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THE NATIONAL AND COUNTY-WIDE DISSEMINATION

OF THE RESEARCH REPORT ON

SECURITY SECTOR REFORM IN LIBERIA: A CASE OF THE LIBERIAN NATIONAL POLICE AND ITS CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO INTERNAL THREAT IN THE WAKE OF UNMIL DRAWDOWN IN 2012

SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND/TALKING DRUM STUDIO

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Introduction:

Following extensive research covering the period October to December 2010, involving the combination of literature review, key informant interviews, survey and focus group discussions, a report on the capacity of the Liberian National Police to respond to internal threat and security in light of UNMIL's transition was compiled.

The draft report was submitted to SIPRI and it went through a series of editing, comments and suggestions from the editing team at SIPRI. The final version of the report reflected the comments and suggestions from the editing team but the final responsibility of the contents and the ownership rested with Search for Common Ground/Talking Drum Studio.

Following the satisfactory completion of the report, it was launched in Monrovia on March 18, 2011 in partnership with SIPRI. The dissemination seminar in Monrovia was attended by staff of SIPRI, government officials, the Inspector General of the Liberian National Police (LNP), County Commanders from counties where the study targeted, UNMIL both civilian and police, a representative from the American Embassy, partner organizations of SIPRI, the Liberia Peace building Office and civil society organizations.

The launch was divided into the following components:

1. Overview and methodology of the study and presentation of key findings: The Country Director of SFCG/TDS gave an overview of the study, its rationale and primary objectives. This was followed a brief description of methodology used to generate the information, selected counties and the criteria for targeting the counties, and the presentation of the key findings.
2. The presentation of the key findings was followed by a discussion facilitated by Professor Amadu Sesay. The discussion generated a healthy conversation among the participants on the issues raised in the report. The Inspector General acknowledged that the findings of the report were a reflection of the reality that the police is faced with and also mentioned that the forum created an opportunity for engagement between the LNP and civil society, something he said was long overdue. UNMIL also highlighted that the report provided empirical evidence of the issues and challenges facing the LNP.
3. The second phase of the seminar was a panel discussion of four persons including the Inspector General of the LNP, the Chair of the House Standing Committee on National Security, a representative from civil society organization that works in the sector, and the Country Representative of Action Aid Liberia. Each panelist spoke for fifteen minutes on a different topic related to the SSR. The panel discussion was moderated by Dr. Thomas Jaye of the International Center for Transitional Justice. The presentations were followed by questions and answers, which built on the discussion earlier held after the presentation of the findings. The topics discussed by the panelists included the following:
 - a. The Inspector General of the Liberian National Police: He spoke on the status of the police reform, its capacity, areas of improvement and challenges in wake of UNMIL transition in 2012.
 - b. Hon. Saah R. Gborlee, Chairman, House Committee on Security: His presentation focused on the role of the legislature in supporting the police reform and mechanisms they have put in place to enhance oversight and budget allocation.

- c. Cecil Griffiths, National Director of the Center for Criminal Justice Research and Education and Chair of the civil society network on SSR: He spoke on the role of civil society in Liberia's police reform process and the challenges.
- d. Madame Korto Williams, Action Aid International in Liberia: She spoke on gender and police reform with emphasis on challenges facing women's access to justice.

Dissemination at County Level

Following the successful launch of the report in Monrovia, four mini-seminars were held in the counties that were included in the study (Bong, Cape Mount, Nimba and Grand Gedeh). The purpose of the county seminars was intended to increase citizens' access to the report as well as the findings and issues contained in it.

The meetings that took place in the four areas comprised forty persons per location and included the county authorities, the police commander and officers from command posts, civil society organizations, community members, and members of community policing forums. Unlike the Monrovia seminar, the county meetings did not have panelists. The Country Director of SFCG/TDS gave a background to the research, including about those interviewed during the research and the used methodology, and presented the key findings. This was then followed by a participatory discussion on the key issues raised in the report. One cardinal point that was raised in all of the meetings was the need for citizens to advocate for the allotment of resources from the County Development Funds to be made for support to the police as it is done with health, education and the construction of roads. This was a new development in the thinking of citizens that security is a public good and service that equally needs to be enjoyed by citizens.

Like the Monrovia seminar, the community radio stations covered the meetings at the county level. Press release that was written about the county meetings was also carried in two national newspapers, the Inquiry and News (See attachments).

The meeting in Gbarnga (Bong County) took place on April 1. The one in Cape Mount took place on April 4, Nimba on April 6, and Grand Gedeh on April 8.

Key Outcomes

From the dissemination seminars the following outcomes were generated:

1. The seminars provided an opportunity to commence discussion and build a consensus on the need for a Police-Civil Society forum as a platform where community-police

relations, civil society perspectives on policing strategies and challenges would be discussed at regular intervals.

2. Revival of the CSO Working Group on SSR in Liberia: the seminar also led to a broad agreement amongst civil society groups, national and international policy actors on the need to revive the dormant CSO working group on security sector reform in Liberia. The revival would include broadening the membership and expanding its activities to include focus on police reform issues on SSR and also civil society participation in the broader framework for civilian oversight (through parliament) of the security sector.
3. Greater awareness by civil society on the range of challenges confronting the Liberian Police force, including operational, financial, command and control issues, and possible solutions and roles civil society could play in resolving these challenges.
4. Communication of civil society fears, concerns and perspectives on police reform, policing and the state of community-police relations in Liberia to the top hierarchy of the police force.
5. Broader awareness, discussions and input into police reform, policing and community-police relations in Liberia through participation of broader civil society groups and county-level dissemination activities.

Media Coverage:

The seminar was given maximum media coverage that took place at two levels. The first engagement covered activities during the seminar and the second was a press conference held in the evening of the same day of the seminar at the office of SFCG/TDS. Two of Liberia's leading newspapers (Daily Observer and Front Page carried the story the following week (See attachments. The seminar and press conference was carried on Power TV/Radio, Truth FM/TV, LBS radio/TV and Radio Veritas. Apart from contents gathered from the press conference and seminar, the media also had access to a formal press release that was developed by SFCG and SIPRI. Hard copies of the report are available but the report can also be accessed on SFCG's website.