.
- Willingness of community groups mobilizing to apply for grants to develop and apply rights-based and conflict analysis frameworks, and to solve problems of social exclusion and marginalization thus revealed, as part of the CDD process.

Translation of these criteria into precise indicators will require further, detailed, community-based work, and cannot be specified in advance. This work will require the involvement of field specialists with social science analytical skills (including skills to analyze the political dynamics of community development) and a good knowledge of Liberian rural and informal institutions. Any M&E framework should be established with participatory involvement of beneficiaries, including the involvement of those rural groups most alienated from and critical of previous development processes in Liberia. The RSA revealed that local groups have a shrewd and lively appreciation of exactly what it is that has to be monitored if previous abuses are to be corrected.

Annex 1: Social Cohesion and Land Tenure in Liberia

Social Cohesion

Donors, led by the World Bank, now emphasize community-driven approaches to poverty alleviation, including reconstruction after war. Development capital channeled through social funds should go as directly as possible to local communities, who know best what is needed, and have the greatest interest in ensuring success. Beneficiaries contribute their own share, in the form of labor (including management time). It is expected that the local collective interest will control misappropriation and rent-seeking behavior. The success of the policy depends on the correctness of its characterization of the collectivity.

Increasingly, donors of development aid consider "community" to be a locus for social capital, e.g., a space within which network connections or organizational capacity develop. Recognizing both structural and cognitive social capital World Bank social capital methodology seeks to measure social capital at household, community and organizational levels (www.worldbank.org/cdd). The concept of social capital has been criticized (Fine 2001) for seeking to combine two opposed conceptions, i.e., the notion of an asset potentially accessible to all (e.g., trust among business partners sharing religious affiliation), and a notion developed by Bourdieu (cf. the essay "The New Capital" in Bourdieu 1998) of cultural mechanisms protecting the privileges of an elite (e.g., a school selection procedures based on dress or accent, or high fees levied by some sports clubs to deter non-elite participation).

What makes social capital analytically problematic when applied to Liberia is that the mayhem over the past two decades could be described as these two conceptions of social capital at war. In meetings described below, "educated" persons several times tried to impose themselves as "translators" in order to report what people ought to have answered (as opposed to what they stated). Their justification was to help provide connections and motivations necessary to catalyze development activity between sophisticated external consultants and simple country people, i.e., they see themselves as repositories or articulators of "correct" organizational information, and thus as protectors of social capital in the first sense. In several meetings with disadvantaged young people, and ex-combatants, by contrast, participants were more likely to invoke Bourdieu's understanding of social capital as something negative and problematic. Several times, it was argued vehemently that the war stemmed from inequality in access to education and jobs. The view that up-country youth were consciously "written out" of development scenarios to ensure the continued advantage of a Monrovia elite was several times reiterated. Or as an anonymous note passed to the convener of the first stakeholder meeting on the RSA put it—"the problem of the war in this country is not tribalism but class".

But if we are to back away from the notion of community social capital as something tangible (i.e., as measurable independent of context) and of value to all, what better notion can we deploy to analyze social cohesion as a basis for community action? War—all our informants concurred—tended to atomize society. Neighbor turned against neighbor and children against parents in a desperate struggle to stay alive. Some female ex-combatants reported they became killers (and thus predatory on civilians) in order to protect themselves from military rape. If there is any social capital formed in these circumstances it tends to be of the kind envisaged by Bourdieu—serving to insure the survival of "elites" (in this case armed gangs) amidst general disorder.

Emile Durkheim offers a different conception of social solidarity. Social cohesion is processual, and grounded in religion. It is formed by action that involves ritualistic aspects. Co-operation in ritual reinforces a sacred-profane distinction, reflecting and protecting valuable social arrangements (including, in the most elementary cases, marriage alliance between different lines of descent). Shared ideas about what is valuable and works in terms of co-operation, or segmentation, are consolidated as collective representations. In the simplest pre-literate cases basic ideas about social cohesion are often expressed as clan totems, sometimes an animal that is sacred, and thus (for example) taboo to eat. The significance of

the totem lies not in properties the animal displays (some totems are odd, insignificant creatures) but in the fact that it assumes sacred significance because it identifies a group. The totem stands in relation to the clan in much the same way as, today, a flag stands in relation to a nation, i.e., it "flags" the importance of identity and inclusion.

Seibel and Massing (1974), in a countrywide survey of forms of rural labor co-operation, offer an instance that brings out very clearly the way in which social cohesion rests upon a blend of functional and ritual aspects. Mano farmers in Nimba County cooperate with their young people to plant rice. As the adult work party is busy planting, the children and youth of the village scamper on all fours in and among the workers, dressed in masks representing baboons, pulling aside burnt, fallen logs impeding the progress of those hoeing the rice. For these groups farm work is more than technique. It is also performance. In this performance different forms of co-operation are on display. The co-operation among the adults is functional—the work gets done quicker. But the play of the baboons enacts the co-operation between people and nature essential to the production of rice, while at the same time easing the path of the "ploughing" team.

In the Durkheimian conception solidarity and social cohesion are emergent and path dependent properties of living, changing societies. Not all societies follow the same paths of co-operation, and as circumstances change so does the basis for social cohesion. New collective representations have to be forged, and new rituals invented. Fourteen years of war in Liberia have provided many illustrations of society trying to remake itself through ritual action, including rituals of violence. The enormous surge in Pentecostal religious groups both during and after the war has been remarked by commentators such as Ellis (1994 and 1999), and observed during RSA fieldwork. The war itself took on ritual forms. Outsiders have wondered at the cross-dressing, wigs and joke-shop masks donned by fighters, but we need not discount the explanations of the fighters themselves—impelled by inequalities and injustices, they saw their violence as a kind of ritual purging of an old order that had disastrously failed and a desperate attempt to coerce a new social order, often with the assistance of magical means.

But Durkheim (1933 [1893, pp. 120-1]) notes that the peace that sets in when war-weariness prevails is only a negative peace: "Doubtless, fatigue can for a time put an end to hostilities, but this bare armistice cannot be more durable than the temporary lassitude which occasions it". It has to be replaced by a positive sense of solidarity, in which people have need of peace "only as they are already united by some tie of sociability". The unifying force, he famously argued, was the division of labor. Family affection, he argued, is founded upon co-operation in household tasks (whether in sharing burdens, or undertaking tasks on a complementary basis). And in this regard the family is the model for society as a whole. For people to recognize each other and mutually guarantee their rights "they must, for some reason, depend upon each other…"

Sharing in work was the ubiquitous basis on which Liberian social solidarity rested pre-war. Seibel and Massing (1974) show that the *kuu* (the co-operative labor group, but sometimes also savings or trading association) was a defining feature of rural societies throughout Liberia, despite the many variations in organizational detail. The *kuu* is found as often among Muslims as Christians, and is as widespread in the "Mande" northwest of the country as in the "Bassa-Kru-Krahn" southeast. Our investigations suggest that as groups resettle after the war the *kuu* is among the first local institutions to revive. As in Sierra Leone (Richards et al. 2004) war has not diminished reliance upon labor co-operation, and may even have increased it, even if the institution is evolving in modern ways (our investigations show that football and religion—again, as in Sierra Leone—are now as often as not the ritual "register" framing the more mundane aspects of work undertaken to plant crops, rehabilitate plantations or rebuild wrecked houses.

Where social cohesion is based on mechanical solidarity (i.e., similarity of function rather than complementarity) society tends to defend itself by violence. Specialization of function, and division of labor according to aptitude (i.e., organic solidarity), tends to foster a more generalized regard for human life (what Durkheim termed the "cult of the individual", i.e., the respect and sympathy we tend to accord

to all human beings, as society becomes globally more interwoven, thus in effect "human rights"). To simplify an argument of considerable complexity (DiCristina 2004) Durkheim suggested that homicide is liable to decline as the division of labor in society becomes more complex, and that suicide is liable to increase. Complicating factors are anomie (sudden loss of a sense of values due to very rapid social change) and violence associated with ritual excitement (massacre and atrocity associated with moments of intensive social "feed back" encountered in all societies—"effervescence" in Durkheimian terminology, cf. Stone 2004).

Finally, Durkheim warns that solidarity based on affection and respect grounded in mutual dependence must inevitably be diminished by a defective division of labor. Where the best educational opportunities and jobs are reserved for an elite, and others are forced to undertake uncongenial work, making no use of natural aptitudes, or (worse) where a section of the population is excluded from employment whatsoever, perhaps (as in Liberia) restricted to subsistence reserves on the margins of society, then lack of social cohesion is liable to lead to civil war. Durkheim cites slave revolts in the French Caribbean as instances.

Durkheimian arguments about social cohesion and forced division of labor seem very apt to the situation in Liberia as it has developed over the past few decades. It is the recurrent refrain of ex-combatants, and impoverished rural youth alike, that lack of access to education and jobs is the basic cause of the conflict. Some of the violence may reflect the defensive reactions of cohesive traditional groups (the barbarism of authors such as Robert Kaplan, cf. Kaplan 1996). In other cases, doubtless rapid collapse of institutions has been responsible for some amount of "anomic" violence (the rapid rise in criminality analyzed by the "greed not grievance" school of thought). But the cross-dressing violence of the bewigged Rambos associated with Taylor's NPFL, and the iconoclastic (Poro-desecrating) violence of young Mandingo fighters in LURD are probably better interpreted as ritualized expressions of dissatisfaction with a society in which class differentiation into *kwii* and "aborigines" over many years, and subsequent economic failure, has dangled civilization in front of the eyes of any rural youth, but failed to provide the educational means or skills to take part.

In VOA demobilization cantonment ex-combatants who took part in our meetings were unanimous that the major underlying cause of the war—lack of education—had "not been properly trumpeted". One older woman ex-combatant said she had encouraged three of her children to fight "because of inequality". Interviewees thought the "coming into power of a country boy who was not *kwii*" [Doe] might be a turning point, but "education became even more expensive…and could only be accessed by those on the Seaside [Monrovia and other coastal urban centers]". The interior southeast remains totally neglected, and even now "the causes of the war in Liberia are still not addressed".

Ex-combatants have passed through demobilization centers in a matter of days. As of August 26, 2004, 68,730 fighters and dependants had reported for disarmament, but yielding only about 20,000 guns and 20,000 pieces of ordnance), but (due to lack of facilities and funds) only 6,800 had so far enrolled for vocational training. Carol Bellamy, Director of UNICEF, remarked, "much effort has been put into disarmament and demobilization but not so much effort has gone into funding reintegration and rehabilitation". She expressed particular concern for the 85% of 5,800 children formerly associated with the fighting forces who had been reunited with their families "what happens when children return home? There needs to be access to educational and vocational and skills training…" (quoted by AllAfrica News Agency August 26, 2004).

Land Tenure

The Liberian land tenure system is dualistic; the government recognizes deeded ownership by "civilized" Liberians (*kwi*i) but only the use rights of "aboriginal" occupiers. The roots of this dualistic system lie in the vision of the American Colonization Society (ACS) for the kind of society it hoped to create for the16,000 former American slaves and 4000 "recaptives" it settled in Liberia between 1822 and 1892 (Fraenkel 1964, p. 5). The aim was "an independent community of peasant farmers owning in fee simple a tract of land sufficient to enable them to support themselves and their families by their own labors,

allotted out of the public domain without payment, but subject to their improving the land within a specified time." (Fraenkel 1964, p. 9, quoting Huberich).

It is important to note that the Society's leaders were white, and that (additionally) the damage done by plantation slavery in the United States to the family life of slaves had dimmed the Black settlers' collective memories of Africa. The vision was to create a new "United States" in Africa, where the settlers would experience racial and religious freedom, rather than integration within an ancestral cultural womb. The concept of the ACS was closer to the wilderness vision of the Boer trekkers in South Africa than to the Zionist conception of a diaspora Right of Return. Fraenkel (1964) notes the abiding consequences for modern development of Liberia. Today, most Liberians may be only dimly aware of the political heritage of the ACS, but they still live with its institutional consequences, namely a dualistic land-tenure system in which the most advantageous places in a property-owning and market-oriented society are reserved for those who can demonstrate to the government that they are sufficiently "advanced", or loyal enough to the Executive Mansion, to be classed as civilized. The dualistic land tenure system (we conclude) is one of the main motors of Liberia's political economy.

In Liberia only citizens and benevolent organizations (missions) can own land. To be a landowner requires a deed from government. Americo-Liberians and educated up-country people (i.e., *kwii*) hold extensive amounts of land, throughout the country, on the basis of deeds recognized by government. Ultimately, these deeds are scrutinized and recognized by the Executive Mansion. Liebenow (1969) summarized land acquisition in Liberia in the following terms: "honorables, and others who have the ear of the President, have engaged in one of the most extensive programs of private land acquisition outside of South Africa, Rhodesia and the Portuguese dependencies" (p. 209). President Tubman conceded that several citizens had "acquired estates of up to twenty thousand acres for as little as fifty cents an acre" (Liebenow 1969, p. 209). The role of the Executive as the final arbiter of land allocation has also resulted in large concessions being granted to foreign investors. Firestone holds a 99-year lease on one million acres of land for rubber planting.

All undeeded land is public land, including land occupied by "aboriginal" peoples. Land cannot be purchased for aborigines since the government is the only legal vendor, but the Liberian Code of Laws offers certain statutory rights to aborigines. A tribe has a right to as much land as needed for farming and other tribal necessities. It can have its territory defined by metes and bounds at its own expense, and tribal land can be converted to communal holding with the tribal authority designated as trustee. When a tribal group is deemed (by the government) to be sufficiently "civilized" it can petition to have its land divided into family holdings of 25 acres per family. Provision is made to regulate the use of tribal land by strangers.

"Civilized" aborigines can apply to allotments of public land upon meeting specified improvement requirements, though Clower et al. (1966) indicated that in the early 1960s these rights were seldom exercised. Reviewing work by Fraenkel (1964), Falkman (1972) noted that government-approved land titling allowed some "tribal" communities to settle in Monrovia while retaining (or developing) aspects of "aboriginal" governance. Thus he correctly identifies scope within Liberian land law for "collective" values to be preserved. During the 1930s the Kru community in Monrovia successfully petitioned the government for land close to the mouth of the St. Paul River to found New Kru Town. The land was administered by the representatives of the Kru Community, and a well-laid out community developed. Part of the success of the arrangement was a link to employment. Many Kru migrants worked as stevedores, and community elders were also the gangmasters recruiting labor for the docks and ships, which gave them considerable powers of patronage and discipline, and the possibility to withhold a portion of wages as community tax. Representatives of the Vai and Bassa communities in Monrovia also applied for title to land, but (without employment to allocate) were less successful in imposing regulatory authority on Vai Town and Bassa Town. Collective titling of land is now more common in rural communities than described by Clower et al. (1966) in the 1960s. A number of multi-ethnic farming communities we visited around Mount Gibi (Margibi County), for example, had succeeded in having their

land surveyed and protected by deed. A Government Land Commissioner, appointed to each County administration administers the process. It represents a potential way forward for other groups also. In Buchanan unemployed school graduates told us they planned to engage in farming, at least temporarily, and would apply to the Grand Bassa County Land Commissioner to gain access to suitable sites.

Falkman (1972), taking the case of Grand Cess, describes the situation in the early 1970s, in the remote Southeast, where uninhabited forest land was still being brought into cultivation for the first time. His analysis identifies a latent conflict between two basic sets of land tenure principles—the market-oriented notion of fee simple, where land is owned by its current occupants, and can be sold, or passed on to designated heirs, and the "aboriginal" conception, under which land is "owned" only by the ancestors, and is used by the current generation on the basis of membership of a descent group. The latter idea functions within the context of rotational farming, in which land users use the soil for one or two years at most and rest it for perhaps seven to fifteen years to regain fertility. During this interval of family investment in soil fertility older farmers may drop out of the cycle, and new family members take their place. Fallowing is an aspect of two processes—one an investment in soil fertility, the other a process of inter-generational land re-allocation. Group rights are likely to be defended, but perhaps only as long as bush fallow farming remains an important resource for the rural poor, and for the incorporation of the younger generation into farming. Falkman (1972) noted that in Grand Cess pioneering in the forest was welcomed and considered legitimate only insofar as the land won from forest passed into and remained part of the collective tenure system. A farmer working on the forest edge alone, he notes ominously, would soon disappear, but those well embedded within the lineage system are seen to be virtuously extending the family domain for future generations. A consequence of the lineage-based land management system is that an egalitarian ethic is strongly maintained, with an emphasis on sharing of labor and all consumption. In Grand Cess (as is widely the case elsewhere) individual accumulation of wealth was only possible by becoming "civilized". Grand Cess was divided into two settlements—a municipal half, in which land and other property was held under government rules for the "civilized" and Bigtown, a traditional community, organized on family lines, in which lineage-based ownership prevailed.

Because land was abundant in the forests of the southeast, Falkman (1972) describes the incompatibilities of the two systems as latent rather than actual. But he anticipates a time when aboriginal Liberians might face real land shortages, and wonders what means of protest against private land alienation would be open to them. He rules out the option of violence. "Making war would be difficult against a Western ruling elite armed with high powered firearms and heavily supported by large Western firms and their governments". It is now clear violence was a more viable option in Liberia than Falkman ever imagined. It is a moot point the extent to which land acquisition has contributed to the marginalization of young people in rural areas, and thus increased their vulnerability to militia recruitment.

With the Cold War ending, Western governments showed much less appetite for peace maintenance in West Africa for strategic reasons. Western business investments in the region, by themselves, were not sufficiently valuable to defend. The Liberian army turned against the ruling elite, and modern (Cold War surplus) arms and ammunition became cheap enough for even small dissident groups to afford.

Is there evidence that land shortages fuelled conflict? Certainly, there are such shortages, and not only in areas adjacent to Monrovia. Holsoe (1976), discussing the Lofa County agricultural scheme, notes that some Gbande, Kissi and Loma communities were short of land for expansion of upland rice farming—squeezed between grassland and international borders, and had in some cases already moved, spontaneously, into intensified wetland rice cultivation. As a modern technology—dependent on inputs of fertilizer and improved seeds, and in some cases water control investments and machines—wetland rice cultivation tends to invoke the provisions already laid down in Liberian land law for the recognition of title in terms of fee simple ownership. Better-educated "aborigines" have seized their chance. In Peye Town and Peters Town (Margibi County) the team found the community claimed to be, by origin, settlements founded by Gio elephant hunters from Nimba County, but the leaders of a current mixed population of Gio, Kpelle and Bassa had ensured that the community lands were surveyed and registered.

This encourages investment in, e.g., small plantations, since families can apply to have their own assets recognized, and land can be handed on to designated heirs, but this raises the question of what happens to those not so designated.

Liberian demographics suggest family formation strategies more suited to an open frontier, with regular intake of land under the lineage system to accommodate an expanding younger generation. But this intake of frontier land is unlikely to be happening on a large scale, even if it remains important in some specific locations, such as around the Sapo Forest. Part of the reason is not so much lack of suitable land as low interest, among the young people we talked to, including ex-combatants, in the traditional communal system. It makes them vulnerable to social hazards, such as exploitation of their labor by the elders. Where they wish to go into farming, they would prefer to do so under the modern system. They envisage training as their first requirement for becoming small planters, followed by a land grant (or means of acquiring deeded land at reasonable prices). The evidence we encountered suggests that, indeed, land held under the deeded system is expanding rapidly, but the indications are that for the most part it is children from better educated groups, living closer to roads and towns, who are more likely to acquire such deeded land. What happens to rural youth, from the poorer households, in more isolated districts? Some remain within the traditional system (and have now often joined the ranks of the displaced), but clearly, some at least, have preferred to join militias. Some say they had no option. When war overwhelmed their districts their families wanted them to join to protect family assets. In other cases it was a bid for freedom from traditional community constraints. The traditional land tenure system offers few prospects for the re-incorporation of these marginal young people. Viable agrarian alternatives to militia employment for young people with little formal education will require deeded acquisition.

The government, as owner of public land, could approve deeded acquisition by co-operative groups of e.g., unemployed school leavers, or groups of ex-combatants unwilling or unable to resettle in their homes. Such groups would need grants to pay for land acquisition, and training in co-operation, plantation crops, and business skills. They might constitute a network of rubber or oil palm out-growers linked to major plantations. In general, young people made clear to us that plantation laboring was not viewed as an attractive option, but rural ex-combatants expressed interest in farming.

Annex 2: Methods

The Concept of a Rapid Social Assessment

Social assessments are an established part of the World Bank strategy for informing and advising its projects. In a conflict-affected context, an important assumption is that war destroys institutions and undermines cognitive aspects of social capital (e.g., trust and collective action), so a stock-taking exercise is needed to establish the extent of the damage, and what might be done by donors to remedy the situation. This includes avoiding further harm (e.g., unintentionally divisive interventions) as well as positive contributions to the rebuilding of social fabric. A social assessment is also an opportunity to explore elusive or recalcitrant social factors feeding conflict. Thus, the Bank developed the Rapid Social Assessment as a tool specifically to understand the dynamics in a conflict setting. Liberia is the first pilot of this tool.

To establish social facts with certainty normally requires pains-taking and thus time-consuming research, but the window of opportunity in a post-war situation is narrow. Unless action is taken rapidly there is a danger that the belligerents (e.g., large numbers of combatants awaiting demobilization) will drift back to war. Normal standards of social science enquiry have of necessity to be adapted. Yet biased or seriously patchy information would undermine good judgment. Methodological ingenuity is thus needed to ensure facts that are good enough, and yet not so time consuming to ascertain that the moment for key decisions has passed.

A rapid social assessment (RSA) could therefore be defined as a clearly thought-out strategy to gather adequate and timely information and grounded interpretations in a sequenced manner to improve policy-making dialogue as it evolves during the early stages of post-war social reconstruction. A key operational concept is integration of the best available information at the time, enfolded within an on-going policy making dialogue. Information is attained and crosschecked by triangulation of: (i) literature review; (ii) interviews, reports, stakeholder discussion and written comments with/from/by practitioners; and (iii) limited but well-aimed bursts of direct field investigation, as post-war circumstances permit.

The Liberian RSA: A Three-phase Process

In the Liberia RSA three phases were planned, each with its own reporting and feedback deadlines. The phases were devised to cope with the uncertainties that affect the earliest stages of any peace process:

- **Phase 1** involved team building, with special emphasis on bringing in the right range of Liberian expertise, initial liaison with a range of stakeholders, and some preliminary exposure to the field situation, leading to an extensive literature review and a draft document for stakeholder discussions.

- **Phase 2** involved substantive field investigations and preparation of an outline version of the envisaged report, drawing conclusions from literature review, initial feedback from practitioners and field investigations.

- **Phase 3** involved interaction with stakeholders over the summary report and the development of a more fully elaborated version of the report keyed to the main subdivisions of the terms of reference, final fieldwork, and incorporation of feedback from practitioners and other stakeholders into the final report.

Success depended a great deal on the adequacy of organizational arrangements, and the adaptability of the process management and team members to shifting contingencies of a rather mundane kind (e.g., atrocious weather conditions, difficulties over transport and the vagaries of the banking system). Insecurity was less of an obstacle than anticipated. The central objectives of meeting reporting deadlines, and securing the engagement of a range of stakeholders (including useful feedback), were attained.

From the point of view of methods it was recognized that a rapid social assessment exercise at an early stage in post-war recovery would offer only limited opportunities for direct data collection in the field. Although limited in regional coverage, due to weather conditions, fieldwork proved more feasible than had at first been expected. This was a reflection of the exceptional local knowledge and contacts of the Liberian team members. Meanwhile, considerable effort had been invested in literature review. This enabled the team to draw lessons from a surprisingly rich social science literature on Liberia, and to open up links to Liberian intellectuals who might be expected to play an important role in sustaining CDD after the current emergency phase has ended. Advice from practitioners was also a significant factor in shaping the conclusions. Much of this input came in the course of briefings or through perusal of working documents, ahead of formal reporting or feedback deadlines, and shows the advantages of trying to embed RSA knowledge formation within real-time policy dialogue and implementation processes. A key source of information was the Technical Working Group established to advise and inform the development of the Liberian Agency for Community Empowerment on technical matters related to conducting CDD in the unique Liberian context.

The RSA was supported through a grant from the World Bank's LICUS Trust Fund to Mercy Corps International and through funding from UNDP. This had the advantage of ensuring advice and feedback from a range of operational sources, ahead of formal feedback on the three draft reports, even while the CDD process for post-war Liberia was in the process of being established.

Fieldwork

The RSA field teams conducted research in 12 locations in 5 Counties between June and August 2004. The teams worked in Counties where disarmament had (i) not commenced, (ii) was ongoing, and (iii) was said to have been completed. Road conditions and lack of funds prevented fieldwork in eastern Liberia, where literature review indicates social conditions that are in some respect strikingly difficult from those in the north and west of the country. Further funds will be sought to extend the fieldwork coverage in 2005.

In our field meetings it was typically the case that villages in which we held meetings were the accessible headquarters point for a (so-called) clan. Clans in Liberia are territorial units, below chiefdom and above a town. Typically, a number of satellite villages 'belong' to the clan headquarters town; the numbers of villages belonging to the headquarters varies, in the case of the RSA field-research numbers varied between 4 satellite villages and 22 satellite villages.

No.	County	Community	Targets
1	Grand Bassa	Buchanan City, Compound #3	War-affected communities Local Government Officials
2.	River Cess	James Town and satellite villages	War Affected Communities and ex-combatants
3.	Margibi	Peters Town and Paye Town (and satellite villages), Wohrn, 'Voice of America' Cantonment Centre	War Affected Communities and ex-combatants
4.	Lofa	Zorzor, Borkeza and satellite villages	Combatants and War Affected Communities
5.	Bong	Gbarnga, Deman, Tomu and satellite villages	Ex-combatants, War-affected Communities etc.

Our field methodology involved planning meetings in each location one day ahead of the meeting to be requested with the wider community group. During the planning meetings we discussed the recent history of the location (pre, during and post-conflict), gathered information about the different ethnic groups living in the area during each period, identified the number and names of the satellite villages, and requested that representatives of each be asked to attend the meeting on the following day (an unreasonable request for many but, given time constraints, the only effort we could make to enhance inclusion).

The teams worked within semi-structured frameworks informed by the key questions posed in the RSA Phase I Report, the teams conducted plenary group, focus group and key informant group interviews in on-road and off-road rural villages, in urban centers, and in cantonment centers (see Table above).

Annex 3: Community in Liberia

Liberian society is quite extensively documented. Here we review literature covering three themes directly relevant to the RSA: inter-communal tensions, lessons learnt from community reconstruction attempts post-1997, and a survey of some mechanisms affecting CDD.

The Contested Nature of Community in Liberia

National Groups and Factions

Socially, the population of Liberia comprises settlers (by origin either freed slaves or "recaptives", i.e., Africans liberated from the Atlantic slave trade while en route to the New World), indigenous groups located within the boundaries of the state when its territory was demarcated by protracted negotiation between the Monrovia government and the British and French colonial powers at the beginning of the 20th century, and various African and non-African diaspora groups engaged primarily in trade, mining and logging. The 1847 constitution provides that only persons of African descent can hold citizenship, a provision reconfirmed in the 1986 constitution. For many years the Liberian state was ruled by a settler-dominated one-party regime, the True Whig Party. After a military coup in 1980 factions dominated by indigenous elements contested state power. Two West African trading diaspora (Mandingo and Fula) have tended, historically, to ally with settler interests. This support was transferred to military rulers after the Doe coup in 1980. Some indigenous elements, opposed both to the settler and army regimes, have continued to stigmatize the Mandingo as not truly Liberian.

One area where the Mandingo long traded is Nimba County, where, in particular, they exported kola from the forest margins to the West African savanna interior (Ford 1989). Nimba County was a zone of considerable instability in the early decades of the 20th century. The Liberian Frontier Force—largely unpaid and living off the land—established Liberian state authority in the region in a series of punitive campaigns, 1912-17, aimed at breaking French-backed trade between the Mandingo and local land owners in rubber and kola. Matters were significantly different in the 1980s. By then much more Mandingo commercial interest was Monrovia based, and leading Mandingo merchants shifted support from the Tolbert regime to Samuel Doe. Doe feared the rivalry of his coup partner, Thomas Quiwonkpa, a Gio from Nimba, and launched scorched earth attacks in the region. Local reactions included hostility to the Mandingo rural trading diaspora, translated into harassment and atrocity after Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia, appealing to local anti-Doe sentiment, established itself in the region at the end of 1989.

NPFL violence encouraged many Mandingo to support a rival faction, ULIMO, initially assisting the Sierra Leone government to stem the advance of the Taylor-backed Revolutionary United Front in eastern Sierra Leone in 1991. From 1992 ULIMO focused on wresting the western border region of Liberia from the NPFL. Mandingo groups have maintained, for 500 years or more (d'Azevedo 1989; 1993) a strong presence in this western part of Liberia, through which passed the main trade routes between the coast and major Mandingo commercial centers in the Upper Niger Valley (e.g., Musadugu and Kankan in Guinea). Mandingo involvement in various armed trading federations, at times in alliance with Gola, Gbandi, Kissi and Kpelle-speaking groups, in the 19th century, anticipates their more recent involvement in both ULIMO-K, and its regional successor, LURD. ULIMO was formed in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in mid-1991, with covert support from both the Sierra Leonean and Guinean armies, and LURD has at times operated from Guinea, allegedly using both Guinean mercenaries and *kamajo* (special hunter) fighters from the Mende-dominated Civil Defence Forces in Sierra Leone.

A second element in the ULIMO forces opposing Charles Taylor's bid for power in the early-mid 1990s traces its support from southeastern Liberia, where, as will be discussed below, patterns of interaction with the settler state were somewhat different from those in Nimba County and the northwest. In

particular, the element of long-distance trade with a "Mande" interior is absent. Much more important is the factor of coastwise expansion of settler enclaves in the direction of Cape Palmas, in the extreme southeast, and the coastal mobility of Kru-speaking populations, engaged in fishing, surf boat and deckhand activities, as far as Freetown to the west and Accra to the east. The migrant Kru communities of Freetown, noted for their co-operative savings activities even in the 19th century, contributed group funds to ship arms to home communities rebelling against the Liberian settler state in 1915, and to the British war effort (the Kru had petitioned to be placed under British administration). This pattern of coastal diaspora support repeated itself in 1991 when Sierra-Leone based Liberians mobilized support for ULIMO. Armed opposition in the southeast to the elected regime of Charles Taylor form 1997 regrouped as MODEL.

The present interim government of national unity (from August 2003) involves elements from the former Taylor government, the two regional militia factions opposed to Taylor (LURD and MODEL), civil society and the former "settler" regime. A general point is that multi-ethnic federations or coalitions fighting to control the terms of trade over valuable forest and forest edge produce are not new. There is nothing unusual or unprecedented about the trade-oriented political contests sustaining the factional wars of the 1990s, or in current inter-factional bargaining to secure peace.

Ethnic Groups and Cultural and Ethnic Solidarities

Heightened ethnic tension is a factor in many African conflicts, and ethnic tensions have bearing upon prospects for post-war community-driven recovery. In what ways has ethnicity been a factor in creating, sustaining or mitigating conflict in Liberia? In answering this question we need also to consider trans-border ethnic factors. Thirteen out of 16 officially recognized "tribes" in Liberia are trans-border groups (i.e., they have significant populations linked by family connections in one or other of three neighboring countries). Border division of ethnic groups in Africa often leaves the great majority in one country and a small minority in another, but in Liberia a number of groups are split down the middle. Of nine Vai chiefdoms, for example, four are in Sierra Leone and five in Liberia. How does this rather high level of radical border fragmentation affect the conflict? The spread of war into Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire seems to have been assisted at times by trans-border community linkages. At the same time, family connections have bearing upon the region's refugee crisis. Van Damme (1999) shows that among refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone to Guinea, 1990-96, as many as 75% was self-settled in cross-border ethnic communities.

Relative to the British and French colonial regimes the Liberian state found itself in a weak position in establishing its international borders at the beginning of the 20th century. The British, for example, supported the territorial claims by local Mende rulers to the disadvantage of Kisi, Gola and Vai groups less well protected by a weak Liberian state. The French intrigued in Nimba County to support Mandingo trading interests. Kru dissidents sought British protection during the First World War and conservative Gola chiefs continued to hope that President King's actions in freeing domestic slaves in 1930 might be reversed if the British or French were to take over Liberian administration under a League of Nations mandate (d'Azevedo 1969, Part II). Ironically, the only reason such a mandate was sought was because the King administration was charged with complicity in shipping forced labor to Fernando Po. A legacy of peripheral dissidence and communities divided by colonial border intrigue was at times consciously exploited by armed factions operating across international borders during the Liberian crisis from 1989.

Whether ethnic solidarity, by itself, is a factor in Liberian national instability is controversial, however. D'Azevedo (1989) warns against the idea that tribe in Liberia is some kind of natural unit, arbitrarily fragmented by colonial boundaries. "In Liberia…there is not one "tribe" on the borders of the country whose ascribed boundaries are not intersected by those of [neighboring countries]. Yet the territorial claims or complaints of social vivisection, until recently, have not been raised at all by "tribes", but rather by the aspiring and competing colonial or national entities that contain them" (p.93). D'Azevedo's perspective reflects his deep knowledge of the ethno-history of the Gola people in western Liberia.

Throughout much of the 19th century communities on the right bank of the St Paul River were shaped by the interest of local leaders in and around the Gola Forest to control of trade routes from the coast at Gallinas and Cape Mount. In the early 19th century the Kondo federation, based on the town of Bopolu, was a major power in the Gola forest. Sao Bosu—the ruler of Bopolu—was sympathetic to direct trade links between the Monrovia settlers and the Mande interior. The Gola, determined to thwart such connections, infiltrated Bopolu and then expanded to the south east, incorporating various Dei and Kpele chiefdoms, using a mixture of warfare and cultural strategies (marriage alliances and political supervision via the Poro). This effectively blocked Monrovia settlers from trading directly with the Mandingo of the Niger Basin for much of the 19th century. Gola regional hegemony was undermined in the 1890s by the cavalry army of Samory Toure in northwestern Liberia causing much destruction, loss of life and hunger in the region, and by the Gola chiefdoms in the northwest having aligned with an unsuccessful chiefly revolt against the British in Sierra Leone. Henceforth both Freetown and Monrovia paid attention to consolidating national power in what now appeared a troublesome border region. On both sides of the border this was done by indirect rule—rewarding co-operative local rulers and discriminating against those inclined to act independently. Under the presidency of Arthur Barclay this meant working with the newer, mixed Gola chiefdoms in the south east, and against chiefdoms in the northwest from where the institutional supports for Gola cultural distinctiveness emanated (e.g., ritual supervision over Poro initiation on the frontier of Gola expansion). The Kanga War of 1918 was a last attempt by these heartland chiefdoms violently to resist state encroachment (D'Azevedo 1969, Part II: 52). The freeing of domestic slaves under President King in 1930 was the final blow, felt much more by the ranked lineages of the interior Gola than by the southeastern chiefdoms, where, closer to Monrovia, contractual labor relations were more firmly established. The agrarian economy of the interior chiefdoms collapsed. When d'Azevedo interviewed Gola elders in the mid-1960s they were in ambivalent mood, living on memories of faded glory, but resentful at the poverty and isolation they sensed was "punishment" for earlier intransigence.

D'Azevedo's point is that Gola ethno-history reflects dynamic, regional currents, rather than being an expression of an intrinsic cultural identity (even though the cultural identity of all Gola people is precisely the belief that community elders at times fought to maintain). It is an irony that under Liberian indirect rule cultural strategies originally pursued by Gola mercantilists to sustain trade "federalism" in the 19th century were reshaped to convey a picture of a community locked into backwardness and cultural decline under Liberian indirect rule. In a later paper, D'Azevedo (1989, p. 95) goes so far as to claim that Liberian tribes and clans are entirely a product of Liberian state expansion: "In no instance, for example, can it be demonstrated that the present clan, chiefdom or country or any other administrative divisions of Liberia reflect socio-political arrangements of any historical depth prior to the subjugation of the interior by the national government".

D'Azevedo concedes his viewpoint may not apply to all parts of the country. It is especially important to note contrasts, in this regard, between the northwest and southeast of Liberia. Southeastern communities belong to what Massing (1980) terms the Kru Culture Area (KCA). The KCA was divided by the international border between Liberia and the French colony of La Côte d'Ivoire. It is a zone of lower population density, including two major areas of uninhabited forest (now the Sapo and Tai Forest Reserves), where decentralized groups lived independently until the first decades of the 20th century. Free flow of population among these tiny village republics took place across a purely nominal international line on the map, but major trade routes into the interior were less well developed. Inland Kru and We (Krahn)-speaking groups were not fully incorporated into the Liberian state until the 1930s. However, the coastal peoples of the KCA have long been especially mobile within the West African coastal zone. Men from the Kru coast worked in fishing, as deckhands on coastal shipping, or as "dockers" (i.e., surfboat crews) unloading large vessels stood off shore.

Historically these coastal groups trace interior roots, and maintained links to important regional shrines. They tended to compete with each other at the coast, but maintain co-operative relations with interior

groups. In and among the coastal groups were various settler enclaves, as far as Cape Palmas. But since there was no major trade with the interior there was little incentive or scope for the emergence of strong mercantilist federations in the forested interior, comparable to the Kondo federation at Bopolu, or processes of lateral, trade-seizing expansion as initiated by the Gola among the Dei and Kpelle. Local initiation societies are found in the KCA, but there are no examples of Poro-based political developments as found in the northwest in which big-men warrior-chiefs play a major part. Local leaders tend to be ritual authorities, with very circumscribed powers. But the peoples of the KCA are especially noted for the way young people are mobilized into age sets for community defense and group labor. This has translated in the modern period into a strong commitment to labor and savings activities (Seibel and Massing 1974). In the early part of the 20th century diaspora groups drew upon this community activism to support rebellion in the KCA. Liberians based in Freetown contributed group funds to procure arms for the Kru Rebellion of 1915, in striking anticipation of the processes through which ULIMO was formed among sections of the Liberian diaspora in Freetown in 1991.

In imposing itself militarily on the KCA the Liberian state created tension and ambivalence about the status still apparent today. A sense of alienation from the Liberian state was fed further by rounding up for forced labor of many of the young men who would earlier have been mobilized into age sets for community defense (Massing 1980). The labor history of interior parts of Liberia during the 1920s and 1930s could be described as the continuation of conquest by other means. These abuses were moderated but not eliminated by League of Nations pressure on the Liberian authorities to halt the forced recruitment of indentured labor for the cocoa island of Fernando Po, described as little different from a modern slave trade. In the more remote parts of the KCA—around the forest reserves—people retreated into the forest at the approach of the state. Some villagers "would refuse to join their neighbors and surrender, choosing instead to burn down their dwellings, slaughter their animals and flee into the bush", where they would live in "refuge hamlets hidden off the main paths" (Ford 1989, p. 53). He cites evidence from two eyewitnesses that of 100 settlement sites on the path between Tappete and Grand Bassa in 1912 only three remained inhabited, and that after the razing of 46 villages along the western bank of the Nuana River, bordering Côte d'Ivoire the population retreated six miles into the forest. Frontier instincts to relocate at signs of serious trouble remain active. Cross-border movement in the KCA has been an aspect of the spread of war from Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire.

The rather distinct social worlds of the northwestern and southeastern Liberia meet in Nimba County, where borders between Liberia, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire divide Liberians from related ethnic communities in the two neighboring states, while an internal forest frontier is formed where groups linked historically to the Mande worlds of the Upper Niger approach We-speaking groups belonging to the less centralized KCA. If Liberian state expansion created present-day tribes, but in rather different ways in the northwest and southeast, then the resulting social complexity, and potential to mobilize dissidence around ethnic rivalry is at its most intense in Nimba County, the cradle of the civil war.

A few points can be listed by way of summary, for purposes of discussion:

- ethnic and cultural solidarities in Liberia have been formed and reshaped by dynamic processes of contestation over resource mobilization and trade;

- the expansion of the Liberian state has impacted upon ethnic and cultural solidarities, both through its attempts to control regional resource flows and through imposition of administrative hegemony;

- the dynamic of ethnic and cultural solidarity is different in different parts of the country, reflecting different resource endowments, trade patterns and histories of contestation;

- cultural hybridization, supportive of contractual views of social relations, seems to be strongest in the coastal zone and in areas adjacent to Monrovia; and

- cultural conservatism is a complex phenomenon, being both a product of resistance to the

expansion of the state and a state-consolidated tactic for indirect rule.

Material above (especially testimony in D'Azevedo 1969, Pt. II pp. 59-62) provokes a question concerning the longer-term consequences of mid-20th century Liberian rural labor relations. Specifically, it seems some rural areas were impacted much more strongly than others in terms of loss of labor due to forced recruitment and abolition of slavery. Is this still reflected in varying attitudes to rural co-operation and community-driven development? Does it have any bearing on the "youth" issue, especially militia recruitment and demobilization of ex-combatants? Might those who joined militia forces have had weaker rural social attachments? It would be useful to know more about the origin of this "footloose" group. Historically, are the fighting youths disproportionately from unincorporated groups with a background in domestic slavery? The answer might also affect our understanding of reintegration prospects. Will stratified societies, such as the Vai and Gola, "characterised by a more rigid caste distinction…[discouraging] intermarriage and social integration with low status non-kin groups" (D'Azevedo 1969 Pt II, p. 60), have more problems re-admitting ex-combatants than more egalitarian groups in the Southeast of the country (cf. Utas 2004, on youth reintegration in Sinoe County)? Do groups once heavily dependent on slave labor still stigmatize laboring youth in the kind of language used by one Gola informant in the mid-1960s, as "[those] dirty stinking slaves…those terrible stupid people [who] ran like animals into the bush" (D'Azevedo 1969 Pt II, p. 62).

The Mandingo

Discussion of Liberian ethnic communities is incomplete without mentioning the Mandingo. The Mandingo have been present in much of Liberia for several hundred years. They trace their origins to the Upper Niger basin in Guinea. D'Azevedo (1994, p. 197) remarks, "Mandingoes are a unique and persistent element that has profoundly influence the cultural orientation and course of events in the area". Earlier commercial involvement included slave dealing, as well as trade in kola and cattle. More recently Mandingo traders have played a role in trading alluvial diamonds, and Monrovia Mandingo are heavily involved in the transport sector, acquiring taxis on hire-purchase terms from fellow Mandingo (Konneh 1993). Their involvement in Liberian affairs has long been viewed ambiguously, both at local level and nationally: "for Liberian colonists and most Euroamerican commentators the Mandingo represented a great tradition which was at once admirable and threatening" (d'Azevedo 1994, p. 197). From time to time Mandingo rights to Liberian citizenship have been questioned, at both national and local level. Konneh (1996) describes a case in Bong County in the 1960s, in which Kpelle chiefs refused land for rice cultivation to Mandingoes on the grounds that "when they claimed the rights of citizenship they would make their appeal in Kpelle clothes and speak Kpelle. However when it was time to perform such duties as road clearing or town labor, they put on their Mandingo gowns, spoke Mandingo, and claimed to be under the authority of their own paramount chief." (Konneh 1996, p. 146)

Seibel and Massing (1974, p. 102) distinguish three groups of Mandingo in Liberia. The first group are descended from Mandingo quarters in Bopolu and other trade federation towns in the western Liberian interior. They are indistinguishable from other villagers in the region, and live by a mixture of farming and trade. Some may descend from the crop-cultivating slave populations of Mandingo merchants. These settled elements were rather readily incorporated into the clan and chiefdom structure devised by the Liberian state under President Edwin Barclay. Given the relative abundance of forest land for settlement some groups were offered incorporation into the "fixed territory" model of tribal organization devised by the state in the 1930s. In western Liberia, a special Mandingo chiefdom—Mecca—was created on the right bank of the St. Paul River, but the larger merchants remain regionally mobile, and retain their Guinean connections and identities (sometimes in parallel with Liberian citizenship). This second group Seibel and Massing refer to as "ghetto" Mandingo—i.e., those who tend to be settled in special merchant quarters adjacent to indigenous settlements. Many have more recently re-settled in Monrovia. Seibel and Massing also identify a third group—refugees from the state socialist system of Sekou Toure in Guinea. Many of these Mandingo refugees entered Liberia in the 1960s as farm laborers. The Mandingo build alliances by marrying local women but preserve "caste" identity by discouraging or

refusing their own daughters to marry into local land-owning lineages. Thus they assume the position of permanent "wife receivers" in the asymmetric marriage alliance systems favored in northwestern Liberia.

During the 19th century the Monrovia made sporadic efforts to establish direct trading links with the Upper Niger, via Mandingo intermediaries, e.g., Sao Bosu of the Kondo federation (Holsoe 1966, D'Azevedo 1994). As noted above, these efforts were thwarted by Gola control of major potential routes through the western forest. Settler attitudes, though at times ambivalent, tended to favor a civilizing alliance between Monrovia and the literate, monotheistic Mandingo to civilize obstructive native groups such as the Gola. This was especially favored by the Monrovia-based West Indian intellectual Edward Wilmot Blyden, who visited Bopolu in the 1860s. Monrovia asserted control of the interior in the first two decades of the 20th Century, and from the 1920s "settlers-Mandingo interaction had reached the stage whereby successive administrations acted to protect Mandingo interests [vis-à-vis the interests of local chiefs] in the political economy" (Konneh 1993, p. 47). During the 1930s and 1940s there was growing trade with the Mandingo heartlands in Guinea, Mali and Senegambia, especially in livestock. Settlers also perceived a cultural affinity, based on the Mandingo "sense of order, manifested in [a] rigid hierarchical structure… [and] monotheistic beliefs" (Konneh 1993, p. 47). Many Mandingo migrated to Monrovia, becoming prominent in areas such as transportation. Konneh (1993, p. 53) concludes that "by the close of the Tubman administration in 1971, the Mandingo ethnic group had been fully integrated into the Liberian political order".

Reliance on the economic power of the Mandingo continued under Doe, but against a background of lingering rural hostility. Perceived Mandingo support for the Doe regime angered populations in Nimba County, an area ravaged by Doe's troops. The NPFL incubated its rebellion against Doe in Nimba County, and tried to manipulate anti-Mandingo sentiment to its own advantage. Fighters sought to cancel farmer's debts by harassing or killing Mandingo moneylenders, or by "redistributing" the contents of their stores (Richards 1995). This ethnic violence in turn stimulated the emergence of anti-NPFL armed factions (ULIMO-K and LURD) strongly supported by the Mandingo. At times the Guinean government offered covert support for these factions in allowing cross-border operations. A motive will have been a desire to undermine Charles Taylor and protect important trade flows through Conakry (especially diamonds). The government of Sierra Leone, under the northern-dominated APC regime of President Momoh, also supported ULIMO, helping arm it in the hope of driving the Taylor-supported RUF back into Liberia in 1991.

There is no doubt that the Mandingo commercial diaspora is an important service-provider in rural Liberia. "Ghetto" Mandingo ship kola northwards, bring cattle south, run rural stores selling basic supplies such as kerosene, offer Islamic divinatory skills and Koranic education, and in some areas are the main or only suppliers of blacksmithing skills (e.g., in Nimba County). In a country lacking in rural financial institutions they also often provide a crucial service as money lenders, often advancing loans for medical emergencies or social purposes, such as funerals, at any time of day or night, as well as lending farmers seed against the harvest. Villagers grumble about Mandingo merchants, but may at times agree life is worse without such merchants. The main problem is not the high rates for loans (because the risks are also high) but that where the Mandingo are few in number, or absent altogether, lack of competition encourages the charging of usurious rates. The Liberia RSA needs to take stock of the current status of the Mandingo in rural areas. Will they return to the rural areas along with village populations, or remain in Guinea and Monrovia? What implications will this have for community-driven development? If the Mandingo return, will communities make use of their skills in social recovery processes, or hold them at arm's length?

Community Reconstruction Post-1997 [2]

A study of community recovery processes in Liberia was undertaken by Atkinson, Mulbah, and others in the period of relative tranquility following the election of Charles Taylor in 1997 (see, for example, Atkinson 2000, and Atkinson and Mulbah 2000). This well-designed study involved considerable amounts of fieldwork by a team of Liberian researchers (one month in each community studied), and covered three parts of the country—Monrovia and two rural areas (Lofa and Margibi Counties). The Lofa study covered a prosperous agricultural region vulnerable to trans-border pressures. The Margibi study covered an area of plantations in the centre of the country, served by a main road from Monrovia. In Monrovia sites varied from inner city to suburbs. Up-country, the research locations ranged from small towns and trading centers to peripheral villages. These were areas in which (pre-war) the rural sodalities were still very active. Yealla was a headquarters for the Loma Poro and Sande. The Margibi study included areas adjacent to Mount Gibi, a national oracle developed during the period of rapprochement between the True Whig Party and up-country land-owning lineages. Atkinson (2000) confirms the perceived importance of cult organization in rural Liberia (cf. Liebenow 1969, Ellis 1994, 1999).

Drawing upon focus group discussions and interviews the Atkinson study paints an interesting picture of rural perceptions of the war. Some villagers openly articulated rural hostility to the Americo-Liberian ruling elite: "they came here and stole, they thought everything good here was for them" (p. 13). Due to inequalities of access to education villagers' "eyes were closed", "that was why they [the Americos] were able to fool us for so long..." (p. 14). Nothing changed with the war: "when our so called liberators arrived they were able to fool us also" (p.14), but the Tubman and Tolbert eras were seen as times of relative material progress for up-country people. The small-scale plantation economy, in particular, was buoyant, and an area of opportunity for local land owners. The Doe period was viewed in largely negative terms, for its repression and economic failures—"no good thing happened in Doe time" (p. 25). The advent of Taylor's NPFL was viewed as the return of Americo-Liberian radicals driven into exile in the US by Doe to avenge the assassinated Tolbert and 13 victims of the post-coup public execution in 1980. Lofa villages "hoped that liberation had finally arrived" (p. 16), but some were disillusioned when the true extent of Taylor's intransigence became clear. Even so there was a degree of rational economic development and a rudimentary administration in Taylor's Greater Liberia, and for many up-country communities "Taylor time was normal day" (p. 17), a fact reflected in his electoral success in 1997, but for others the ebb and flow of conflict brought only forced labor. In both Lofa and Margibi Counties villagers were compelled to tote loads, to farm and to dig diamonds for the fighters: "we were kept as their slaves, whoever they didn't kill had to work for them".

Atkinson's team report the extent to which rural communities experience inter-generational tensions. Older people felt youth was out of control: "they got rich from cane [a cash crop in Lofa County used for making cheap gin] and didn't listen to us anymore" (p. 27). Schooling divided youth, and caused resentment. Because "those who were half schooled didn't want to make farms, [and] didn't respect their fathers it was easier for them to join the war" (p. 27). Youths were riled by the inequities of the traditional system: "everything went by what [the elders] said, even when they were in the wrong" (p. 27). Resentment at traditional leadership and its privileges picked up the issue of who takes part in community work: "if everyone has to work the chief should also" (p. 27).

War was a time of unprecedented hunger, pain and tribulation, but at times interviewees were honest about collaboration as a means to ease their burdens (e.g., they sometimes encouraged fighters to take village daughters in marriage, to gain some bargaining power). War also created awareness ("our eyes are now open and we will not be so easily fooled again", p. 28) and strengthened co-operation: "we survived because we all pulled together" (p. 28). Respect for chieftaincy had been undermined, however:

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[2] On the economic and social reintegration of ex-combatants and child soldiers from earlier phases of the war in Liberia see Specht and van Empel (1998) and Peters with Laws (2003).

"during the war the elders just ran away and left us here, we had to learn to take care of ourselves" (pg. 29).

Peace presented new challenges and opportunities. Social cohesion was essential to prevent a return to war: "for war not to come back in we have to love one another and work hard for the country". Children were very specific that when "people stop killing people...stop forcing them to fight...and to tote all kinds of things, then that is peace" (p. 29). In some cases the sodalities were thought to be an asset for peace ("devil business is here stronger than the government, and it has very much helped to cool the boys", p. 30, box), and in Margibi County apparently played a positive role in reintegrating ex-combatants. In other cases, however, doubts were expressed about enforced initiation of the young, the tendency of the *Zoe* to extract resources for personal gain, and the use of the sodalities to plot revenge. Elders were worried about the growth of individualism among youth, as a threat to the moral order ("they will regret this when their own children will not help them", p. 30), but others were frank about the exploitation of the labor power of the young ("how can we tell them, when they do all the work", p. 30).

Everywhere, *kuu* [rotational labor] groups had been re-established, and not only for farming purposes, but also to support social and community activities. Atkinson (2000) comments: "the strength of local social capital shows the potential for partnership work, particularly in terms of trauma healing and social regeneration" (p. 30), but relations with NGOs were often tense. Corruption appeared to be pervasive, and in some cases NGO activity fed conflict: "when inequalities brought the war, how can unfair distributions help to bring peace". Some communities were adamant better monitoring of NGO activities would contribute to peace.

Much of this material replicates findings of the social assessment study in neighboring Sierra Leone (Richards et al. 2004). Village consultations revealed inter-generational conflict, with exploitation of the labor of young people a key issue (Archibald and Richards 2002). The war had undermined the authority of chiefs (often because people had learnt to survive on their own). Deference was dead, and women and youths frequently seized the initiative to speak on their own account in public meetings. Co-operative institutions had revived quickly, and were probably stronger than before the war. Individualism was more widespread, welcomed by some, deplored by others. The authority of the sodalities had been reduced (people lacked the resources to fund initiation expenses, but young people also expressed feelings of resentment at the way the sodalities sustained the power of elders vis-à-vis the young, especially bush cases and fines). There was also widespread resentment at NGO corruption and an enthusiasm for community-driven development, provided sufficient effort was made to build up community managerial capacity. In general, the two studies could be regarded as inter-changeable in terms of the pictures they paint of rural areas undergoing post-war recovery. Two major issues not covered in the Atkinson study concerned the institution of marriage as it affects the status and opportunities of young rural women from lower ranked lineages (cf. below), and information on the position and rights of rural strangers. The status of the Mandingo trading diaspora is a prominent theme in the social science literature on Liberia, but there seems less information on rural laboring strangers (40% of the population in some chiefdoms in Sierra Leone). A related issue is the adequacy of existing land tenure arrangements to provide agricultural self-employment for an increasingly large stranger population. These are topics requiring further attention in the Liberia RSA.

Mechanisms of Community Action: Before and After War

How did communities function in pre-war rural Liberia, and what institutional and social capital remains? The literature documents (among others) marriage systems (Leopold 1992), village farming, savings and community co-operatives (Seibel and Massing 1974), basic education and skill formation (Gay and Cole 1967), the functions of sodalities (Bellman 1984, see below), and informal dispute settlement (Gibbs 1963). Major gaps seem to be thorough treatments of land tenure and the functioning of local government systems (including chieftaincy and operation of local courts). Among emergent topics, intergenerational tension and involvement of women and young people in community affairs is as yet only thinly

documented. Has war increased the vulnerability of women and youth to labor exploitation, for example, or could wartime demands in some cases have enhanced their skills and assertiveness? We have a better picture of young people undergoing demobilization and reintegration (Specht and van Empel 1998, Peters with Laws 2003). Neglect of women fighters is a valid complaint, but Utas (2003) offers interesting material on the way female partners of fighters managed their relationships.

Marriage Alliance

Throughout African rural society marriage is a key social and political institution. In the forest belt of the Upper West African coast rural communities are organized into ranked, exogamous patrilineages (descent groups). Historically, marriage has been an important means to cement alliances between high-ranking (ruling) lineages. Powerful late-comers (e.g., the descendants of a warrior) are frequently linked to first-comer (land-owing) lineages through an institution known to anthropologists as the prescriptive asymmetric avunculate (autochthonous and stranger lineages stand, in perpetuity, as wife-givers or wife-receivers). Among the peoples of northwestern Liberia this favors the marriage of a man to his mother's brother's daughter (or at its most general a woman from his mother's lineage), a union generally concluded without bride wealth transaction. The land-owing lineage incorporated the stranger group into the ruling hierarchy by offering them a daughter in marriage, and the land-owning group is henceforth "uncle" to the newcomers (Murphy and Bledsoe 1987, Leopold 1991). Chieftaincy is sometimes rotated between groups linked by this arrangement. In some cases the avunculate links distinct ethnic groups. The Loma and Kissi consider themselves to be related as nephew and uncle. On a personal level the avunculate involves joking relationships—a nephew can freely make use of the uncle's property but the uncle has the right to call on the nephew's labor (in the old days he could, in extremity, sell the nephew into slavery to cover debt).

Leopold (1991) carefully documents the avunculate among the Loma people of northwestern Liberia. His original research plan, he tells us, was to study land tenure under the impact of cash cropping, but abundance of land rendered this uninteresting. His Loma hosts were fearful he would pry into the affairs of secret societies, and steered him toward the avunculate as an interesting "open" research topic. Historically, the avunculate served to create close bonds between lineages of different origins in a single geographical community. Women often favored it, since it led to them being joined in their married homes by sisters or close female kin. It also served as a major idiom in which to cement the co-operation needed to run chiefdom affairs. The majority of residents of the community which Leopold studied were members of either *keke* (wife giving) or *daaba* (wife receiving) lineages, and a system still functioned in which each wife-receiving lineage made ancestral sacrifices on behalf of its regular wife-giving lineage. But a relationship working with 100% effectiveness at the level of ideology (i.e., sacrifice) was true of less than 40% of actual marriages. Even discounting strangers, the majority of unions involved symmetric exchange (i.e., the marriage was inconsistent with the avunculate). Leopold offers data from which the reader can calculate that the incidence of "wrong" marriages tends to increase among the younger generation. Even in a stable inward looking community the avunculate runs into logistical problems, due to differences in demographic success of different lineages. As populations become more mobile it tends to break down altogether. Hemmed into their present position across the Guinea–Liberia border by competition from neighboring groups, the Loma are noted for their cultural conservatism. Among other northwestern Liberian groups the avunculate served mainly as a means for ruling lineages to cement, and legitimize strategic local political alliances (Murphy and Bledsoe 1987).

In practice, the majority of marriages are symmetric, and typically involve transfer of bride-wealth (known locally as dowry) from the wife-receiving to wife-giving lineage. Many of these bride-wealth unions cross lines of social stratification in Liberian rural society. A low-ranked (commoner) lineage will offer a high-ranked (ruling) lineage a daughter to cement a protective relationship. By accepting a young wife from a low-ranked lineage a big man would, in effect, receive his in-laws into a relationship of clientship. Parents from the low-ranked (wife-giving) lineage benefit from the marriage payment, but may find it hard to repay should the marriage fail. Bride-wealth transaction serves to "stabilize" village

marriages. It is hard for a young woman to abandon an abusive or exploitative relationship if her impoverished father or brothers are under pressure to refund bride-wealth. It is also hard for her to inherit property unless her bride wealth has been repaid (Holsoe 1985). A further consideration is that under patrilineal ideology the children are deemed to belong to the husband's lineage. Village women marry very young (often in mid-teenage) and often to much older husbands (young men from commoner lineages frequently lack the wealth to "compete", i.e., meet the marriage payments). Although there are no precise data, it seems likely the net flow of benefits is toward the higher-ranked lineage. Marrying up is one of the means through which relationships of patronage and deference are prolonged. Some would add that it also exploits a young woman's labor and stifles her potential entrepreneurship. For example, she may be reluctant to engage in own-account trading activity due to a fear that the husband, or husband's family, might seize the profits.

Richards et al. (2003) argue that marriage based on bride wealth in rural areas of neighboring Sierra Leone is a problematic institution, contributing to the perpetuation of the poverty of commoner lineages. Early marriage to older men from higher ranked lineages exploits the labor of young women and denies them the chance of education. It also drove young men from the village due to woman damage (adultery) cases brought by older men able to afford marriage payments. Fines for woman damage were often commuted to bride service, in effect a source of cheap labor for farming. Many young men preferred to become fugitives rather than suffer labor exploitation—a factor in the social exclusion that fed militia recruitment. This explanation runs counter to the widely held opinion in Sierra Leone that militia violence mainly reflects criminal dispositions, not the failure of local institutions. However, in the Liberian literature there seems to be greater recognition of the regressive aspects of traditional marriage. Holsoe (1985, p. 76) refers to what he terms "a legal problem…under traditional law, a wife married by dowry has limited rights to property in her own name. She herself is in essence the property of her husband's patrilineage, and only upon the return of her dowry and an additional "damage" fee is she released from this obligation…". Noting that this contradicts women's property rights as recognized in Liberian statute law, Holsoe then adds, "clearly, the question raised is fundamental to the social fabric of customary society, and it is an area that has to be reconciled" (Holsoe 1985, p. 76). The recently enacted law on marriage and rights of inheritance provides this reconciliation, firmly recognizing and addressing several problems in the operation of customary marriage and inheritance arrangements (see below). Whether Liberian ex-combatants see marriage constraints as an important factor in their social marginalization, and subsequent vulnerability to militia recruitment, is yet to be determined. Utas (2002) reports many young Liberian fighters found it difficult to marry by reason of poverty.

Sodalities

Sodalities (secret societies) figure large in the accounts of rural social capital in Liberia. Some issues relevant to CDD can be distilled from a sizeable literature. Yoder (2003), Ellis (1999) and Atkinson (2000) all indicate that some Liberians think the sodalities may have a part to play in restoring community discipline, and in the ritual reintegration of ex-combatants. How widely such beliefs are held, and how active the sodalities remain after the war, is unclear.

Commentators agree that President Arthur Barclay's response to British and French efforts to erode the borders of the Liberian state in the first decade of the 20th century produced a Liberian variant of indirect rule (rule by state cooption of interior political institutions), an approach also practiced widely by the British in Africa. Liberian indirect rule reshaped up-country political institutions before they were well understood or documented, thus creating the illusion institutional arrangements forged by modern politics were somehow ancient. This reshaping probably applied to sodalities as much as to chieftaincy. Liberia made use of its own anthropological expertise to document native institutions, but it would be a mistake to assume (as in much of British Africa) these institutions kept their original functions when shorn of earlier power relations. In the aftermath of a lengthy war a degree of nostalgia is understandable for the stability generated by a system in which the True Whig Party licensed hand-picked leaders from rural ranked lineages to manage local politics on behalf of the state. Arguably, the traditional spiritual order

about which Ellis (1999) writes is no more than a cognitive tribute to the earlier effectiveness of indirect rule. To recreate such spiritual order it might be necessary not only to restore the fortunes of paramount chiefs and sodalities but also the hegemony of the True Whig one-party machine.

On the earlier functions of Liberian political institutions much is speculative. Members of sodalities are bound by their initiation oaths not to reveal ritual and symbols to non-members. It is unlikely the published literature conveys as much solid fact as might at first appear. Several invaluable articles by D'Azevedo (1962, 1969, 1970, 1970-71, 1989) are among the more plausible socio-structural accounts of relationships between sodalities and polities in pre-settler rural Liberia. A special issue of the *Ethnologisch Zeitschrift Zuerich* (1980) offers a range of interpretive perspectives on Liberian masquerade societies as political and judicial institutions. Ellis (1999) offers a thorough recent review of Liberian ideas about religion and spirit forces from an historian's perspective. He argues that legitimate sodalities have been corrupted by the collapse of the state, but the state is strongly present in even the earliest accounts of allegedly "criminal" sodalities, such as the widely feared Leopard Society. Dorothy Mill's several encounters with "leopard men" in the unsettled or recently pacified districts of Liberia's eastern frontier in the early 1920s (Mills 1926) correlate closely with the pacification effort of the Liberian Frontier Force (she met only prisoners). Pacification waged war on alleged local terror, but it is unclear whether the terror emerged in the imagination of administrators to fulfill a need to act with force (shades of weapons of mass destruction).

Poro and Sande, however, are indisputably real. Their first concern was to turn young men and women into full adults through initiation. It is the higher political aspects that are more obscure. D'Azevedo (1969, Part I) supplies a detailed account of the political uses of the Poro among the Gola in the 19th century (cf. Little 1964). Determined to control trade through the Gola Forest the Gola chiefdoms used Poro officials to inspect initiation arrangements and ensure authenticity of ritual in newer Gola chiefdoms closer to Monrovia (much as medieval Bishops might itinerate outlying districts to ensure conformity to the faith). Poro symbols were also used quite widely to ensure co-ordination of major activities, such as launching or halting a war, or opening and closing a season for gathering produce. These symbols were often effective even among neighboring groups. Gola political uses of Poro, however, also emphasized an "essentialist" cultural orientation (that Gola-ness was an in-born, in-eradicable aspect of individual identity, for example). This helped the Gola "hold together" in the 19th century, and re-invent themselves under Liberian hegemony in the 20th, as a distinctive group, despite tendencies to cultural hybridization implicit in considerable territorial change. But it imparted a conservative "spin" to Gola political thinking when coupled to indirect rule under the Liberian state. The once-dynamic northwestern Gola chiefdoms ended up in the 1930s as stigmatized embodiments of isolation and rural backwardness.

Liebenow (1969) reports the sodalities were first suppressed by the state, and then resurrected (from the 1920s) in state-controlled form, becoming key institutions in indirect rule, with Mt Gibi in Margibi County designated the apex of a government-regulated system of traditional spiritual authority. It is in this context that D'Azevedo's remark (1969, Part II) that the Gola regarded settler Masonic Lodges as similar to Poro (and vice versa) takes on wider significance. The state was shaping a "broad church" from diverse materials, but it seems clear (e.g., from reading the useful set of comparative essays published in the *Ethnologische Zeitschrift Zuerich* 1980) that the Liberian sodalities are far from being a single institution. There are many local variants, and many internal divisions, perhaps even embracing other associations under a more general umbrella. Masking is different from Poro ritual in what it does and how it represents spiritual forces. Half the country could be counted as belonging to the Poro belt and half to the belt in which Dan/Gio-type masking traditions prevail. There are complex areas of overlap, but the literature makes it clear that it would be wrong to conflate masquerade processes and the processes of social control through graded associations like Poro. There is little or no evidence for a grand council of Poro, as envisaged by Harley, but some evidence that Poro and Sande protected a kind of class privilege. Secret society elders (*Zoes*) assumed hereditary office, ranked lineages were prominently represented in the councils of elders, and ex-slaves were initiated only in the less prestigious lodges.

Analytically, techniques of secrecy (cf. Bellman 1982, Murphy 1990) need to be distinguished from attempts to explain mechanisms of initiation (Richards 2004c), and the cognitive processing through which spiritual forces are envisaged (Boyer 2000). Techniques Ferme (2001) terms a "politics of ambiguity" are means of putting a "best face forwards", and protecting "the [vulnerable] underneath of things". These techniques are found in all cultures (cf. Goffman 1959), if developed to a sophisticated degree in Liberia, but they do not necessarily constitute a region-wide Poro or Sande organization. They may be better regarded as recurrent localized manifestations—shaped by the interplay of center-periphery relations—of a shared and widespread repertoire of techniques for molding attitudes and states of consciousness. Mechanisms of social bonding invoked through initiation link to what psychologists of the emotions term the social construction of "disclaimed action" (see Richards 2004c for a brief summary) found in many societies. The role of secrecy in forging group identities and the psycho-dynamics of initiation readily escape specific cultural contexts, and surface in altogether new domains areas (schools and militia groups, as well as masquerade societies, for example, cf. Richards 1996, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c). The new cognitive anthropology shows that spirit forces are more than wild imaginings, i.e., they can be explained by accounting for systematic features of cognitive processing (Boyer 2000), but their status is never more than as epiphenomena. Thus, care has to be exercised in imputing to them the kind of political causality proposed by Ellis.

Furthermore, it is hard to imagine so diverse, esoteric and chimerical a set of institutions becoming a partner in CDD. Whether the political imperatives animating Liberian indirect rule have any further significance outside the memories of older rural Liberians seems also to require debate, but this is not to say that the techniques and mechanisms of secrecy and initiation will be abandoned, since they rest upon different functional principles to those identified in Ellis' account [cf. Durkheim 1953]. National politics might yet find ways to deploy such techniques and mechanisms to drive CDD. But the resulting institution would necessarily be a new "animal"—more compatible with competitive, decentralized multi-party politics. At issue is whether a "politics of ambiguity" can be rendered compatible with the transparency, accountability and meritocracy at which international donors aim.

We should ask whether, in the minds of some young people, war was conceived as a struggle against spiritual obscurantism undermining accountability in the exercise of political power. In Sierra Leone, RUF informants glossed the meaning of the name of their forest headquarters camp—the Zogoda—as "death to sodality elders" (Krijn Peters, personal communication). The potential divisiveness of "neo-conservative" strategies of indirect rule is similarly evident in the following remark: "In Liberia, it is not only those who carry...weapons who are the warring parties...[but also] the unarmed civilians who wage psychological warfare on the ECOMOG supplied radio wavelengths and also use ECOMOG as a shield to draw swords against bullets in this continuing generational feud" (Sesay 1996, citing International Alert).

Rotational Labor and Savings Clubs

A major study by Seibel and Massing (1974) carefully documents and classifies the main forms of indigenous co-operation to be found throughout Liberia in the early 1970s. Two major types are distinguished—labor sharing groups and savings clubs. We describe each type briefly.

Labor co-operatives. The major staple throughout Liberia, rice, is a short season crop (i.e., it ripens in about 90-150 days from sowing), and operations on rice farms tend to be tightly time-constrained. Not all farmers need labor at exactly the same time, because they plant different rice types on different soils with different water regimes (hill crests, slopes, swamps). So there is some scope for sharing labor, but when a farmer reaches a "window" for a particular operation on a particular farm site the work must be done expeditiously. So gang labor is favored. The best way to secure timely labor is through membership of a reciprocal labor sharing group. These are found throughout the country, forming and re-forming seasonally. In some cases a successful group develops a corporate identity—perhaps in connection with leisure activities such as dancing or football—and may persist over a number of years. Work is done on each member's farm strictly by turns. Turns may be allocated by lot. Strong sanctions are imposed on

those who skip responsibilities (leading eventually to expulsion). Reciprocal labor groups have leaders in the Northwest, but these leaders are absent among the egalitarian communities of the KCA.

Seibel and Massing (1974) note western Liberian co-operative work groups had the greatest importance in farming activities. Men cooperate over bush clearing and other heavy tasks. Women combine for weeding. Both genders at times combine for harvesting (p. 51). It is important to realize that working together had ritual aspects for many Liberian villagers. Farm work is often accompanied by drumming, and this has obvious connections with the psychomotor processes important in forming social cohesion, as evident in the dances performed by sodalities (Richards 2004c). On-farm rituals involving masks and masquerades are specifically reported to have been of great importance among the Mano and Dan. A description is offered of a Dan work party, in which a team of older men hoed in rice, while a team of youngsters cleared sticks while masquerading as baboons (Seibel and Massing 1974, pp. 104-5). Mano co-operative groups also place great emphasis on medicines that protect from injury and witchcraft. Co-operative work among the Gola is reported to have been often organized on a competitive basis, involving either individual stints (cf. Richards 1986) or teams (Seibel and Massing 1974, p. 97). Overall, Seibel and Massing (1974) estimate that among Kpelle, Gola, Kissi or Vai "the bulk of agricultural work on rice farms is done co-operatively" (op. cit., p. 49), and specify that among the Mano this figure is "50 to 70 per cent of the agricultural work" (p. 69).

In eastern Liberia (among groups of the KCA) they report that reciprocal labor co-operation was of somewhat lesser significance. Here co-operation was based on kinship or age grades (e.g., young people who belong to a specific cohort of initiates). A clan might clear its farms together and then divide the plots by families. Reciprocal groups form primarily for rice farming purposes, but in some areas other tasks are tackled in the same way, e.g., house building or palm-fruit harvesting and processing. In Sierra Leone rotational labor groups quickly re-formed on resettlement of a war-affected area, and were sometimes as important for shelter as for food security (Richards et al. 2003). We expect the same to occur in Liberia.

In the 1970s non-reciprocal labor groups were also found widely in Liberia, though they were more important in the Southeast than in the Northwest. Junior grades in the sodalities sometimes had specific community-wide laboring tasks, like cleaning or fortifying their towns, or clearing paths and repairing stick bridges. Seibel and Massing (1974) found Kpelle villagers would occasionally work on a farm for a chief without compensation. Elsewhere in the northwest it was more common to find village communal farm plots cultivated to feed government visitors. This is a 20th century development, and the plot was sometimes referred to as the "government farm". Villagers also adapted the approach to the financing of community projects (Seibel and Massing 1974, p. 56). Large non-reciprocal farming groups were more common in the southeast. A large farm work party could be commissioned only by a big man, since it demanded large reserves to provide lavish feeding and other inducements. The non-reciprocal work group is in effect festival labor—i.e., less a way of attaining agricultural efficiency than a mode of conspicuous consumption designed to redistribute resources and add to the big man's prestige, in communities without permanent leadership hierarchies, where competitive achievement is the basis for social advancement.

Savings clubs. A club collects regular subscriptions from its members to create a pot which is distributed to members in turn. A small group may have no formal leader. Larger groups may have a president and board. In most cases there is some basic record keeping (records of meeting attendance and subscriptions paid). Each club generally has a standard amount to be subscribed at each meeting, but amounts may vary from a few cents to hundreds of dollars. Each person receiving the pot has major expenditure in mind. Men and women are equally likely to participate, but often membership is based on gender or additional associational interests in common (even membership of a particular religious congregation or social club). Savings clubs are common in both urban and rural areas of Liberia. Women frequently use the pot to acquire a market (items for petty trade). Some clubs also agree to insure members against misfortunes (illness or bereavement).

Seibel and Massing (1974, p. 63) report savings clubs using money began "around 1930 when Firestone started its operations and cash became available to the hinterland populations for the first time". But the idea is much older. Rice saving co-operatives are traditional among the Mano, Dan and Kpelle (Seibel and Massing 1974, p. 60). Usually, groups were formed by women after harvest, with between 4 and 30 members. Each member contributed a stipulated and equal amount of rice each week (or multiples of the stipulated amount). Seibel and Massing (1974) are not explicit about the purposes to which the pot would be dedicated in pre-cash days (perhaps initiation expenses). They state that rice clubs have largely disappeared, but that forms transitional to cash-based savings clubs are still found (the rice is sold and perhaps used as a loan fund for members). Other commodities (palm oil, coffee, and iron money) could also be used as the basis for a savings club in kind.

Some savings groups evolved into savings-and-loan clubs, i.e., the contributions create a fund that both members and non-members can apply to borrow at interest (members pay less). Thus a certain degree of capital formation can take place through interest accruing. Few such clubs lasted for more than a year, however. At the end of the year proceeds were distributed to members. Savings and loan clubs tend to have a more formal organization, and demand higher levels of record keeping and book-keeping skill. Among the Sapo money-based savings and loan clubs developed from earlier clubs based on acquiring cattle used in bride-wealth transactions (Seibel and Massing 1974, cf. Massing 1980).

The study by Seibel and Massing (1974) suggests that there is a large legacy of skill and awareness relevant to the operation of CDD in rural Liberia. Communities undergoing post-war resettlement have few resources to invest. But rural Liberians have long known how to operate labor sharing and savings clubs, and how to monitor and sanction cheats. Some of this institutional capacity—e.g., as evidenced by large-scale savings-and-loans clubs among the Kru and Sapo—is of considerable historical depth and complexity, and makes considerable organizational demands on committees and general membership.

A New Marriage Law and its Relevance to CDD

The *Act to Govern the Devolution of Estates and Establish the Rights of Inheritance for Spouses of Both Statutory and Customary Marriages* approved by the House of Representatives October 7, 2003 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003) establishes equality before the law of men and women linked in both customary and statutory marriage. The act spells out the rights, duties and liabilities of customary marriage. Specifically, it prohibits the recovery of bride wealth (dowry) from the wife-givers ("any husband who collects or attempts to collect dowry from the wife or parent by use of force, directly or indirectly, has committed a felony of the first degree" [Section 2.2]), entitles wife and husband, equally, to one third of the property of the deceased partner (Section 2.3), forbids compulsory labor by the wife (Section 2.4) and asserts that "the property acquired or owned by a customary woman either before or during her marriage belongs to her exclusive of her husband and she is therefore free to do any lawful business in her own name", including contracting with third parties, provided it is with the full knowledge of her husband (Section 2.6). Marriage under the age of 16 is forbidden (Section 2.9). Furthermore it is illegal for parents to choose their daughter's husband or "to compel the daughter or other female relative to marry a man not of her choice" (Section 2.10). After the death of her husband a woman is entitled to "remain on the premises of her...late husband to administer said estate" or to take another husband of her choice (Section 3.3). Compulsory levirate is forbidden—"No family member of the deceased husband shall compel the widow or widows to remain within the family, or marry kin of her late husband" (Section 3.4). Previously, compulsory levirate determined that the labor power, property and children of the woman remained within the husband's lineage. A woman unwilling to remarry within her husband's lineage risked destitution if her own impoverished lineage was unable or unwilling to cover her upkeep. Section 3.7 asserts the right of children of a marriage to remain with the surviving spouse. Under Liberian rural custom, offspring were considered to belong to the lineage of the husband, and a woman unwilling to submit to levirate marriage might lose access to her children.

Finally—and most significantly for young men from commoner lineages—the law forbids older men from high-ranked lineages from monopolizing young women through marriage and then using this as a pretext to exploit the labor of a wife's illicit lovers for woman damage. The practice is rooted in domestic slavery (cf. Holsoe 1977), and remains a source of rural grievance. It was repeatedly cited in Sierra Leone as a reason for a young man to leave the village and join a militia. The new Liberian law states that "no customary husband shall aid, abet, or create the situation for his customary wife to have illicit sexual intercourse with another man for the sole purpose of collecting damages" (Section 2.7), and that it is unlawful for "any customary person or husband to comple [sic] or demand any female of legal age, whether or not she is his customary wife, to "confess" or call the name of her lover...in order to collect damages from the said lover..." (Section 2.8). The impact on rural social relations will become apparent only over time. Holsoe (1985, p. 76) envisaged that the impact of statute law on marriage systems might impose changes "fundamental to the social fabric of customary society".

The fact that the new law has been framed in such explicit detail testifies to the awareness of the problem it seeks to address. Hon. Ruth G. Caesar, a senator who piloted the act through the legislative process, explained that the draft aroused some suspicion among rural elders, fearful of a ban on polygyny, and that attitudes changed only when it was explained the purpose was not to undermine existing unions, but to provide a better framework for future rural social relations. She suggested to doubtful chiefs that being associated with the legislation would help keep alive for future generations their reputation as wise rulers. She believes this helped win chiefly support for the law. The bill encourages female property ownership and supports women's entrepreneurship in rural areas. Potentially, it also limits exploitation of young men's labor, contributing to their better social integration.

Community-Driven Development: The Liberian State-of-the-Art

A meeting in Monrovia allowed Liberian practitioners to review best practices for CDD. The objectives of the event were to:

- obtain relevant information for expenditure guidelines for LACE;

- discuss relevant challenges as well as the usefulness of CDD in Liberia;

- identify best practices based on field experiences; and

- identify and discuss practices possible under current post-war conditions.

Various methodologies were mentioned (in particular DELTA, and ActionAid's REFLECT, an approach influenced by Freire's approach to adult literacy acquisition). The meeting report is available on request.

A range of typical difficulties with participatory methodologies was discussed. Most reflected the unpredictable and at times unmanageable outcomes of interactions between change agent interventions and "hidden" social factors. Participatory method tends to be only weakly informed by social theory, and practitioners devote insufficient attention to building empirical understanding of how local social institutions actually function. This was well captured in one story told in the meeting—about a community in which there were two chiefs, one of whom dealt with outsiders but had little influence over actual decision making, and a second more shadowy figure who seemed to control the real decisions. This is an especially typical circumstance for rural Liberian cultures, where social action is regulated by a language of secrecy and a politics of ambiguity.

Information came from NGO practitioners, not from community representatives. An aim of the RSA will be to help fill that gap. But bringing in these voices is not by itself enough to ensure coherent CDD. The problem of representation in rural societies with little experience of modern institutions of democracy and mechanisms of public accountability has also to be addressed. Practitioners will need to understand what Murphy (1981), writing about the Kpelle, terms "the rhetorical management of dangerous knowledge", as evident in the dramaturgy of village meetings. These interventions—whether termed focus groups, stakeholder workshops, participatory rural appraisals, or farmer field schools—amount to "a limited area

of transparency in the otherwise opaque surface of regular, uneventful social life" (Turner 1957, p. 93, cited in Murphy 1990, p. 24). In discussing consensus formation in a village meeting in eastern Sierra Leone, Murphy (1990) argues that the transparency of which Turner speaks is not a reflection upon a state of affairs, but a condition produced and sustained through the "skilful purposiveness" of social actors. In effect, competing interests work for different outcomes, but that those receiving community endorsement tend to reflect the intentions of those with the greatest local endowments of skill or power.

Murphy (1990) draws attention to rhetorical and communicative skills involved in handling local decision making, but appears to assume that established local power elites will continue to monopolies these rhetorical skills. In fact, war stirs the local pot. As communities re-form opportunities arise for new interests to seize rhetorical initiative and new interventions become possible. To avoid the mere "appearance of accountability" CDD will need to focus on developing the skills of the unskilled. One way is participatory exploration of the language of human rights (Archibald and Richards 2002). There is evidence of war-formed rights awareness in rural Liberia (Atkinson 2000).

A successful social fund for Liberia needs, in addition to an operational manual for financial transparency, to ensure support for new collective interests within rural society. This could include interest-driven as well as village-based organizations—e.g., occupational groups, or groups based on gender and age, rather than residential units (townships, clans, and quarters). It became clear from discussions that lack of rural banking and widespread illiteracy and innumeracy greatly hinder the application of standard procedures of accountability, but several useful ways of making project transactions physically apparent to community representatives were discussed. Additionally, there is a need to direct analysis, based on social science methodology, toward understanding tacit knowledge and hidden mechanisms of community action. Such studies should be incorporated into monitoring and evaluation activities, with the RSA serving as a base line. Adjustment, on the basis of findings, should be participatory; local institutional innovations may be the key to the development of a culture of accountability for Liberian post-war rural development.

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