

Technical Report on the Mano River CPS Annual Partners Meeting

Mano River Union Civil Peace Service Network



Venue: Hotel Bamoi. Aberdeen, Freetown.

Theme: Reflecting on Elections and Building Local Capacities for Peace in the MRU

Venue: Hotel Barmoi, Aberdeen, Freetown, Sierra Leone

Date: November 20th – 25th 2023

Brot
für die Welt

Bread for the World -
Protestant
Development Service



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Civil Peace Service
We don't turn our backs on conflict.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mano River Union Civil Peace Service (MRU-CPS) Network conducted its Annual Partners' Meeting at the Hotel Barmoi, Aberdeen in Freetown, Sierra Leone from 20th to 25th November, 2023. While such important gatherings usually have specific themes as the primary focus, generally discussing work contents to build better networks and develop collaborations through informal interactions also form an integral part of the program.

Unlike all other CPS annual network meetings, the importance of the 2023 meeting was rooted from the fact that Liberia and Sierra Leone had just concluded their national elections, and the latter still grappling with issues relating to the credibility of the outcomes of the final results, which might have serious implications on the peace and security of both countries. An apt theme, "Reflecting on Elections and Building Local Capacities for Peace in the MRU", was therefore, selected to form the basis of the deliberations and future actions by partners.

In attendance, were over 50 participants drawn from partner organizations from Liberia and Sierra Leone, the CPS Support Team, representatives of the Berlin Team of Bread for the World (BftW) and the media.

The CPS Programme is supported by BftW in Germany, and works with local civil society organisations/NGOs in member countries in different thematic areas to strengthen local capacities, while carrying out projects that support peacebuilding initiatives at community, national and regional levels.

II. OPENING COURTESIES: INTRODUCTIONS AND STATEMENTS BY KEY GUESTS

Madam Adenike Cole requested the assembly to rise and observe silent prayers for the head of LOIC who was reportedly passed away. She later introduced Mr. Sheku Kawusu Mansaray, Coordinator, Small Projects Fund, Sierra Leone Adult Education Association (SLADEA) for the delivery of the welcome address and formal opening of the meeting.



Mr. Mansaray introduced himself as one deputizing the President of SLADEA, Prof Joe A.D. Alie, whom he said was given the honour to deliver the welcome remarks at the opening of this meeting but was bereaved at the time.

He requested all to join him as peacebuilders, to observe a minute of silent prayers for the

innocent souls he said were needlessly lost in the ongoing conflicts around the world especially on day 45 of the Hamas – Israeli War.

Mr. Mansaray requested for all to allow him to mention that those wars continue to dash their hopes for global peace simply because those entrusted with preserving civilized peaceful coexistence have degenerated into passive fire fighters waiting for conflicts to happen before deploying their peacekeeping machines. He noted that peace is a priceless and scarce global gem that all must seek to preserve at all times.

He heartily welcomed all Civil Peace Service (CPS) Partners, especially those from Liberia and the Trainers to where he referred to as their home away from home. He prayed for the guests not to lack anything during their stay. He assured all of the hosts' warmth and hospitality, as he quoted the French saying: "a votre service".

He continued that the CPS work in the Mano River Region (MRU) as far as he could recall was necessitated by the exigencies of post-war Sierra Leone and Liberia, which was threatening the whole sub-region. He said, the two neighboring post-war sister countries had been described in many developments as fragile states. Their fragility was measured by the 'state of peacelessness' and the threat to breaching the peace, he added. "The guns had been silenced, thanks to the presence of 17,000 UN Peacekeepers. But our populations comprised of disarmed and disoriented ex-combatants, dispossessed internally displaced persons, angry war wounded and returning refugees all traumatized and desperately seeking resettlement", Mr. Mansaray revealed. He continued that It was against that background that the then EED/BftW partners resorted to the use of indigenous knowledge for peaceful co-existence. In order for development partners to re-engage the new population mix, workers had to mediate and resolve conflicts before introducing their post conflict programs; a program devoid of conflict sensitivity was bound to perish at the initiation, he updated the assembly. "In the circumstance, program designers must consider the traumatized and charged post-war population at the receiving end of our development services. Not forgetting that even the service providers (partner staff) delivering such services were equally traumatized", he emphasised.

Mr. Mansaray underscored the relevance of their colleagues joining them at the time as CPS Professionals to create the much-needed balance in their post-conflict program-planning and service delivery. He said, in those formative years, the CPS professionals turned out to be the most valuable human resource added to their cooperation with EED/BftW. He said the result was a radically transformed organizational capacities for creative conflict sensitive programs; every partners program was generously spiced with shades of conflict sensitivity required to navigate/maneuver through the hostile communities that characterized their post-war society. He added that the CPS partners made invaluable contributions to stabilizing their post-conflict countries and would continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

He however encouraged all to do more, as according to him, the reward for good work is more work. He reminded all that their work had only just begun in their respective operational communities. He noted that, Sierra Leone and Liberia are still considered post-conflict countries, riddled with latent conflicts of yester years especially at community level. He mentioned that the the underlying causes of conflicts are still very much alive in communities; and the situation is

exacerbated by declining global economic trends, rendering communities volatile. He therefore called on all peacebuilders to be strategic in their planning at organizational level in order to respond adequately to the looming peacebuilding challenges.

He urged CPS partners to prepare for an expanded role beyond the familiar mandate in order to break new grounds. He encouraged all to reach out to new partners including political parties, the joint security forces, the peace/conflict departments of the universities, the judiciary and the Land Ministry.

He expressed that Sierra Leoneans were blessed with a new Commission called “The Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion”, established by an Act of Parliament on 4th February 2021 with powers to take measures to prevent, build, promote and maintain sustainable peace in the country. He said, it provides all peace building organisations the legal framework for collaborative peace work, and urged CPS partners to consider forging a working relationship with the Commission for obvious reasons especially sharing perspectives from their unique community experiences.

Mr. Sheku Kawusu Mansaray noted that, CPS Partners needed to strengthen their capacities by engaging in research to document and publish findings on indigenous peace building methods and approaches prevalent in their communities. In building local capacities for peace, he continued, CPS partners must consider specializing in the various aspects of peace building work ranging from community conflict monitoring to preventing and managing one when it breaks out.

Mr. Mansaray continued that, if the twenty years of CPS peace building approach/experience must inform future peace work in the two countries, he proposed to the National Coordinators, Dr. Sheku Kamara and Adenike Cole for a Centre for Effective Peacebuilding Knowledge Management to be hosted by a competent partner – where research findings and recommendations could be deepened and archived for future users.

He noted that peace building work needed to be more youth and gender friendly for a sustainable and continuous service to the communities. “The younger the people we train, the better for our work for peace. The MRU joint cross-border election monitoring project is a case in point”, he added.

Concluding his opening remarks, the SLADEA President’s representative personally declared that it amounted to improper appropriation of valuable human resources to deploy a CPS professional solely for development work with no direct reference to peace work; a role other national staff could perform efficiently, he reiterated. He then, on behalf of his President, Prof. Joe A.D. Alie, declared the meeting open and wished all fruitful deliberations.

The Fritong Players International melody drama group was ushered in by Adenike to welcome the guests



with their usual trademark welcome songs. This was graced with much amusement and satisfaction by all and sundry in the conference room.

Additional statements were delivered by various speakers including Maximillia, the AGIAMONDO Coordinator in Sierra Leone, a representative of the Support Team, Julianne Westphal and the Berlin Team representatives, Sybille Frideres and Christina Wummel.



The AGIAMONDO Coordinator in Sierra Leone, Maximillia thanked the Coordinators for inviting him to the meeting. He said, the two organisations (AGIAMONDO and BftW) implementing the CPS programme in Sierra Leone had created a synergy to bring together all the other partners, and hoped that the partners were really leveraging that opportunity. He said, he was at the meeting to represent the AGIAMONDO partners of the CPS programme in Sierra Leone. He continued that, he knew that activities were ongoing together, but on strategic level, he was the representative of the partnership to bring in their view at the meeting.

Max mentioned that they would soon be going into the process of building AGIAMONDO's strategy in the next couple of months. He continued that, the intended strategy, in terms of context, was obvious since the country was coming out of election that year; they would have to look at the future in relation to peace for Sierra Leone and the region. He said, for them to focus would be to look at localizing the CPS programme, which AGIAMONDO calls "partner orientation", ensuring that not only the strategy or activities, but also the objectives are not influenced by organisations in Germany but the local partners in Sierra Leone. He reminded all that, that was the reason for the founding of the CPS programme; to effectively support local peace movements in the countries that CPS programme works in. He however noted that, the longer he stayed in the programme, the more he realised that more needed to be done to achieve that goal. He added that, he thought it was because of the structures and power dynamics, and some of the funding of the activities of the programmes that the networks were implementing come from Germany. He said, they still needed to find pockets of progressive ways of being better at giving the steering, planning, developing the implementation strategy in any way to the local partner organisations, and have the peace processes be driven from here, and just support those processes in the way that they could. He ended that, it should be the objective, and he and the AGIAMONDO partners looked forward to being part that process.

On behalf of the Support Team, Julianne Westphal, said she looked forward to a joint presentation from the members of the Community of Practice (CoP) in the coming days, and would also listen to partners on how they intended to take that initiative forward. She noted that reflecting on the past elections aimed at activities for the next elections and maintained that even after elections, there would always be issues to address. She expressed hopes that the conference would provide them with the capacity to react to whatever would come up, and also create a more peaceful MRU.



From the Berlin Desk, Sybille Frideres said, she was very happy to be physically present at the MRU conference for the first time in the last three years, and meeting with all the CPS partners from Liberia and Sierra Leone. She acknowledged the current challenging times that the world face with the wars between Russia and Ukraine, and Israel and Palestine, and the effects that these cause globally. Such wars also cause high inflation in economics and food shortage in the MRU, she noted while

emphasising the relevance of the meeting for partners to discuss the challenges for peace in the region, especially the two countries. She stressed for all to appropriately utilize the time they had, and not to see it as a normal meeting but as a chance to bring in their own perspectives to discuss peace and conflict transformation, including burning issues in the two countries in order to consolidate peace.

Sybille furthered that, Sierra Leone and Liberia had come from elections in the same year and that, Liberia's elections had been generally free and fair; but this was different in Sierra Leone, as people had different views about the conduct and outcome of the election. She described the peace in Sierra Leone as a "cold peace" and a "not sure peace", which she urged participants to also pay attention to during plenary discussions, and how could peace workers like all in the room should react and work on the existing "cold peace" in Sierra Leone.

Sybille also talked about the question of shrinking space for civil society as something to think about during the conference. She encouraged all to devise a good strategy on how to maintain peace on one hand, and to advocate for fair and transparent elections in the future.

She expressed happiness for the presence of two of the Support Team members, Julianne Westphal and Rolfe Grafe, at the conference to continue working with the CoP trainees. She thanked all for being present and looked forward to the upcoming discussions.

III. PRESENTATION OF THE CONFERENCE OVERVIEW AND SCREENING OF PARTICIPANTS' EXPECTATIONS

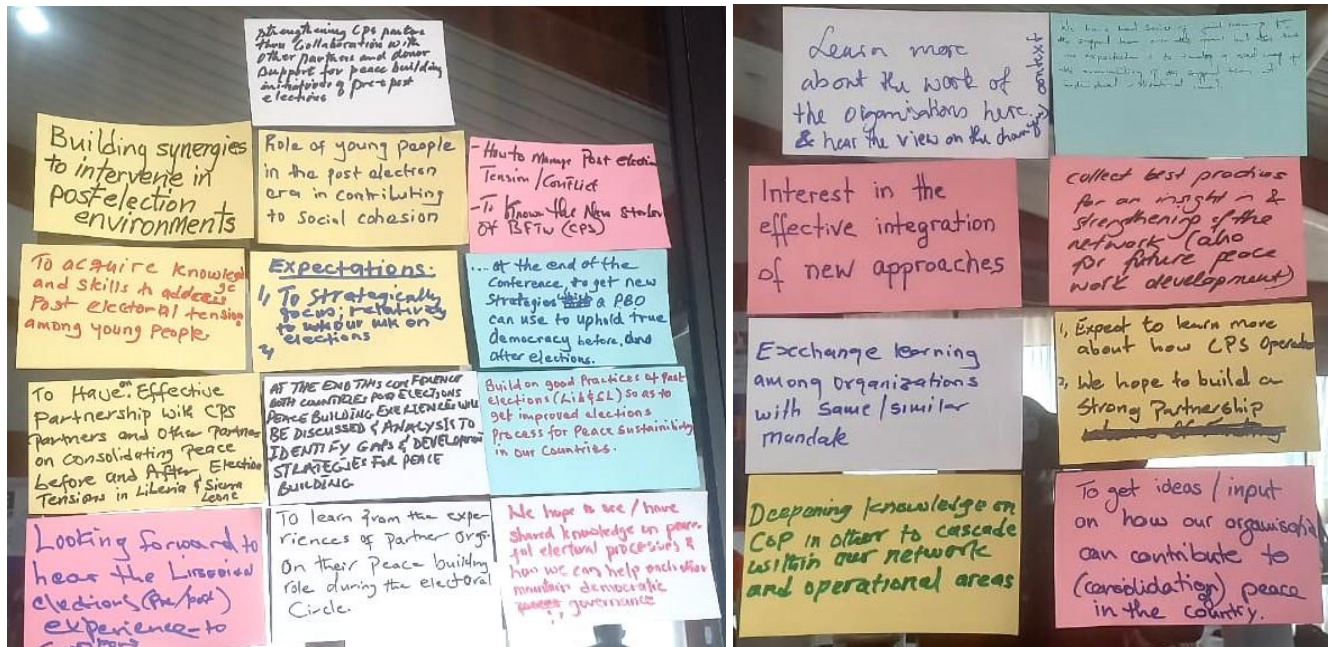
Dr. Sheku Kamara took participants through the whole three days' program. He explained that in the previous meetings, a wholistic context analyses used to be provided, which would be a bit different with that one. He said, the context analysis would particularly deal with the political situation relative to elections in the sub-region. He added that setting and analyzing the context would take them through the whole of the first day, and on the second day, participants would critically look into elections in the MRU region (Sierra Leone and Liberia) with actions proposed.

He continued that, that session would be followed by a capacity development related activity referred to as community of practice. “The capacity is expected to stay within the network, with support from the Support Team which is a sustainability approach. It is a very important component of this conference, which is why we have allocated enough time for it”, he assured the assembly. Dr. Kamara reminded all that, the CoP is being done in both countries and that, participants would be exchanging experiences from time to time, and implored colleague partners to start thinking of possible ways of proceeding with that initiative beyond the intervention of the Support Team.

In a bid to formulate the expectations of the participants, Dr. Kamara read out the following conference objectives:

1. Promoting peace in post-election times.
2. Develop concrete action points for partners’ interventions in post-election tensions.
3. Enhanced sustainable capacity development within the MRU CPS Network.

The above stated objectives guided the process of harvesting the undermentioned expectations from participants.



- Looking forward to hear the Liberian elections (pre/post) experience.
- To have an effective partnership with CPS partners and other partners in consolidating peace before and after election tensions in Liberia and Sierra Leone.
- To acquire knowledge and skills to address post electoral tension among youth people.
- Building synergies to intervene in post-election environments.

- To learn from the experiences of partners organisations on their peace building role during the electoral circle.
- At the end the conference, both countries post-elections peace building experiences will be discussed and analyzed to identify gaps and develop strategies for peace building.
- To strategically focus relatively to our work on elections.
- Role of young people in the post-election are in contribution to social cohesion.
- Strengthening CPS partnership and collaboration with other partners and donor support for peace building initiatives of pre- and post-elections.
- We hope to see/have shared knowledge on peaceful electoral processes and how we can help each other maintain democratic governance.
- Build on good practices of past elections (Liberia and Sierra Leone) so as to get improved elections.
- Process for peace sustainability in our countries.
- At the end of the conference, get new strategies which a PBO can use to uphold true democracy before and after elections.
- Learn more about the work of the organisations here and hear the view on the changing context.
- Interested in the effective integration of new approaches.
- Exchange learning among organisations with same/similar mandate.
- Deepening knowledge on the COP in order to cascade it within our network and operational areas.
- We have had series of joint training from the support team over the years, but this time our expectation is to develop a roadmap for the availability of the support team of individual institutional level.
- Collect best practices for an insight and strengthening of the network (also for future peace work development).
- Expect to learn more about CPS operations.
- We hope to build a strong partnership.
- To get ideas/inputs on how our organisations can contribute to the consolidation of peace in the country.

IV. PRESENTATION OF UPDATES FROM THE BERLIN TEAM OF BFTW BY SYBILLE FRIDERES



- Since January 2023 the new Global Personnel Cooperation Unit at BftW has started its work with 23 colleagues operating in nearly all global regions
- Communication is easier now and exchange between different regions facilitated
- Problem of too less personnel capacities not yet solved – we are working on it...
- The current CPS Mano River Program is prolonged until the end of 2024
- After realization of our two CPS Partner workshops in Liberia and Salone in March 2023, a new CPS Mano River Union Program Proposal has been submitted for the new Program period 2025-2027
- The Objectives of the new CPS Mano River Program Proposal have been developed according to the results of the Partner workshops

Objectives New CPS Proposal (2025-2027):

- **Objective 1:** Local communities, faith-based and civil society organizations and initiatives, especially women and youth, express and promote their needs and interests for peace, development and the rule of law, including respect for human and women's rights.

Sybille explained that, there was need to fight for the stabilization of the rule of law due to reported corruption, division between the two largest political parties, actions of government destabilizing the country, etc. Objective one was therefore, formulated to step up advocacy with government and also focus on addressing civil rights of citizens.

- **Objective 2:** Young people and marginalized groups are committed to improving their living conditions and developing prospects for the future. She said with this, they wanted continue with work on supporting returnee migrants, and reforming the lives of young people in both countries especially those involved in drug peddling.

- **Objective 3:** Local communities, different ethnic groups and their stakeholders are increasingly campaigning at local and national level for the appropriate and fair management and sustainable use of natural resources in the face of land grabbing and climate change.

News as to our new CPS Support Team Program (2024-2026):

- The new CPS Support Team Program for the African CPS programs in Mano River (Sierra Leone & Liberia), DR Congo and Cameroon has been approved by our back donor, the BMZ, for the project period 2024-2026
- After a call for tenders the current advisers Juliane Westphal and Rolf Grafe have been confirmed for the new and last Support Team Program period (2024-2026).

Sybille explained that above mentioned Support Team would be the last because, after several discussions in Berlin and the National Coordinators, they agreed on focussing to developing and strengthening the capacities of locals, not to be dependent on funding from Europe, but have own resource persons in the member countries. She announced about the discontinuation of Christian Kujstermans, who was leading on Knowledge Management due to internal financial issues with BftW, but assured that Juliane would continue with that component in close collaboration with the Communication Focal Points of the CPS, along with her usual role. She also disclosed that the CoP was not only limited to Sierra Leone and Liberia, but also for all other member countries in Africa including Cameroon and DR Congo.

Future Responsibilities of our CPS Support Team:

- **Rolf Grafe:** Peace and Conflict Analysis, and Do No Harm
- **Juliane Westphal:** Conflict Transformation/Mediation and Knowledge Management
- In future, both will accompany and support the newly built CoPs professionals in conflict analysis and resolution methods in all four African CPS Program countries.

New Identified Thematic Areas of all CPS Supporting Organizations in Germany

Sybille disclosed that, nine (9) CPS partner organisations supporting and working on CPS programs in Germany had identified what she referred to as “hot” issues of peace work. Even though the discussions were yet at their (BftW) level in Germany, she however underscored the relevance of sharing such information with the assembly as it might affect future financing of the program. She clarified that it did not mean other issues were less important, but every year, environmental issues become more and more important due to the problems of climate change. So, for them, she added, environmental peace building and feminist peace building (equal rights for women; including women in all policy areas to achieve sustainable peace in societies) are two of the “hot” issues of peace work. This also involves inclusion of other marginalized (ethnic, religious, handicapped etc.) groups, fight against Gender Based Violence, she concluded.

V. CPS FINANCIAL ISSUES BY CHRISTINA WUMMEL

Christina Wummel from the BftW Berlin Team reminded partners of the following important deadlines:

November 15, 2023: proposals 2024;

December 05, 2023: Last requests for funds 2023;

January, 24: financial (Jan 15) & narrative (Jan 31) reports 2023 (templates to be shared shortly).



- Audit 2023
- Preview: Digital training & exchange on tender processes in April/May, 2024. This would be open to all administrative and financial staff.

VI. COMMENTS/DISCUSSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Christian Kamara from YMCA requested to know whether BftW had plans to take on board additional partners to cover the area of governance. He also asked about issues related to the annual audit, with apprehension of delay in disbursing funds for the first quarter if the audit was not done in time.

Christina Wummel responded that, the auditors were due to hand in their reports in February. She however noted that since some clarifications sometimes need to be made, it might take a bit more time to submit the final report. She quickly assured all that if the financial reports were prepared and submitted early enough, they would be able to transfer funds as early as possible.

Regarding the question on additional partners, Sybille responded that, all CPS Officers, Managers and Project Officers were already informed that there would not be any CPS additional funding in the coming years from BftW due to the current financial challenges in Germany including the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, but assured all that the current CPS funding would stay on the same level like the one that year (2023). She continued that, there was an intention to integrate other partner organisations like SHADE and COMNeT for the future, but would be highly dependent on funding. She used the opportunity to formally welcome the representatives from the aforementioned organisations at the meeting.

Ben Sei from SLOIC asked how partners could be supported to cope with huge operational costs relative to vehicle running costs, etc. when funding is now announced to be limited moving forward.

Sybille responded that, given the prevailing circumstances, she implored all partners to focus more on the “hot” issues of peace work which funding would be mainly meant for, while also finding other possible ways of addressing additional operational costs at institutional level.

Rebekah Bertsche from Liberia asked whether it would be possible for institutions whose CPS professionals had left to request for new ones. Sybille responded in the affirmative, but noted that the more CPS professionals BftW hires, the less funding would be available to finance activities.

Pious Mannah requested to know whether there were plans to continue engaging and strengthening the capacities of members of the CoP. Sybille assured that a separate stream of funding would be set up for the furtherance of the CoP.

Rolfe announced that, he would be available for engagements with partner organisations from both countries on specific support that would be required for the following year. He informed partners in Freetown about his availability in the next week for bilateral engagements with them for better planning to integrate the new approaches into their work.

Christian Kamara asked how much BftW was ready to commit more support to the CoP initiative. He requested to know whether Seconded Personnel could only be hired from Europe. He added that even in the MRU, there could be very good technical skills that the program could tap into, thereby reducing cost and improving sustainability within the network.

Rolfe responded that, he had seen AGIAMONDO recruit local CPS professionals in Cameroon and Congo Brazzaville and that, it could be a point of reflection for BftW moving forward.

Sybille also responded that discussions on that had already been going on for years now. She however noted that legal considerations at operational and political levels were also being paid attention to, including insurance coverage, etc. She added that the pressure was already high in Germany, as other organisations were also thinking along that direction, and they (BftW) were discussing how to go about it for 2024 or the following year.

Maximillia from AGIAMONDO disclosed that they were currently working with colleagues in the program from other African countries including Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, etc. He added that, BftW could also learn from other organisations if they wanted to apply that.

Ben Sei inquired to know whether BftW could financially support designated local staff in institutions that do not have Seconded Personnel in the tune of half of the salary that is normally paid to the latter to motivate them to fully do CPS work in those organisations. Sybille assured all that once such people were identified and committed to the program, they would certainly be supported by half of the salary through their respective institutions.

VII. CONTEXT ANALYSIS: POLITICAL CONTEXT IN RELATION TO ELECTIONS



The “Do No Harm” Framework Presentation

This was a presentation delivered by Salamatu Conteh from MADAM. She took participants through an overview of the contents of the framework including Dividers, Connectors and Options.

To further delve into the approach, Rolfe requested Pious and Sarto to present the general observations of the elections in Sierra Leone and Liberia respectively. He also called on participants to focus on answering to the programming questions; what, where, who, for whom, how and what... He asked all to have a short review of their perspective relative to observations generated about the elections processes in the two countries.

The following general context was presented for Sierra Leone by Pious Mannah:

- Peaceful co-existence of different ethnic groups and of people from “red” and “green” regions

Tensions around Recent Elections in Sierra Leone:

- Election process relatively peaceful with few incidents of violence
- Arrests mostly of opposition supporters
- Allegations of vote rigging
- Importation of drugs to influence youth voters
- High costs of living leading to wide-spread anger
- Misuse of social media through hate speech in order to antagonise people based on ethnic groups, regional backgrounds or family ties
- Self-interest of the majority of civil society organisations

The following general context was presented for Liberia by Sarto from Liberia:

- Peaceful coexistence among all regions irrespective of political divisions between Nimba and Lofa Counties, and the South-Eastern parts of the country.

Tensions around Recent Elections in Liberia

- Doubts about credibility of the Electoral Commission
- Campaigns leading to violent confrontations
- Ethnicity and religion misused to divide voters
- Rejection of critical voices
- Strong use of social media to spread disinformation and misinformation
- Fear of violence as a consequence of publication of results

VIII. GROUP WORK AND PRESENTATIONS BY SIERRA LEONE AND LIBERIA WORKING GROUPS



The lead facilitator, Rolfe, divided participants into four groups and tasked them to answer a critical question about the role of civil society in a context where political interests and elections lead to tensions among people who could otherwise live peaceably in communities in both countries. He also tasked them to reflect on the statement; “The Civil Society has lost all credibility due to the fact that representatives of organisations are leaning to one side or the other and that their activities are causing tensions between the supporters of different political parties...”. He described such statement as being very strong and provocative on CSOs, and requested all to suggest ways how they could position themselves to avoid being labelled as such during political campaigns.

The following critical questions were required to be taken into consideration during the reflection exercise:

Critical Reflection

Are any of our programming decisions (or those of other organisations) having negative side-effects on the political fragmentation?

These could be caused by any of the following aspects:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| ▪ Definition of needs and project goals | Why? |
| ▪ Selection of locations (in general and for specific activities) | Where? |
| ▪ Types of activities to be implemented | What? |
| ▪ Project duration and timing of activities | When? |
| ▪ Selection criteria for beneficiaries | For Whom? |
| ▪ Partnership with authorities or with local organisations, or procurement processes for service providers and suppliers | With Whom? |
| ▪ Recruitment / composition of staff | By Whom? |
| ▪ Strategies and approaches | How? |

The following presentations were made by the various groups after series of deliberations and brainstorm:

GROUP 1

1. Have you observed that CSOs contributed to violence by their responses to any of the eight programming questions of DNH?
 - Adult literacy program: a trainer from SLADEA was denied access to continue his adult literacy classes because of his political affiliation to the opposition learners had to protest with a cease or halt of the program somewhere in Pujehun district, south of Sierra Leone.
2. What should CSOs working on the issues mentioned below do, to effectively contribute to peaceful co-existence?
 - Peace messages – about colours of t-shirts and use of trainers or interpreters.
 - community entry strategy – awareness raising/DNH
 - Assessment of the atmosphere/situation
 - Prepared that things will change.

FOR WHOM? - Beneficiaries are using opportunities for personal benefits.

WHERE? – Perception through ethnicity/history of the Church.

BY WHOM? – Representatives of the institutions of the Church publicly declaring support

WHAT? – Use of the Church for political campaign

WHOM? – Engagement with government as first entry point
WHEN? – Timing of statements and activities.

Question

- Selection of observers across the country
- Objective (role we play)
- Constant engagement with all stakeholders in a transparent way.
- Clear rules of not using the Church for political purpose.
- Platform for candidates to debate and reconcile.
- Using pulpits to preach against hate speech.



GROUP 2

1. WHY? – For partisan affiliation by civil society organisation.
2. WHERE? – Sierra Leone and Liberia
3. WHAT? – Take sides with government wrong doings, beg for job openly from government, not holding government accountable, not speaking out because of promise of government positions/appointment
4. WHEN? – Before, during and after election.
5. FOR WHOM? – for political gains and personal gains.
6. WITH WHOM? – The media, vulnerable youth, social media bloggers, entertainers.
7. BY WHOM? – Affiliated civil society organisations, civil societies formed by law
8. HOW? – Finance (bribery), intimidation, misinformation, blackmailing and propaganda

Question 2

1. Do a refresher training on Do No Harm for Network members and non-Network members.
2. Civil society organisations should remain nonpartisan.
3. Engage media group to stop misinformation.
4. Name and shame civil society organisations that are partisan.
5. Set up a monitoring civil society group to monitor the (JPO)
6. Civil society organisations have to maintain integrity.
7. CPS Network should be strong and capable enough to be issuing press statements on conflict sensitive issues.

GROUP 3

WHY?

- To complement government
- To play intermediary role
- To serve as watchdog

HOW it feeds into violence?

- When civil society deviates from doing their role
- When civil society are biased or take sides in playing their roles.



WHERE?

- Biased location
- When locations are selected with political or tribal considerations.

WHAT?

- Biased selection of beneficiaries
- Wrong approach (Top-bottom approach)
- Wrong communication
- Corruption
- Neglect

WHERE?

- Untimely support of provision of resources.
- Late information sharing.

FOR WHOM?

- Wrong selection of participants
- When the programmes do not match up with the community needs or expectations.

WITH WHOM?

- Poor community entry strategies
- Working with the wrong community structures.

BY WHOM?

- Working with the wrong people.

HOW?

- Wrong strategies used to share resources.
- DYC: a structure set to benefit party boys.
- SLG: a means to benefit party children.



Question 2

1. Should be apolitical
2. Correct entry strategies
3. Selection of right people
4. Transparency
5. Accountability
6. Must play neutrality
7. Effective communication
8. sincerity
9. Promote justice
10. Respect for the rule of law
11. Mutual tolerance



IX. DEALING WITH POST-ELECTION TENSIONS

Representatives of the Councils of Churches in Sierra Leone and Liberia delivered presentations outlining their roles and achievements in dealing with post-elections tensions in their respective countries. They also revealed some of the key challenges faced and lessons learnt in the process.

Rev. Moses Khanu made the following presentation on behalf of CCSL:

General Perspective:

- The June 24, 2023 general elections were conducted in a relatively peaceful environment.
- Few incidents of election violence and intimidations were recorded in some parts of the currents. However, these violence actions and intimidation did not affect the voter turnout.
- Polling day was relatively peaceful.
- The results were counted in each polling station and tallied in the five regional headquarters towns of Makeni, Port-Loko, Kenema, Bo and Freetown.
- Presidential results announced on June 27, 2023. President Julius Maada Bio was declared winner after scoring 56.1% of the vote cast.

Key Role Played by CCSL

1. In collaboration with the IRCSL, facilitated the APC-SLPP Peace Communique to ensure a free and fair elections.

2. Met with the EMBs to discuss the preparedness of ECSL to ensure a free, fair and credible election.
3. Orientation Meeting with CCSL heads of Churches on the Proportional Representative System
4. Training of Trainers (Regional and District Coordinators) on the PR electoral system
5. Observation of the Voter Registration
6. Training on Data Collection: Kobo-Collect
7. Training of District and Regional Coordinators on Election Observation
8. Developed civic and voter education messages
9. Voter Education by religious leaders through Congregational engagements and radio; women and youth through skits and street open air campaign.
10. Observation of Elections including the Tallying of Results at Regional levels
11. Documentation of Findings through Kobo Collect
12. Management of the Situation Room
13. The Preliminary Report

Challenges Faced

1. Issues surrounding the Voter Registration: ID documents for registration, Voter ID cards etc.
2. Boundary Delimitations: Caught between the Midterm and the 2014 Census data
3. The late decision to employ the Proportional Representation System. The lateness in employing the PR System gave rise to insufficient time for Voter Education
4. Campaign period was a near disaster marked by hate speeches fake news and the burning of houses and opposition party offices in Kono, Pujehun and Bo.
5. Issues surrounding the tallying of result at regional levels: District-Regional; Projection-not projection

Lessons Learnt

1. **Stakeholder engagement** with various stakeholders, including electoral officials, political parties, and local communities, ensured a comprehensive understanding of the election dynamics.
2. **The kobo data** collection and analysis tool helped gather accurate and timely information on election proceedings, voter turnout, and any irregularities.
3. **Maintain a neutral** and unbiased stance throughout the observation process, avoiding any influence from external parties to uphold the integrity of the mission.
4. **Prioritize safety and security measures for observers**, considering the potential for tensions or conflicts during the election period.
5. Acquaint ourselves with the **legal framework** governing elections in Sierra Leone to better assess the adherence to electoral laws and regulations.

Key Role Played the LCL- THRP

Anthony Philip Nushanp K. of LCL- THRP made the following presentation on behalf of his organisation in relation to their role in diffusing tensions during elections in Liberia. He started off by mentioning that LCL is a unifying, witnessing, servicing and advocate premier Christian body of Christ that promotes justice, integrity, respect for human dignity, participatory governance, gender equity, morality, accountability, transparency and support collaboration with other stakeholders for the enhancement of democracy and ensuring of a peaceful society. He continued that the organisation conducted engagement meetings with key stakeholders that included:

- National Elections Commission
- Ministry of Justice and Joint Security
- Governance Commission
- US Embassy
- Civic Initiative for Peaceful Elections (faith-based groups, CSOs, and media institutions)
- Angie Brooks International Center

Anthony also mentioned that LCL- THRP recruited 15 campaign monitors and deployed them in Grand Bassa, Margibi, Bong, Montserrado and Nimba Counties. They developed the Kobo Collect software tool for data collection in the field. This was also used to support their campaign monitors and election day observers.

He updated that a Situation Room was launched, hired 5 data analysts with supervision on: social media, legislature, news cast, political engagement, elections activities.

They published reports on campaign monitoring and election day.

Challenges Faced

- Inadequate civic and voter education
- Incoherent election calendar
- Inability to implement Farmington Declaration 2023
- Inadequate logistics to facilitate elections activities
- Conflict of interest observed at the National Election Commission on procurement
- Using of pulpits to propagate hate speeches
- Threats to peace by supporters of unity party and coalition for democratic change
- Campaign violence in Nimba, Bong, Lofa and Montserrado counties that resulted to the death of persons
- National Election Commission perception of role played by some religious leaders
- Exclusion of religious leaders in the review of the Farmington Declaration 2023
- Rising public doubt of the election commission to conduct a free, fair and transparent elections (especially the general & presidential elections)
- The slow pace in the receipt of budgetary support to the National Election Commission
- Violation of election laws by political parties without penalty

- National Elections Commission was not able to focus on financial reporting from political parties through the election law.
- Attack on the lives of people based on party affiliation

Lessons Learnt

- A critical look at the appointment process of the National Elections Commission commissioners reduces public confidence.
- Inability of the National Election Commission to effectively implement the Farmington Declaration when it comes to violation negate public trust.
- Inability of Elections Commission to implement election law increased doubt about the Commission ability to conduct a free, fair and transparent election
- Inadequate budget support to the Election Commission affects activities delivery as per schedule and therefore undermine the credibility and effectiveness of the Commission in terms of performance.
- The review of the Farmington Declaration 2023 did not include civil society and the religious community, two prominent actors in the 2017 Declaration formation.

X. ROLE OF CPS PARTNERS IN ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND ENHANCING THE OPPORTUNITIES

This was a plenary discussion session that was led by Kathrin Prinzing, Seconded Personnel at the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone. Having drawn various contributions from participants, Kathrin summarized that even though the CSO space is shrinking, the existing relationships between communities, political parties and government bodies should still be leveraged to maximize the results of the network's advocacy interventions on specific thematic areas. She also called on all to use the power of the current networks, including those on international level to raise awareness and seek support when CSOs become a bit more critical with governments or international companies.

Furthermore, the lead facilitator of the session noted other critical issues that were highlighted including working with faith-based institutions to help in influencing behaviour change, conducting research and basing advocacy work on well-researched data/information rather than imagination.

XI. PRESENTATION ON COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AND INPUTS FROM PARTICIPANTS



Members of the community of practice in Sierra Leone and Liberia made a presentation on what they had done with the tools/new skills acquired from the Support Team.

CoP – Sierra Leone

The Sierra Leone team focused their work on what they described as practical interventions using the Do No Harm (DNH) and Meditation tools. They reported to have rolled out a training on DNH and mediation skills, and also used such skills at Yainkasa, north of Sierra Leone, to settle a long-standing conflict between crop farmers and cattle rearers in that part of the country. The DNH tool is a doorway to mediation, asserted by members of the team. They disclosed that lessons learnt from working together would enable them to have more positive results (synergies).

CoP – Liberia



The DNH and Meditation CoP team in Liberia updated the assembly that they had been using the DNH tool in proposal development and mediation interventions in a particular conflict prone area in Liberia.

They furthered that their methodology was focused mainly on the Open Space Technology, a tool that is reportedly used to make everyone's voice heard. It

was said to have been used practically especially for pre-election during stakeholders' engagements and other sector of society.

Group work and discussions were later directed at the next steps of the CoP: The name, partners' expectations from the structure and the contributions of partners towards the structure.

Participants unanimously agreed to maintain the CoP name. The outcomes of the brainstorm and discussions also generally suggested that, once the tools of the CoP were incorporated into the operations of partner institutions, it would enhance the work they do.

XII. Institutional Marketing

This was done in groups of Partners working in similar areas. This was done in order for partners to exchange ideas based on their strengths, needs and possible partnership and collaboration.

The meeting ended with an interactive dinner.