

Final Report

Evaluation of the Reintegration and Recovery Programme in South-Eastern Liberia

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Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (German Agro Action, GAA)

by

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1. Summary of the main results and conclusions including an assessment of the following aspects

1.1 Short description of the project

Liberia is a rather small tropical African country with a very low population density. After 14 years, the devastating Liberian civil war came to an end in August 2003. The war had started in 1989 and cost about 250,000 lives. It finally ended with a comprehensive peace agreement and the resignation of President Charles Taylor who was exiled to Nigeria. In 2005, a democratic election described as free and fair, brought Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to power. Today, around 4 years after the end of the civil war, both the physical infrastructure and the economic production system in Liberia are almost completely destroyed. Life expectancy at birth today is at 40.39 years. Another effect of the long civil war has been that Liberia is today one of the world's poorest countries with extremely high illiteracy rates. Since 2003, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has shown a strong presence throughout the country.

The programme region is situated in the South-East of Liberia covering as implementation zone the three counties of Grand Gedeh, River Gee, and Sinoe. This region mainly consists of tropical lowland forests with excessive rainfalls. During the wet season from May to October, not even the rare main road axes are passable. The general situation in the five scheduled sectors of the Reintegration and Recovery Programme, RRP is as follows:

- The agricultural sector is marked by a lack of tools and seeds as well as destroyed cash crop production facilities, such as rice swamps, cocoa plantations, and fishponds.
- The three RRP counties used to have 433 schools in total. Everywhere there is an acute lack of teachers as the Ministry of Education does not or only occasionally pay the teachers' salaries. Many juveniles and young adults could never attend school.
- Access to clean drinking water is limited to the major settlements in all three counties. To a large extent, the rural population is forced to fetch water from creeks and the people have to dig mud holes.
- The road network is extremely limited, and practically no road can be used throughout the whole year.
- Sexualised violence experienced during the civil war, as well as all forms of post-war violence and sexual abuse of women and girls are at an extremely high level.

1.2 Project holder analysis

The project holder of the Reintegration and Recovery Programme in South-Eastern Liberia, RRP, is German Agro Action (GAA/DWHH). The so-called implementing partners are:

- The Danish NGO Ibis implementing the Accelerated Learning Programme, ALP, as part of the programme result 2 of the logical framework and
- the German NGO medica mondiale, implementing result 5 of the logical framework.

The RRP organigramme shows that the GAA/DWHH manager of the programme can only steer the GAA/DWHH implemented components directly. The mere fact that the programme management has no information on the use of the partners' available budgets points to the high level of "independence" of the so called "implementing partners" in this programme.

GAA/DWHH, Ibis and medica mondiale have so far used all major budget lines appropriately, except for the budget line for transportation. The running costs have been completely underestimated in the initial project proposal of 2005. As a whole, the running costs of the programme are very high, due to extremely bad road conditions. The programme has no influence on an improvement of its lines of communication.

On the whole, the programme seems to be sufficiently equipped with portable computers, printers, and photocopiers. Unfortunately, the Internet is still not working in Zwedru and in Greenville. Office space in the GAA/DWHH offices in Monrovia and Zwedru is sufficient to accommodate Ibis and medica mondiale in one room each. The Greenville office is just being set up.

The programme does not have an own garage for complex mechanical work and car repair. Vehicles often have to be brought to Monrovia. The programme's car park is rather modest. The two used trucks as the only technical equipment are completely inadequate, given the distance of 200 km of feeder roads to be reconstructed.

1.3 Analysis of situation and target group

The logical framework of the RRP defines internally displaced people (IDPs), ex-combatants (XCs), and survivors of gender-based violence in South-East Liberia as the programmes direct target group. In a broader sense, the rural population along the ten intervention axes of the RRP in Grand Gedeh, River Gee, and Sinoe can be considered the target group, all together approximately 37,500 rural families.

A special focus is put on approximately 2,300 out-of school and over-aged children and youths as participants in the Accelerated Learning Programme, ALP, also including 75 teachers. These children and youths did not have access to or attend formal schooling because of the war or for other reasons. Priority is given to vulnerable groups of children and youths, including girls, orphans, former child soldiers, returnees, and economically vulnerable people.

From a socio-economic perspective, the entire huge project area depended and still fundamentally depends on road infrastructure. As a result of displacements during the civil war but also due to a lack of transport facilities for marketing of harvested products, agricultural production completely collapsed. Besides small-scale subsistence production, agriculture in this region was and is specialised on cash crops only. Mainly cocoa and rice generate monetary income.

The level of self-help structures has been traditionally low and had been weakened even further by 14 years of civil war and long-term displacements of large parts of the rural population. Not only in Liberia but also in tropical rain forest areas in general, the traditional societies of hunters and gatherers have a very low level of self-help organisation. Mainly informal groups can be addressed by RRP. The programme uses

nearly the whole range of self-help support measures mentioned in the GAA/DWHH working paper of 2007.

1.4 Analysis and assessment of project preparation

In 2005, KfW contacted GAA/DWHH and GTZ informing the two organisations that a total of 12 million Euros of remaining funds scheduled to be invested in Liberia were still unspent. After a general expression of interest in collaborating, GAA/DWHH, together with GTZ, was requested to submit a detailed project proposal. South-Eastern Liberia had been defined as the most eligible project intervention zone.

The submission of a project proposal was affected by high time pressure. Another decisive factor – together with the strong GAA/DWHH willingness to win the “tender” in concurrence with GTZ – was the approaching replacement of the relevant Liberian minister in charge of signing the cooperation agreement. For these reasons, a still inconsistent and only partly assessed project proposal had to be submitted to KfW. However, on the other hand, after winning the contract, GAA/DWHH had to implement a development programme suffering from essential defects. Despite permanent readjustments, the initial deficits will certainly accompany the programme throughout its entire live span.

1.5 Analysis and assessment of planning / project planning matrix

The following objectives and results were defined in the initial logical framework. Despite several readjustments in project planning, no changes were made on the result level.

Overall objective
Contribution to the peace and recovery process in Liberia.

Project objective
Improvement of living conditions in South-East Liberia and support to the re-integration of IDPs, XCs, and survivors of gender-based violence into civil life.

The following project components represent the five attended results:

Result 1
Agricultural production is improved and diversified.
Result 2*
Schools are reconstructed and teaching is improved.
Result 3
Access to safe drinking water and sanitation is improved.

Result 4
Remote areas are linked through a transportation network.
Result 5*
Women and girls, especially survivors of GBV and those at risk, increase their well-being and benefit from integrated GBV prevention and response systems.

*The ALP component of result no. 2 is implemented by the Danish NGO Ibis. The component of result no. 5 is implemented by the German NGO medica mondiale, mm.

The initial project proposal is based on the following unrealistic assumptions:

- full access to the project zone throughout the whole year,
- an implementation phase of 36 months,
- simultaneous project implementation in three different counties.

The logical framework mentions clear and measurable indicators for all project results, except for result no. 5. The technical equipment, especially for road rehabilitation has been fully under-estimated.

1.6 Analysis and assessment of project implementation

A baseline study for a detailed needs assessment has never been carried out. Project implementation is limited to a period of 6 months per year only, due to very bad road conditions during the two raining seasons. Considering the huge and remote RRP implementation zones the return would never have legitimised the necessary effort.

The programme offers services for groups only, not for any individuals. Project staff pays attention to a gender-balanced composition of such groups. Although the programme as a whole does not explicitly address gender issues, such as quota arrangements and specific schemes concerning support to women and girls, project results clearly show a strong female participation in groups of around 40 %. For well constructions, a beneficiary contribution and an existing water committee are requested.

The project fosters close contacts to stakeholders from the different line ministries at county level despite a serious lack of professional knowledge and management skills thus hindering significant assistance and practical support from their side.

RRP meanwhile tenders much more services as originally planned, due to a lack of technical and human resources as a result of unrealistic planning. Tenders include road reconstruction, culvert placements, production of school furniture, construction of schools etc. Contrary to the initial concept, the RRP management has meanwhile started to make use of the raining season for home based preparation of concentrated implementation field work immediately after the ending of the wet season.

The Ibis approach, a copy of what had already been carried out by Ibis in Uganda, might be rather ambitious in view of the relatively low professional level of teaching

staff in Liberia. But, as a whole, all methods and instruments applied are very appropriate.

Regarding the agricultural outputs, it is visible that RRP could even top most of the planned quotas two and a half years before the programme's end. The weakest implemented RRP component is road reconstruction. Although RRP made a considerable effort, and despite the apparently high number of rehabilitated road kilometres, those roads do not yet meet the sustainability requirements. As a result of the highly deficient technical equipment road works cannot be done by the project itself. Tendering for private contractors is under way.

An estimation of medica mondiale's project implementation is rather difficult to make, due to a lack of clearly pre-defined and measurable inputs. However, the new mm engagement in professional training activities for women aiming at increased income generation is highly appreciated.

On the whole, the entire RRP implementation is stamped by deviations from planning. From the evaluator's perspective, all deviations were necessary and all of them point into the right direction. Most of the taken measures compensate to a certain extent for the weaknesses in the initial project planning. The project team does its very best to achieve as many of the formerly defined objectives as possible.

1.7 Impact with regard to development

The efficiency criterion concerns "how well the various activities transformed the available resources into the intended results, in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness".

- In terms of quantity it seems that the RRP might be able to fulfill at least the quantities mentioned in the latest revised logical framework submitted to KfW for approval.
- In terms of quality it must be said that a disproportionate part of the available financial resources must be spent as transfer expenditures. The result of the deficient planning of an oversized and uncontrollable programme periodically leads to battles of material with a subsequent six month paralysis, due to bad road conditions.
- In terms of timeliness the initially scheduled implementation period of 36 months shall be extended to 54 months. From a practical point of view, this seems appropriate, as only 6 months per year can be used for implementation. But, the absolute maximum funding period is limited to 36 months with most donor agencies. This will also have been the case in the initial guidelines for the RRP proposal. Approval of a programme extension up to 54 months can therefore be considered an exception and a very flexible concession to GAA/DWHH by the funding agency.

Besides hunting, gathering, and small-scale subsistence growing, any monetary income in South-Eastern Liberia was generated by the cash crops cocoa, rice, and little coffee. The programme's support in agriculture increases harvest quantities significantly. But, a revitalisation of regional economic trade can only take place on passable roads. The positive or negative programme-related impact will, at a mid-term perspective, mainly depend on the access to regional markets.

The population density in Liberia is rather low, and it is even much lower than the average level in the programme intervention zone with its huge rain forests. This environment is not attractive for migrants to settle down. Overpopulation is not a very probable scenario in the medium-term. The programme's soft components, ALP and GBV, do not have any environmental impact. The only component including a certain risk of negative environmental impacts is the agricultural one. Here, the programme mainly promotes intensified agricultural activities in the low land swamp areas for rice cropping and fishponds. Other agricultural activities in the up lands applying the very land consuming technique of shifting cultivation are avoided.

1.8 Project management

In general, the management structure of the RRP is influenced by two major factors, the project's highly deficient historical background and the personality of the project manager. At first, it must have been a real challenge to gradually build up the different working units. Nowadays, project management is clearly structured. The four GAA/DWHH project units for agriculture, WATSAN, and road and school reconstruction are fully operational and headed by competent local staff. There is clear leadership in management, and the project as a whole is based on the principle of delegation of responsibilities to expatriate and local key staff at all levels of project management. The project team as a whole is professional and highly motivated. Regular team meetings, as well as regular discussions and reflections to mutually share experiences have created a good working climate and allow for a transparent decision making process.

1.9 Conclusions and recommendations

- The Reintegration and Recovery Programme in South-Eastern Liberia, and especially the programme's head office in Zwedru has a highly motivated project team, a very good working atmosphere, and transparent decision-making structures. These positive characteristics should be sustained.
- Collaboration with local stakeholders is very close at all implementation sites (Zwedru, Fish Town and Greenville). GAA/DWHH has an excellent reputation. This high quality and level of appreciation should be preserved, too.
- The most significant weaknesses of the programme are by no means related to project implementation, but rather occur within the overall concept and project planning. In particular, technical feasibility aspects have been neglected to a very large extent. The major result of re-negotiations between KfW and GAA/DWHH has been a revised logical framework, including a prolongation of the implementation period until 2010 and additional funding of 3 million Euros. After the final approval of this revised framework, the consequences for everyday project work must show sufficient adequacy regarding the difficult implementation situation.
- All major budget lines are used appropriately, both by GAA/DWHH, by medica mondiale and by Ibis.
- Cooperation between GAA/DWHH and other partners in increasingly complex project contexts becomes a more and more common feature. Unfortunately, the

“partners” understanding of collaboration is very close to the one of equal partners in a consortium, which is not the case. It urgently takes clarifications and readjustments in the partners’ head offices in terms of the organizational and legal setting of collaboration, including a definition of responsibilities, liability, and decision-making.

- The Accelerated Learning Programme component carried out by Ibis is a very wise completion of the rural development components. It fully meets the requirements. The applied methods, the didactical materials in use, and the organizational setting are efficient and appropriate. But, to what extent Ibis students will meet the qualitative achievements in terms of examinations passed at the end of the three-years ALP courses, is still very unclear.
- The relatively short visit of the Women Centre in Fish Town could not provide sufficient information for a detailed assessment of the manifold activities of medica mondiale. As a result of the low level of integration of the mm component into the programme as a whole and some very specific mm activities, a detailed evaluation of the “mm project” seems appropriate and recommended.
- The technical project outputs in the agriculture, schools construction, and water and sanitation sectors fully meet the required quality standards. This high quality level should be preserved.
- High quality road rehabilitation is seriously affected by a lack of essential technical equipment. The programme’s practice to compensate for this deficit by tendering this component to local contractors to carry out road reconstruction was a very wise decision that should be kept up.
- An internal evaluation and monitoring (M+E) unit does not yet exist. Up to now, the GAA/DWHH programme manager has been regularly provided with the latest data of the GAA/DWHH implemented programme components. The set up of a multi-disciplinary task force team responsible for the follow up of all programme components, including the Ibis and mm implemented ones, might be one instrument towards an improved coordination of the programme as a whole.
- High quality and realistic planning and programming of development projects is a very difficult business, due to frequent lacks of statistical data, facts, and figures, and due to mostly multi-sectoral contexts. Proposals for co-funded projects represent the legally binding service description for the project results attended later on. Therefore, it is highly recommended that GAA/DWHH assign the elaboration and writing of proposals for co-funded projects only to its most experienced staff and/or qualified external senior consultants. Financial issues should hereby not play a crucial role!
- There is an enormous potential of knowledge and experience within GAA/DWHH. It is highly recommended to make more use of these resources. It might even be useful to ask for specialized consulting services in view of establishing a sort of basic internal knowledge management system.