

Monrovia Report & Position Statement
The Comparative Post-conflict Recovery Project (CPRP)
Land Concession and Rights Workshop
Monrovia, Liberia
January 3-7, 2014

Introduction

In developing countries, profitable exploitation and export of resources by national or international companies are often welcomed. But institutions, policies, and programs of national government are often seen or perceived to siphon off resources and prevent or reduce local development rather than encouraging it. Agents and institutions of the State are often seen to block or constrain development, including in areas such as land use and management, business development, and agricultural livelihood. Profits are often perceived to flow *to* the State but not sufficiently *from* it to provide for local services. And yet, provision of infrastructure, security, education, and other services is typically felt to be both the responsibility of the State and crucial for peaceful and sustainable development.

It is often easy both in general and specific terms to find fault with state functioning and with the activities of politicians. And yet, apart from rebellion, revolution, or civil war, it is difficult to fundamentally change the major structures and organizations of state governance – and history shows that attempts to do so can be very costly and dubious in outcome.

How, then, do progressive citizens and professionals most effectively engage officials and organizations of state governance? At the present workshop, this issue was raised in the specific context of land development and alienation. However, the findings and results of the Monrovia workshop have implications far beyond issues concerning land. Indeed, as discussed in conclusion, we believe that this workshop has provided a new general model of how peacebuilding can be practically developed and feasibly supported in developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and other world areas.

*Monrovia versus New York:
The value - and challenge – of in situ “South-South” dialogue*

In terms of format, a concrete finding of this workshop is the great value that results from connecting best-case practitioners across developing countries in *in situ* South-South dialogue. This entails bringing

international practitioners together in their *own* countries of residence – rather than meeting in a Western city or a regional metropolis. The rarity as well as the value of such direct South-South interchange is thrown into relief by the taxing logistical challenge of arranging travel, visas, and official permission for intercontinental participants to meet collectively in a small developing country such as Liberia. In the present workshop, practitioners from Myanmar in Asia and Papua New Guinea in the South Pacific met in Monrovia, Liberia, with West Africans from Guinea and from different parts of Liberia itself.

Prior to the workshop, each participant submitted a summary project statement about their own work, a bio-sketch, and questions posed to those from other countries.¹ These were collectively circulated in advance and are currently being posted on our project website. The workshop provided each participant the opportunity to briefly contextualize his or her statement for the collected group but privileged extended discussion and debate. The reading of long papers or the giving of extended PowerPoint presentation was prohibited.

Beyond meeting in five dedicated workshop sessions, the participated collectively in three field excursions across Liberia to directly observe, meet with, discuss, and then analyze:

- the experience and challenges of ‘rehabilitated’ ex-combatants attempting to form a farming cooperative in a rural county
- the challenges – and potential legal opportunities – faced by traditional leadership in a community faced with large-scale expropriation and clear-cutting of its land through government concession to an international Malaysian oil palm plantation
- the activities and strategies of the Liberian Council of Tribal Chiefs as they attempt to reformulate governmental policy and legal procedures to more accurately reflect – and defend – the rights of regional and local constituents in the face of externally implemented development projects.

The confidential evaluation assessments of those attending as well as the assessments of organizers and the public statements – and follow-up plans – of participants themselves underscore not just the personal or general value of such cross-continental connection but its practical impact as well as analytic and strategic understanding – as discussed further below.

¹ A bio-sketch of workshop participants, their individual position statements, selected practical readings, and the present report and its sequels are being posted on the CPRP website.

*The Cream of the Crop:
Best-case organizations and personnel*

The productivity of the Monrovia workshop depended on advance selection of a small number of appropriate and highly accomplished individuals from the Mano River Region of West Africa and from Asia/Oceania. We believe that the results-based accomplishment, intelligence, strategic acumen, and personal ethics of the participants reflect best-case practical advocacy for responsible governance in relation to peacebuilding in low GDP countries.

Given common patterns in these countries of organizational inefficiency, corruption, and organizational profiteering, this identification was both important and challenging. In the course of more than a hundred interviews in meetings in developing countries in diverse world areas in previous months and years – including during a previous Carnegie-supported project – the co-organizers identified developing country participants for the workshop who embodied:

- deeply exemplified personal commitment – beyond official statements and policy affirmations – to responsible governance and responsive community development
- practical understanding and appreciation of local and provincial dynamics in their home country
- demonstrated strategic and practical social ability in their cultural and social context
- intellectual acuity
- fluency in English (a regrettable but practical necessity)²
- national (or hybrid) developing country personal identity and identification
- a demonstrated track record achieving tangible positive results and practical impact in their work
- a genuine interest in connection with best-case practitioners both comparatively across countries and continents and organically within their own country
- focus on achieving concrete near-term results, with cognizance of practical constraints and need for critical awareness

² Written fluency in institutional English was a significant factor, but verbal fluency was ultimately more important.

Highly select members of *governmentally-associated but organizationally independent* entities and institutions emerged as most prominent and impressive in the above respects.

Reciprocally – and revealingly –the organizations these individuals that we identified were typically:

- directly involved with governmental bodies and officials without being themselves elected, politically appointed, or ministerial in nature
- NGO's, CBO's, and CSO's – Non-Governmental Organizations, Community-Based Organizations, or Civil Society Organizations
- funded continuously and stably for at least several at a substantial but not at an extremely high level by international NGO's or by progressive private enterprises or philanthropists
- effectively operated and/or controlled by national staff rather than tightly managed by international organizations or institutions, including their own funders
- moderate rather than either very large or very small in scale – typically having between 10 and 25 employees, with just one or a few branches, offices, or divisions within the country
- able to attract, promote, and support educated and professionally qualified national staff on a continuing basis
- able to afford flexibility and the opportunity for creative professional development and promotion for national employees
- emphasized (as one participant clearly articulated) the importance of “giving rather than getting.” This entailed organic outreach both to communities and to members of government rather than strategizing to gain personal benefit from these relationships and connections.

*Needles in the Haystack:
States of Moderation, Moderating the State*

The significance and importance of highly engaged non-governmental entities as best-case examples of statebuilding in relation to peacebuilding may seem counterintuitive or disappointing: why do state and governmental bodies and institutions not themselves reflect productive linkage between statebuilding and peacebuilding more prominently in these countries?

This question, however, may itself be miscast. Consistent with the research and analysis of many others, we find repeatedly that state governance is

under-salaried and overextended in developing countries. This is especially true at key levels of governance below those of the very top elected officials, ministers, and appointed institutional directors. These intermediate and lower levels of governance are the key interface between the state and the civilian experience and perception of government. The underperforming of governance at these levels is abetted by a great shortage of qualified national professionals, a weak tax base and low state revenue, low government salaries, and great pressures and demand to supply government services amid inflated local expectations of service delivery.

Though democracy is in principle an antidote to these problems – poor officials can be voted out of office -- in practical terms, the politics and economics of electioneering and winner-take-all political victory and defeat easily subvert rather than support deeper democratic goals and ideals. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that graft or corruption in government is pervasive.

Conversely, it is difficult for the progressive orientations listed further above – both organizationally and in individual careers – to take root and productively grow. The same is also true, not coincidentally in many national NGOs, in which selling one's services and gaining project employment as an NGO worker can be more important than providing organic deliverables. This problem afflicts small so-called suitcase NGOs and also very large NGO's funded by large international organizations and/or Western governments, such as USAID, the World Bank, and the UN. In many cases, the initiatives funded by these large donors percolate down as specific projects for which funding may be at once large, unpredictable or sporadic, time-limited, and, not-coincidentally, dangerously lucrative for those who can become integral to their operation or management. These outcomes are not inevitable, but we find them to be very common.

Amid these trends and challenges, however, in virtually all developing countries one can find moderately-sized and nationally run NGO's, CBO's and CSO's that exhibit more genuinely organic commitments, high professionalism, good connections with government, and personal as well as organizational efficacy and efficiency. In important contrast to other organizations, corruption is not just frowned upon or generally absent but seen as a fatal flaw and scourge that directly threatens not just the integrity and viability of both the organization and each member within it. Credibility, accountability, and openness are essential not just to the operation but to the personal and collective success of these organizations.

Though this ideal situation may not always be realized in fact, it appears to be approximated, and self-consciously so, in best-case national NGOs and CSOs.

Given their character, these NGOs and CSOs are highly effective mediators, facilitators, and brokers between the agents and institutions of state governance, on the one hand, and the realities and needs of local communities, on the other.³ In the best case, as discussed further below, they are explicitly charged to conduct and expand their mediation and facilitation of government services by organizational mandate underpinned by stable and independent funding.

In a sense, this result itself constitutes a significant finding of the CPRP project to date: our empirical global search for best-case organizations and practices of statebuilding in relation to peacebuilding has led us to identify, and now to highlight, their more general character and characteristics. It is in relation to larger contexts of governmental inefficiency, undercapacity, and underperformance across a range of developing countries that the identification and delineation of best practices of peacebuilding in relation to statebuilding is thrown into relief. We believe this to be the case notwithstanding and indeed just because best-case national organizations, including those which we have identified, tend to be at once moderate in scale, organically responsive, and yet connected to intermediate and higher levels of state governance.

*The Stick and the Circle:
Absolute goals, relative outcomes*

At the center of practically all progressive NGOs or CSOs in developing countries – and certainly of democratic governments and their institutions – are foundational principles or at least ideologies of humanitarian rights. The universality and universalization of human rights discourse around the world, including in most of Africa, Asia, and Oceania in addition to North and South America and Europe – is a striking feature of our contemporary era of politics and service-delivery.

Despite the shared stated emphasis on human rights among governments and the NGOs and CSOs that alternatively accommodate, moderate, attempt to manage them, the precise reference and policy emphasis on human rights can be widely or even wildly discrepant or contradictory depending on political and cultural context and the professional and

³ In some cases, the organization itself is a hybrid that combines features of civil society, community based, private, and/or governmental organizations.

personal goals of the individual actor of agent. Against fixed or even absolute frames of ideal reference concerning human rights, then, are regional, national, and notional realities that are complex and chaotic, relative and relational, and nothing if not politically contested. These circumstances provide the air (or the miasma) in which principles of universal human rights live and breathe.

Though governments and the state are increasingly constrained to affirm principles of human rights against the realities that in fact compromise them, NGOs and CSOs of the kind we are presently considering have a more practical, more efficacious, and a more personally committed way of both embracing principles of human rights and helping facilitate their implementation in culturally and locally responsive ways.

One example was our group's interaction in a rural Liberian field setting of with a group of rehabilitated ex-combatants. These were hardened young militia fighters during Liberia's civil war who had since undergone effective NGO-led vocational training to become vegetable farmers. They had then been re-settled back in rural communities, given land to farm, and had begun productive and profitable enterprises of vegetable-growing. However, subsequent encroachment and land-alienation by an intruding international agribusiness had led to great discontent, including the threat of violence. Based on the government's narrow interpretation of common land law, large tracts of land had been ceded to the oil palm agribusiness and clear-cut with little or no consultation with those who resided on the land. In the process, the state received a surfeit of new revenue from a major multinational agribusiness while promoting what it considered to be a new green revolution in Liberia. However, their actions pitted the technical right of the state to alienate common use land against local rights to secure subsistence livelihood from their residential property.

Against this polarization, various members of our combined group listened carefully to the grievances of the ex-combatants and then effectively counseled them how to follow legal means of filing grievances, and, at the same time, how to incorporate themselves as an agricultural cooperative so they could secure other land on their own. Amid the specter of further conflict and aggression, the young men became not simply mollified that their problems were taken seriously but excited and enthusiastic that there was a viable way to peacefully pursue their own livelihood: they became both realistic and enthusiastic about congealing their own agricultural cooperative based on the agricultural skills they had already acquired through their vocational training. Rather than inflated hopes and fanciful expectations, their projected plan was highly feasible. At the end,

discussion turned to how they young men could sell the increased volume vegetables they were planning to grow back to the agribusiness company itself. This company was on the one hand needing to feed its large numbers of paid field hands, and, on the other, desirous of finding some way to de-escalate tension with the local community.

Among our own group, this field experience led not only to animated discussion, learning, and analysis, but a concrete commitment by the director of one of the Liberian NGOs present to extend his project work to the particular county and the particular community in question – so that the needs and concerns of the young men and many others like them could be effectively addressed.

Though principles of human rights are widely if not universally shared, the strength of this commitment easily leads, in concrete circumstances, to alternative interpretations that can pit the government – and selected private enterprises that it supports – against local communities in terms that are absolutist. Against this, a commitment to legal process that applies but also effectively mediates legal application in concrete cases – as is commonly pursued by progressive national NGOs in developing countries – is an important and effective way to promote rather than to polarize statebuilding in relation to peacebuilding.

The mediatory function is especially important in issues concerning land – and many many others – in which confusion, uncertainty, and lack of clear information exists among many constituents concerning existing law and policy, and how it might or could be applied in particular cases. In this sense, the NGOs, CBOs and CSOs in question perform a crucial informational and progressive educational function not in abstract terms but in concrete application to facilitate – and make more manageable and effective – state-society relations. They also work concretely and diligently in dialogue with state ministries and agencies themselves, and their cultivation of good relations and structures of support with and for state governance is crucial to their operations and their success.

Carrot and Stick:

Compliance and resistance in best-case organizations

Just as state governments have benefits and costs that they can use to induce or penalize citizens, so, in their own limited way, progressive national NGO's and CSO's have a range of inducements and pressures at their disposal, both vis-à-vis those in governance and in relation to local communities. Indeed, it is their intermediary and interstitial position

between the state and its citizens that gives them potential leverage at both ends of this spectrum.

On the encouraging side, well-organized and progressively oriented national NGOs and CSOs can help the state to deliver its services – and citizens to effectively access them. Because they are positively perceived and supported by important and influential donors, these national NGOs and CSOs tend to have high symbolic capital and moral status even though they may have little means of enforcing their objectives beyond the threat of withdrawing their services. Given that the local perception of governmental service delivery is often low, however, state actors can benefit from their association with such non-governmental organizations in both the eyes of citizens and those of influential donors and the international community.

NGOs can reinforce these positive perceptions of government through advertising and news releases, attraction or promotion of press coverage, and proposal of new donor-funded programs that further benefit state actors and institutions. In more day-to-day terms, given that state infrastructure and capacity in non-urban areas is often low, basic services such as establishing means of communication, arranging and holding meetings, and, especially, supplying effective vehicular transport for participants, can be key aspects of influence and leverage on state actors by progressive NGOs.

In complementary fashion, publicizing, investigating, and calling attention to circumstances and cases of state service shortcoming can be embarrassing or damaging to state organizations and institutions. In cases of state dispute with citizens, including some land dispute cases discussed at our workshop, NGO dissatisfaction with desultory or recalcitrant state performance has the effect, either implicitly or explicitly, of encouraging and facilitating communities to actively redress their grievances through legal means, protests, or even physical resistance. Often, it is these procedures, including the education of local communities to know about and more effectively exert their legal rights – that is at the heart of NGO activities.

In our visit with one paramount Liberian chief, the NGO that he had been working with was singled out for his praise and local support. When asked how he would handle the situation if a company came with a contract to access his land, the chief responded with great confidence and definitive assertiveness that he would refuse any access to his people's land until full and complete deliberation had been made in compliance with a full set of

legal requirements and dispute management procedures that he had become not just appraised of but fully cognizant of through the advice, education, and legal mentorship of the NGO in question.

In general, the best-case national NGOs and CSOs are effective in linking statebuilding with peacebuilding by skillfully employing both the benefits of their service outreach and the threat of negative publicity and civilian dissatisfaction, polarization, and uprising. This is a delicate and often shifting balance in which the social and political skills of NGO workers as active mediators, facilitators, and negotiators are key – as was impressively evident in the case study situations that we were exposed to.

This mediatory role is structurally central if not integral to the positioning and management of progressive national NGOs between the state and its citizens, and sometimes between them and private business or multinational corporate entities, as well. In the words of one participant the goal as interstitial actors and agent was to be “not so pliant as to be ineffective, and not so resistant as to be dangerous.”

Sailing the Storms:

The cost and opportunity of political change

Several factors stood out in our workshop that link the structural role and position of progressive national NGOs and CSOs to the practical challenges – and opportunities – of state policies and politics over time. One of the greatest of these is the potential instability of NGOs vis-à-vis their funders, on the one hand, and their governmental connections, on the other.

Though the institutional continuity of government ministries, elected posts, and institutions typically continues over time, the individuals who direct them can change radically, reflecting both wholesale changes in government regimes and the vagaries of individual reappointments. The continuing existence of a government office or institution typically means that a national NGO dedicated to liaison or assist with a certain government, such as the rule of law or land issues, is tied (or shackled) to the relevant ministry or governmental body – such as the Ministry of Justice or the Ministry of Agriculture and Mines – regardless of who is leading these bodies.

One of our participants described how difficult it was for his organization when the Minister who was the linchpin of his policy efforts with the government left, leaving several years of careful liaison work to be completely rebuilt with a new incumbent who had different priorities and

policies, and a more recalcitrant and less open leadership style. For a moderately-sized national NGO or CSO working to progressively connect statebuilding with peacebuilding in a certain government sector, such changes pose a major challenge.

In complementary fashion, the national NGOs and CSOs in question can also face instability in their own funding sources, which directly impact their continuation and survival. The most successful organizations have built up trust and a track record of dependable accomplishment with significant international donors – to the point that they are given significant funds to simply run their operations on their own terms, with minimal or only modest external oversight. At present, such relatively unrestricted external support for proven national organizations seems much more developed and favored by Scandinavian and European INGOs than those from the USA or elsewhere. Agencies such as USAID and the World Bank may be advised to more fully explore the great potential benefits of such arrangements – including in the bargain a major reduction in their own very large administrative and oversight costs.

Alternatively, international donors impose and then shift their own funding priorities and more actively manage, or micromanage, the operation of the national NGO or CSO. This is generally a much less efficient and ineffective way to facilitate statebuilding in relation to peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere.

On the one hand is a tendency for outside international priorities and implementation procedures to be orthogonal or even counter-effective in the context of national political and economic realities. On the other is the major and sometimes crushing tax upon time, effort, and professional stability among national NGO staff that results from unpredictable changes of priority, project, and procedure imposed by international funders.

Further, the projects supported by international NGOs may be at significant variance with local needs – for instance, funds for a mobile library in a rural area that has impassable roads, a high rate of illiteracy, and a nonfunctioning school. Though large international donors now almost universally stress the importance of grass-roots proposals and needs, these are in fact typically shunted into pre-categorized types and means of funding that risk, if not ensure, that the project money will not culminate in effective results for the community beyond the random distribution of wages paid and materials (re)distributed.

The problem of externally imposed changes of priority and procedure is exacerbated when the nationally based organization must reapply frequently for further project funds. These applications often include technically detailed grant reporting and financial requirements that are very time-consuming and distract or even prevent the NGO or CBO from conducting its own best work.

The tendency toward fragmented, temporary, and inconsistent international funding encourages lack of personal and professional continuity among national workers and unwittingly fuels a cadre of national NGO workers who float like an operational veneer from one internationally-funded project to another. The unrealistic nature of project goals combined with lack of organic commitment by national workers easily reinforces the perception by international donors that national NGOs and their workers lack professionalism and that they require greater oversight, monitoring, and direction rather than less.

As opposed to a negative feedback cycle, in which external donor dominance hampers potentially good national NGOs, reduces their ability to do what they do best, and reinforces inefficiency and closer monitoring, a positive feedback cycle needs to be established whereby the efficacy and self-responsibility of progressive national NGOs is reinforced over time. The latter pattern is strongly evident among base-case national NGOs and CSOs, including those represented at our workshop.

*The Rocks of History:
Ghosts and grails in the present from the past*

Developing countries recovering from conflict invariably face the legacy of a troubled past. As peace returns and development begins, there remains the specter that conflict might again erupt into violence. In Liberia, smoldering land disputes sometimes flair into ethnic clashes that can polarize enmity between groups that are significantly larger than the original disputants. Many concur that the continuing presence of UN military forces in Liberia, even at reduced levels, has been important for civilian confidence and trust that small-scale violence can be contained and will not swell into larger conflagrations.

In neighboring Guinea, a recent history of political coups, on the one hand, and vehement public demonstrations, on the other, raise the specter of government violence against civilians even as the army is now being reduced in size and withdrawn from public operations public back into their barracks. In Myanmar/Burma, the repressive rule of a military junta

for five decades has recently given way to political and economic openness and a fledgling democracy. But the potential for new repression and violence continues, particularly as Myanmar approaches the elections of 2015, in which military leaders may stand in election against Burmese Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, whose candidacy is meanwhile being constitutionally contested.

In our workshop, we addressed the challenges – and opportunities – that past trends of violence have in shaping the work of progressive national NGOs and CSOs. On the one hand, the fear of violence reemerging can, if skillfully managed, exert a tempering and cautionary influence in disputes. In Liberia, for instance, it is often informally said that an active public protest is the quickest and easiest way of ensuring that high government officials will rush to the scene and give at least official acknowledgment that problems exist. On the other hand, as disputes become more vociferous, antagonists may be strongly counseled – by NGOs as well as community members – that escalating conflict could spin out of control, evoking specters of Liberia’s long civil wars.

In the work of progressive national NGOs and CSOs, a nuanced and strategic assessment of current trends amid past histories of violence is often key to their work. During one of our field excursion meetings, an angry schoolteacher whose community land had been taken by a development company asserted hotly that if their needs were not met, it would end, as he said emphatically, “in *war*.” However, the NGO practitioners realized that the man’s assertions were an overstatement based on his desire to obtain some immediate material compensation, perhaps even from our own visiting group itself. Rather than taking his assertions at their rhetorical face value, they effectively drew out the specifics of his story and then encouraged him to discuss practical measures he and his community could take with the government, on the one hand, and the company, on the other. In the process, he became reasonable and more conversational, and the tension that we had sensed between him and other members of the community who were present palpably eased.

In another case, by contrast, when our group met with disgruntled ex-combatants from the civil war, the specter of violence was dealt with quite differently. Here, the young men’s general or vague allusions to possible aggressive action were taken more seriously. The senior Liberian NGO member present turned the tables, however, by suggesting that the young men’s greater “cowardice” was to have backed down from their previous plan to organize their own civilian farmers’ cooperative. This organization

could provide a practical complement and antidote to the agribusiness company that had become their nemesis. As a respected senior man, the NGO worker's strategic remarks led to a practical discussion of the legal and organizational needs of the cooperative in question – rather than a polarizing expression of the men's deeper antagonism against the agribusiness company.

In addition to managing the specter of violence from the past, national NGOs and CSOs are creative in revisiting and rediscovering in fresh and important ways the positive potential resources of their country's cultural past. A striking instance of this during our Monrovia workshop was the meeting of our group with the National Council of Tribal Chiefs and Elders. Though chieftomship is a longstanding feature of Liberian cultural history, the role of chiefs changed substantially during the period of the Liberian civil war (during which many chiefs were deposed, displaced, or killed) and afterwards, with modern governance by democratically elected leaders and ministerial institutions.

More recently, however, progressive Liberian NGOs and CSOs – as well as the President of the country, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf – have helped to rejuvenate and invigorate the structure of chiefly authority. In many areas of the country, chiefs have greater organic and community legitimacy than that of elected officials, who may be seen as outsiders or as residents of the general region who have since become more associated with, and more attentive to, the politics and money of the capital than to the needs of area they ostensibly represent. Additionally significant, the chiefly authority structure of Liberia includes multiple layers and levels of chieftomship, up to paramount chiefs and ultimately the Head Chief of the national council of chiefs of the country as a whole.

As effectively realized and utilized by selected Liberian NGOs and CSOs, providing services, outreach, and education to and via the structure of Liberian chiefs is, across a range of levels, a key way to mediate and articulate the stated goals of governance with structures and support that has strong local legitimacy. On the one hand, chiefs can act as effective arbiters and implementers of government policy. On the other, their demands and safeguarding of community interests can – especially when supplied with up-to-date and effective legal and policy counseling by NGOs – provide a significant check and balance against unilateral or improper imposition of state policies and procedures.

More generally, the work of NGOs and CSOs in coordinating elected governance and ministerial institutions with chiefly authority has emerged

as an important way that Liberian state activities are both held more accountable and made more feasible and efficacious, including in outlying areas of the country.

As explored in our workshop, the comparative understanding of traditional structures of community authority, such as eldership and chieftdomship, are an important resource for developing peacebuilding in complementary relation to statebuilding. Indeed, our participants from Myanmar and Papua New Guinea became highly interested to explore the possibility of developing programs and structures of outreach to traditional leaders in their own countries. Reciprocally, their experience in these and other regards will be relevant to enlarge and enrich the perspective of West African participants at our next workshop meeting, in Mandalay, Myanmar.

*From Here to There:
Summary and next steps*

The insights and practices of our present initiative have great and even transformative potential for facilitating productive statebuilding in relation to peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa and other world areas. Against the baseline of our previous work across a significant range of developing countries in West Africa and elsewhere, the qualitative new perspectives gained through direct *in situ* developing country meetings and collective field experiences are remarkable.

As described above, these insights and understandings pertain to:

- the character and organization of best-practice organizations and personnel within developing countries themselves
- the structural conditions and funding support structure needed to encourage and facilitate best-case practices
- the social, structural, and political dynamics whereby best-case practitioners moderate, facilitate, and broker the interests and concerns of the state with those of local communities
- how a spectrum of approaches are used by best-case national NGOs and CSOs to defuse tensions, promote practical self-help, and facilitate legal means of recourse and redress
- how the challenge and threat of a violent history can be productively used and complemented by drawing on traditional cultural structures of leadership and mediation
- the importance of direct South-South experience, including comparative understanding across cases and continents, for

expanding the understanding, awareness, and professionalism of practitioners.

Support of best-case national NGOs and CSOs in an international context within their own countries reinforces their efforts and cultivates well-deserved confidence as well as organic connection and learning with like-minded professionals across the global South. As such, expanding and proliferating direct South-South connections between progressive and accomplished national NGOs and CSOs should be a top priority of the international funding community and especially donor agencies and institutions that wish to improve the productive relationship between statebuilding and peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere.

The participants in our workshop were deeply enthusiastic about the potentials for further connection and more extended and material collaboration. Though it is not unusual for developing country participants in international workshops or conferences to urge a continuation of expansion of organizers' efforts, the level of personal interest and professional commitment is remarkable in the present case.

Members stressed in public and personal discussion and in their confidential workshop evaluations the particular ways that the workshop had generated new insights for them that would inform their practice and understanding. Several mentioned specific program initiatives that they would now develop and pursue based on things they had learned and insights they had gained at the workshop. Further information and networking has already begun among them, and there is strong desire to hold further gatherings in a range of countries beyond Liberia.

Concluding request

Our present project budget supports plans for one modest follow-up workshop in Myanmar/Burma, and a small subsequent final gathering of a very few key individuals at a location intermediate between Africa and Asia – perhaps outside of Athens, Greece – in winter of next year. Our project is scheduled to end on February 28, 2015.

In addition to providing information concerning our project's Monrovia workshop and related activities, the success of these activities leads us to inquire whether future additional support might be reasonably pursued from The Carnegie Corporation, or from other sources, for further expansion and development of our activities beyond the schedule and budget of the current CPRP project. Our African as well as Asian

colleagues are highly interested to help us develop and orchestrate future project work in this and related regards.

We thank the readers of this report for their time and attention and for suggestions and advice concerning the potential continuation, expansion, and further development of the present initiative.

Respectfully submitted,

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