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Enhancing security and justice in Liberia: The regional hub model

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Justice and security are core components of healthy and functional societies. The security sector comprises, government structures with authority to execute force, detain and arrest to protect the state, its citizens and those civil bodies responsible for security sector management and oversight.² A state's failure to guarantee security and justice presents major obstacles to the achievement of political, social and economic development. Like many other countries ravaged by war, Liberia has experienced challenges with developing and maintaining effective security and justice systems. In order to promote the provision of coordinated and decentralised security and justice services which all Liberians can access, the government is rolling out regional justice and security hubs across the country. This Policy & Practice Brief explores how the Liberian government responds to national security and justice challenges through the creation of these hubs. It interrogates the merits and challenges of this approach.

UN Photo/Andi Gitow



Liberian women gather inside a peace hut, a community court set up to resolve disputes and dispense informal justice

Introduction

Following the 14-year-long civil war (1989–2003), Liberia has had to deal with numerous security and justice concerns, most of which stem from a prolonged history of poor security sector governance and the presence of a weak national security apparatus. Of concern is that post-conflict, all warring factions – including personnel in the national army – were at some point

implicated in the perpetration of serious human rights abuses. This situation resulted in low levels of citizen trust and confidence in security sector structures and actors. In 2003, Liberia's armed forces and other security services were dismantled and rebuilt in response to this problem and in order to adhere to the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which was signed in Ghana in 2003. The CPA called for the disbanding of all warring groups, including

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the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). Other statutory security bodies, among them the Liberia National Police (LNP) and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalisation (BIN) went through a restructuring and vetting process, rather than being disbanded. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has been the key partner involved in strengthening the capacity of the 4,000-strong LNP, while the AFL, with 1,921 recruits³, is undergoing a restructuring process that involves recruitment and thorough vetting of personnel.

In additional efforts to enhance citizens' access to quality and responsive security and justice services, the Government of Liberia began the building and implementation of justice and security hubs across the country in 2011. The objective of these hubs is to promote a coordinated and decentralised national justice and security system. Liberia's Peacebuilding Priority Plan (PPP) provides for the construction and development of five regional hubs in the five security subdivisions of the country. Funding for this intervention is drawn from the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), as UNMIL winds down its operations in the country.

Overview of security and justice in Liberia

Before the civil war started, the justice system in Liberia was manipulated by powerful individuals who used these structures with impunity to maintain and legitimise their power. This had the consequence of cultivating distrust of the security and justice systems among Liberians over a long time. The culture of non-liability, characterised by a lack of impartial institutions, was a major catalyst for conflict and helped to nurture the civil war in Liberia.⁴ To many citizens, justice seemed like the privilege of the wealthy, who could easily manipulate and corrupt the system to their own advantage. Furthermore, the justice and security infrastructure has historically been heavily centralised in a few cities and towns in Liberia, although the largest presence can be witnessed in the capital, Monrovia. Even after the war, police presence outside Monrovia is still severely limited, with some areas going without civilian police since 1990.⁵ The limited presence of national security personnel outside Monrovia, in addition to poor logistical facilities, has resulted in challenges such as the inability to contain conflict situations – a case in point being the inter-communal violence that took place in the city of Voinjama in 2010, which was quelled through intervention by UNMIL.

Security within Liberia is largely dependent on the presence of UNMIL; and the activities of security sector personnel outside Monrovia have been largely reliant on and supported through UNMIL's presence. UNMIL was established through United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1509 in 2003. At its peak UNMIL stationed approximately 15,000 military personnel in Liberia, making it the largest

peacekeeping mission in the world at the time. Since 2003, the peacekeeping and peacebuilding capacities of Liberians have steadily been developed, allowing for a reduction in the mission's numbers. UNMIL has, however, increased its presence around Liberia's border with Côte d'Ivoire, as conflict and violence related to contested election results in Côte d'Ivoire in late 2010/early 2011 continue to pose threats to Liberia's security.

UNMIL's drawdown is dependent on the existence of an effective and sustainable system of justice and security in Liberia. Efforts have been made to rebuild the national security and justice structures. The success of these efforts, however, is dependent on the levels of positive public perception and confidence in the government. Building this has been a major focus of the intervention. Unfortunately, however, regaining public trust in the justice and security sector in Liberia remains a huge challenge.

The security and justice sectors have remained prominent on Liberia's peacebuilding agenda since 2006. In the past, the general support provided to the security and justice sectors has been uneven, with some sectors and geographical spaces, particularly Monrovia, receiving disproportionately more support and attention than others.⁶ This contributed to limiting the sector's overall impact, given the interdependency of agencies under the Liberian system. Even though the LNP is comprised of the elite Emergency Response Unit (ERU) and the Police Support Unit (PSU), their presence outside Monrovia is very light. Furthermore, there is negligible access to justice by many Liberians for a variety of reasons, which include lack of awareness of rights, lack of access to facilities, and lack of trust in the process. It is this absence of services and awareness in many parts of the country and the over-centralisation of security and justice in the capital that has contributed to poor access and utilisation of available systems, which makes a strong case for the need for decentralisation of these services to the counties.

The post-conflict response: The regional hub approach

Immediately after the war in 2003, local and international focus on Liberia was concentrated on the implementation of the CPA. These activities included, among others, the implementation of a disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) process targeting more than 100,000 ex-combatants, forming a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), providing emergency humanitarian assistance, instituting reforms in the security sector, re-establishing the rule of law, and holding elections. As well as making these advancements in the peace process, peace gains needed to be sustained. Towards this end, through local and international efforts, the country was added to the UN Peacebuilding Commission configuration. Liberia thus became a beneficiary of the PBF in 2010. Through accessing

this fund, the country sought to consolidate its stability through long-term approaches, such as the implementation of the Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy I (PRS I), launched by the government in 2008. The strategy's four main pillars are:

1. Peace and security;
2. Economic revitalisation;
3. Governance and rule of law; and
4. Infrastructure and basic services.

Pillars 1 and 3 of the PRS I sought to address gaps relating to the security and justice sectors respectively. Pillar 1's main objective was to ensure a secure and peaceful environment, both domestically and within the sub-region, which would be conducive to sustainable, inclusive, and equitable growth and development. Pillar 3 aimed to foster and strengthen partnerships with civil society as a means of building and operating effective institutions and systems that would strengthen peace, and promote and uphold democratic governance, accountability and justice for all.⁷

The PRS I officially came to an end in December 2011. During the three years when the strategy was implemented, activities mainly revolved around preparatory work. This involved developing detailed plans, building the necessary capacity, passing legislative frameworks, building or rebuilding particular aspects of institutional and physical systems, and rehabilitating or repairing infrastructure.⁸

Building on achievements of PRS I, on 16 and 17 February 2011, the Government of Liberia, with the support of UNMIL and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), developed a three-year joint programme focusing on justice, security and national reconciliation based on the PPP.⁹ The PPP also identified the need to decentralise justice and security services through the establishment of regional justice and security hubs across Liberia, so as to ensure access for all. This was recommended as a major initiative for implementation by the government. The PPP provides for the construction and development of a regional hub in each of the five security sub-divisions of the country.

The major statutory apparatuses within the justice and security sector in Liberia include the:

- Ministry of Justice (MOJ);
- Judiciary/ Temple of Justice;
- Liberia National Police;
- Bureau of Immigration and Naturalisation;
- Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation (BCR); and
- Prosecution Office.

Non-statutory organisations are also major players in the justice and security sector in the country. Through a Justice and Security Board, the various government organs meet regularly with their counterparts from UNMIL, UNDP, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), representatives of foreign missions and the donor community. Discussions pertaining to the on-going process of constructing the hubs and decisions approving projects are undertaken during board meetings. The Justice and Security Board is co-chaired by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Liberia, the Minister of Justice and the UNMIL Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General/ Rule of Law.

The three core objectives of the regional hubs are as follows:

- Develop infrastructure and provide equipment and other logistical tools that will guarantee security and justice for citizens;
- Strengthen the capacity of justice and security personnel to enable them to provide fair and accountable professional services;
- Ensure a justice and security sector that is relevant and responsive to the community's concerns.¹⁰

The Government of Liberia decided to build its first regional hub in Gbarnga, which is in Bong County in Central Liberia, due to the area's geo-political significance. In February 2013, the hub was inaugurated.¹¹ Most of the physical infrastructure had been built and the circuit court was due to be finalised during early 2013. Planning for the regional hub in Gbarnga was done with the participation of all relevant agencies, among them the LNP, BIN, BCR, training facilities and the judicial court. The government and its partners, including the Peacebuilding Commission and other NGOs, agreed that the next two hubs to be built would be established in Harper, Maryland County and Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County.¹² As with any new programme involving unfamiliar methods of working, it was prudent to test the regional hub model in one location in order to learn lessons from its implementation which could then be applied to other areas where the hubs were rolled out.

The selection of the pilot site was of critical importance. Region Three, which covers Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties is serviced by the regional hub at Gbarnga and is widely considered to have been the best site for the first hub. Region Three lies close to Liberia's borders with neighbouring countries Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone. The three countries have historically contributed to insecurity experienced in Liberia. There have also been major security challenges emanating from these countries in recent years.¹³ The regional hubs, functioning as central coordination centres of all the justice and security structures within the regions, will significantly contribute to efforts to restore public safety and confidence outside the capital. This sends a clear message that Liberia is more than just Monrovia.

At present very little about the regional hubs is known to the public. To raise awareness among citizens, the government has launched a public awareness-raising programme for the first regional hub in Gbarnga.¹⁴ The regional hub also hosts a Public Services Office (PSO) that will promote knowledge about services offered at the hub and strengthen utilisation of the hub. Implementing public outreach initiatives is particularly important in rural Liberia as these work to enhance community members' appreciation and understanding of the objectives and work of the regional hubs. Given the fact that the three counties serviced by the Gbarnga hub have all experienced security challenges, it is expected that this regional hub will, as part of its initial work, serve as a proximate point from which to seek redress and access justice.

However, although the necessary infrastructure is in place, there are still logistical challenges that need to be addressed with regard to the deployment of requisite personnel to the hub. While the PSU has been deployed to the hub since October 2011, an estimated 60% of staff members recently left the site, reportedly due to problems with the water system.¹⁵ While the plan to provide decentralised access to security and justice through implementation of the regional hub model has great potential, it is also threatened by critical challenges that continue to compromise Liberia's security and justice sectors.

Current and future challenges to the regional hub model

While there are significant concerns in Liberia, positive strides have been made to restructure and strengthen the security and justice apparatus in the country. This has been achieved mainly through support from the international community and UNMIL. These efforts, however, are threatened by numerous challenges that must be addressed if the objectives of the regional hub model are to be realised. Challenges experienced in Liberia are not novel, but they are related to existing factors that have over the years undermined the delivery of security and justice in Liberia.

Sustainability of the regional hubs

The question that arises out of discussions on security in Liberia is whether, given the strained security sector, positive perceptions of security can be attributed to the improved effectiveness of local security services or to the presence of UNMIL in the country. The performance of both the police and the army has been varied. There have been concerns over slow and lax recruitment and training processes and deficiencies in continuous mentoring, monitoring and oversight.¹⁶ Low numbers of security personnel and lack of a strong presence in counties outside Monrovia have also presented on-going challenges. Decentralisation of security and justice structures to counties outside Monrovia, through

the construction of the first of five justice and security regional hubs, was a positive step in addressing concerns outside the capital. It would, however, be wrong to presume that development of this decentralised infrastructure will immediately restore public confidence and perception, and thus there is need to ensure that this initiative includes significant public outreach and awareness components to ensure its success.

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On the whole, there is hope that the devolution of security and justice mechanisms to county level will improve accessibility to justice and protection for Liberian citizens, thus contributing to citizen safety and confidence in the government. It is therefore imperative that this initiative be supported and strengthened to ensure that citizens' expectations of enjoyment of security and freedom are met.

Over-dependency on UNMIL

Perhaps one of the most critical challenges to security and justice in Liberia is the perception that security is equal to the presence of UNMIL, which was mandated to undertake critical peacekeeping and peacebuilding tasks. These activities related to DDRR, security sector reform (SSR), human rights and transitional justice.¹⁷ Local communities in Liberia have over time developed a dependency on this international force. A history of brutalisation and victimisation by local security service providers means that it will take time to develop trust between local communities and Liberia's security structures. To an average Liberian, the presence of UNMIL is a critical factor in enhancing their feeling of security. Much of the international debate on peacekeeping processes has revolved around the complexity of exiting from post-conflict environments. Important here has been how missions can withdraw without jeopardising and undermining long-term efforts to achieve sustainable peace. In Liberia this has been a unique anxiety, given the low ratio of local security forces to citizens.¹⁸ Liberia's national security capacity is still unable to match the strength of UNMIL.

Furthermore, UNMIL has also had a larger presence in the country's rural counties, reinforcing local perceptions of its importance in providing security, and thus heightening the dependency of local communities on the UN. While efforts are made to scale-up local security capacities, the situation remains far from ideal. The creation of regional hubs is still affected by this dynamic, as perception of safety and security

depends not only on infrastructure but is heavily reliant on citizens' feelings of trust. Going forward, the objectives of the regional hub model will remain unrealised unless the process of restructuring the provision of security is approached in a more holistic manner. This approach would need to focus on shifting the perceptions of Liberians by providing security infrastructure and personnel that are widely considered professional and trustworthy.

Logistical constraints and fading donor support

Another concern is related to poor management of resources, coupled with insufficient funding and infrastructure, which results in the inability of security agencies to perform their functions.¹⁹ Infrastructure in Liberia is poor, particularly in the rural areas, a situation which poses major challenges. The 2008 census revealed that the three counties that will benefit from the first regional hub have a population of 1,072,370, which comprises about one-third of Liberia's total population and spans across 30,293 km² of the country.

Poor infrastructure limits accessibility and poses challenges with regards to residents' ability to access justice and security services. Challenges with poor infrastructure are experienced nationwide. Furthermore, even though the government has put in place mechanisms to ensure the timely payment of salaries, remuneration received by justice and security personnel is relatively low, which often results in disgruntlement, which in turn contributes to high levels of corruption among justice and security personnel. This has had the consequence of undermining perceptions of the legitimacy of justice and security personnel within Liberian communities. The high cost of maintaining a professional security and justice system is a major factor that has compromised the strength of Liberia's security sector. Liberia's ability to decentralise security and justice systems by way of regional hubs is heavily reliant on donor funding. The trend in universal reductions in funding for various sectors and countries in Africa does not bode well for the development and sustainability of the regional hubs in Liberia in the absence of substantial injection of funds by the government.

Regional dynamics of insecurity

Liberia is located in the security-challenged region of the Mano River Basin. To a certain extent, the dynamics of insecurity in Liberia owe themselves to regional interplays. Liberia's inability to develop a strong and fully consolidated state has resulted in poor border control and insecure and unstable border communities. Historically, Liberia's political leaders have reportedly supported rebel groups in neighbouring countries and have received support from neighbouring states and rogue rebel groupings, resulting in regional civil wars with complex state interconnection.²⁰ The Special Court for Sierra Leone, for instance, claimed that former President Charles Taylor,

who ruled Liberia for six years, provided support to the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone.²¹ Furthermore, the 2010/2011 crisis following the post-election stalemate in Côte d'Ivoire is the most recent demonstration of the interconnectedness of this particular region. It is alleged that Liberian militias who had been loyal to Côte d'Ivoire's former President Laurent Gbagbo since the early 2000s carried out attacks on current President Alassane Ouattara's supporters during the conflict, and that Ivorian militias loyal to Gbagbo sought refuge in Liberia after Gbagbo's arrest in April 2011.²² These incidents have contributed to the state of increasing insecurity in Liberia's border regions. On 8 June 2012, UN peacekeepers deployed in the region were attacked and seven killed in an ambush launched in Côte d'Ivoire near the border with Liberia. The resultant influx of refugees as a result of conflict in the region is also a cause for concern, in light of the meagre resources available to protect and deliver justice for Liberians, especially those living in the border areas. The shortage of resources means that extending services to refugees is all the more difficult.

Liberia's security cannot be resolved in isolation from the rest of the region, thus a regional approach is critical to addressing insecurity in the country and neighbouring countries. This realisation was a major factor which prompted the creation of the Mano River Union (MRU), an inter-governmental association that promotes the implementation of joint security initiatives covering Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The union has been severely under-resourced, leading to its potential remaining largely unexplored. The failure of the MRU to take off has negative implications on the success of Liberia's regional hubs in guaranteeing security as the effectiveness of the hubs, particularly those near borders, is highly reliant on stability and security in the entire region.

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On-going challenges posed by former combatants

Unlike other post-conflict countries, Liberia did not absorb ex-combatants into the security forces post-war. Instead, the country focused on building a more professional security force unencumbered by pre-civil war shortcomings. This decision resulted in over 14,000 former members of the AFL being laid off.²³ This, in addition to the presence of other ex-combatants, constitutes a relatively large number of unemployed and highly disgruntled individuals who feel disadvantaged. The fact that the majority of these former combatants are idle means that the chances that they can

be mobilised and used to destabilise other countries in the region – former Liberian fighters were recruited as mercenaries to participate in the Côte d'Ivoire crisis in 2010/2011 – is high. Liberia has also experienced a huge problem with the proliferation of arms as a result of weak border control.²⁴ This has rendered the demobilisation and demilitarisation process a highly complex and untenable one. Empowerment and employment of former combatants, while a necessity, remains a challenge for Liberia. The country needs to prioritise the reintegration of former combatants as the state's failure to economically reintegrate this constituency has the potential to further contribute to the fragility of the country's security.

Presence of informal security brokers

The presence of informal security brokers, who are prevalent in areas outside of Monrovia where state security is absent or weak, presents yet another challenge. Communities increasingly turn to these informal security brokers to fill the protection gap created by the absence of national security structures and personnel. The challenges with this solution lie in the fact that informal brokers are not accountable to the state and they often lack legitimacy. Relationships between informal players and formal security structures and personnel are often strained and complex. While Liberians in rural areas do not openly endorse these informal structures, they prefer them to having no security at all. Access to state-sanctioned security actors, which will be afforded through implementation of the regional hub model, will present a viable alternative to communities. It is, however, unclear whether the hubs will be able to fully service the regions and to what extent their presence will invalidate the need for informal security brokers. The development of regional hubs also raises concern over the possibility of threats to peace and security posed by informal security actors who will lose business as a result of the activities of formal security personnel.

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Challenges in implementing recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was an important mechanism set up to facilitate healing and reconciliation in the country. The TRC was mandated to examine the root causes and implications of violent conflict perpetrated between 1989 and 2003.²⁵ In 2009, six years into Liberia's transition to peace, the TRC released its final report,

in which it named those who bore the greatest responsibility for the conflict. Ironically, many of these individuals now form the political ruling class in Liberia, although the TRC report did recommend barring named perpetrators from holding public office.²⁶ The TRC further recommended that reparations be paid to individuals who experienced gross human rights violations. Liberians were, however, divided over the findings of the report. Civil society was also divided, mostly due to concerns about what the report could do to the fragile peace and democracy in Liberia.²⁷ Many feared that the gains made in terms of reconciliation could be reversed if all the recommendations of the report were adopted. The challenges in the implementation of the recommendations of the TRC report are an indication of the weakness of the country's justice structures. The creation of regional hubs and their subsequent success is dependent on the belief on the part of local communities that they have a right to justice and that the government is both able and willing to uphold that right. Challenges in implementing the recommendations of the TRC send out the message that the strong ruling class can continue to manipulate justice structures and marginalise survivors of the war. Such messages undermine gains made in the model of justice promised through the introduction of regional hubs in post-conflict Liberia.

Improving the security and justice situation in Liberia: Some recommendations

To the Government of Liberia, the international community and civil society

Invest in continuous strengthening of the security sector

Although there is notable stability in Liberia, it is important to reiterate that more work needs to be done. Liberia still needs to strengthen its security systems, especially at the level of the regions. Building infrastructure that guarantees safety and justice requires consistent investment. There is therefore need for increased collaboration between government and the international community, bilaterally and through UNMIL, to continuously strengthen capacity, provide mentoring and enhance security infrastructure. There is also need to increase the number of trained security personnel to ensure that all planned regional hubs are adequately staffed and able to offer security for every Liberian.

Adopt a regional approach to peacebuilding

In efforts to ensure security in Liberia, it is imperative to realise that achievement of security in the country cannot be divorced from existing security challenges in the wider region. The effects of insecurity in one area are almost guaranteed to spill over to the rest of the region, as evidenced by the impact that Côte d'Ivoire's post-election crisis has had on the recent incidents of violence in Liberia. The MRU is a critical platform through which multifaceted regional security

challenges can be addressed in a coordinated manner.²⁸ While Liberia's security and justice hubs can contribute to efforts to ensure regional security, it is important that the Government of Liberia invests more strongly in initiatives aimed at addressing these regional insecurities.

Strengthen socio-economic participation by former combatants

The need to facilitate the re-engagement and re-socialisation of former combatants in Liberia cannot be taken for granted. It is necessary to initiate a rigorous assessment of peacebuilding initiatives and programming that targets this specific group. One of UNMIL's mandates was to facilitate implementation of the DDR process that was completed in 2009. This process must now be evaluated to determine its success in facilitating the reintegration and economic engagement of this group. An understanding of the threats or opportunities presented by former combatants is critical to assessing and understanding the status of peace in Liberia. Due to the interconnectedness of the conflicts in the Mano River region, such an analysis and any responses must be considered from a regional perspective. Whilst the re-engagement of former combatants is the responsibility of each individual state, a regional approach should be encouraged as it would be more effective in ensuring the security of a number of countries, as opposed to just one.

Increase coordination of security- and justice-related initiatives

To avoid duplication and to enhance efficiency, actors including civil society and government, should coordinate their activities and work in tandem. Early warning structures can be substantially strengthened through collaboration between government and civil society. These structures need to be linked to response mechanisms for effective prevention of security threats. Responses to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, for instance, must be mounted in a concerted way by state structures, civil society actors and other stakeholders.²⁹ Where state security remains weak, as is the case in Liberia, collaboration with civil society could strengthen and enhance access to justice, citizens' understanding of their rights and the availability of protection. The regional hub model being implemented in Liberia must promote spaces for government engagement with civil society so as to enhance the effectiveness of the model's reach.

Dialogue on the way forward regarding the recommendations of the TRC report

There is consensus that the findings and recommendations of the TRC report have divided Liberians, but it must be noted that citizens acknowledge the importance of the process for national healing and development. If Liberia fails to obtain consensus on the way forward with regard to

implementation of some of the TRC's recommendations, this will further undermine the confidence that Liberians have in the government. While there are inconsistencies in terms of the substance of the report, the truth and reconciliation process as a whole must be appreciated and the voice of the people heard. It is commendable that in efforts to foster dialogue and reconciliation, the Independent National Human Rights Commission (INHRC) is building more *palava* (or peace) huts in response to the TRC's recommendations outlined in Article 10 Section 46 of the law establishing Liberia's TRC. *Palava* huts form an important part of Liberia's traditional justice system. People from the community gather inside an open-walled hut, discuss a crime or transgression and then together decide on the punishment.

A major recommendation of the TRC, which the country is experiencing challenges in implementing, involves the prosecution and banning of particular individuals, named as perpetrators in the civil war, from participating in public office. It is imperative that the government applies itself to addressing some of the root causes of the Liberian conflict and, in this way, enhances citizen's positive perception of justice delivery in the country.

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To UNMIL and Liberia's security forces

Enforce and strengthen the image and presence of local security services

If peace and security are to be realised and justice availed, it is critical that the people of Liberia believe in judicial and security services. UNMIL should aim to support the work of national security agencies and to promote a positive image of their ability to provide adequate security. However, efforts must be made to impress upon Liberians that UNMIL only has a temporary role in the country and that the police, the army and other national security machinery are responsible for their security. Given the history of brutalisation and exploitation of civilians by security forces, the army, police and other bodies, these structures have an urgent responsibility to re-build relationships of trust with their constituents. The creation of regional hubs around the country should be viewed as an important opportunity to achieve this objective. The Gbarnga hub, and the other four hubs, if utilised fully, will be critical in making security and justice more widely accessible in the country. This process has the potential to restore public confidence in national capacities, but it must be supported as the LNP moves to

wean itself from UNMIL and takes charge of public security. It is imperative that Liberians gradually begin to engage more with their own security forces so as to strengthen their confidence in Liberia remaining stable post-UNMIL.

Strengthen the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalisation

Liberia's fragile security situation is partly due to the existence of porous borders between several countries in this extremely vulnerable region. It is crucial that the regional hubs have a strong mandate to contribute to border security through the provision of adequately trained and resourced immigration personnel who can work in concert with other security actors. The urgency of providing effective border control for Liberia becomes even more critical in light of UNMIL's imminent drawdown.

If peace and security are to be realised and justice availed, it is critical that the people of Liberia believe in judicial and security services. UNMIL should aim to support the work of national security agencies and to promote a positive image of their ability to provide adequate security

Conclusion

Liberia has made significant strides towards the re-consolidation of its security and justice structures. The country's resolve to avoid re-engaging its army and security forces following the end of the war, but rather to rebuild its security structures from the ground up, was symbolic of a state that wanted to rid itself of impunity. However, over time this moral standpoint has been undermined by the slow process of reconciliation and implementation of the recommendations of the TRC, creating mixed reactions among Liberians. The government's recognition that security must be decentralised to the regions is significant and the regional hub model bears promise. At its very genesis however, this model is threatened by old security and justice concerns that have continued to plague Liberia's systems. The success of the regional hub model hinges on the ability of the state to provide the necessary numbers of skilled personnel, to regain the trust of its citizens and to consider and implement the recommendations of the TRC. With regard to security considerations, it is imperative that the regional context is not ignored as the fragile state of the Mano River region has a direct bearing on security challenges experienced in Liberia. The question of UNMIL's exit remains pertinent and the enforcement of national security and justice infrastructure must be enhanced so as to ensure that Liberians can confidently rely on their state's capacity and willingness to protect them.

Endnotes

- 1 This PPB was developed from the outcomes of a training workshop focusing on justice and security in Liberia, which was convened as part of ACCORD's African Peacebuilding Coordination Programme (APCP). The training took place in Monrovia, Liberia from 2–5 April 2012. The authors wish to thank the reviewers for their contributions to this work.
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