This report was prepared by John Lewis Moore, CI Program Manager, with input from Paul James-Allen, ICTJ Program Associate; Jessica Berns, CI Program Director; and Alfred Quayjandii, TJWG Program Coordinator. The authors wish to thank Danesius Marteh of ICTJ for serving as meeting rapporteur and for informing this report through his notes.
INTRODUCTION

Background
The Strengthening Coexistence and Transitional Justice in Liberia workshop was held at Thinker’s Village Retreat Center, Monrovia, Liberia, from November 4-6, 2009. It was convened by Coexistence International (CI), in partnership with the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), and the Transitional Justice Working Group in Liberia (TJWG).

Since early 2007, Coexistence International has engaged with representatives of West African civil society, governments, and regional and international bodies to critically examine the interplay between transitional justice, governance, and coexistence in the region. CI’s work is driven by a focus on strengthening coexistence practice and contributing to the creation of shared societies. This most recent workshop was motivated by discussions with ICTJ and TJWG and repeated requests by CI’s West African colleagues for training in coexistence skills and an opportunity to think about the relevance of using a coexistence lens and complementary approach in post-conflict Liberia.

Summary
In addition to participation by 20 individuals representing a range of fields from Liberian civil society, local government, and government bodies, the event was attended by members of the Coexistence Leadership Group of West Africa¹ (CLGWA) and a representative of the Club of Madrid’s (CoM) Shared Societies Project (SSP)².

The workshop included presentations, plenary sessions, and small group exercises that examined the obstacles to coexistence in Liberia during its current period of transitional justice and addressed what members of civil society and government could do to strengthen coexistence there. In the course of this work, participants took part in coexistence exercises designed to strengthen their collaborative capacities for working towards a socially inclusive society and for modeling coexistence in their approaches to their work; participants also identified transitional justice issues and examined how they link to social inclusion and coexistence; identified obstacles to coexistence in Liberia; developed strategies and opportunities for advocacy to address those obstacles; and discussed how a network, new or existing, could best support civil society efforts to incorporate a coexistence lens into their work and promote a coexistence agenda. The CLGWA members presented on their experiences as practitioners in a range of fields and on their use of a coexistence lens elsewhere in the region, especially in post-conflict settings. The CoM representative talked about how CoM’s work with heads of state relates to, and can support, coexistence work at the civil society level.

The workshop was facilitated by Liberian peacebuilding expert William “Bill” Saa, and discussions were led by CI, ICTJ, and TJWG staff.

¹ More information on the CLGWA can be found at: http://www.brandeis.edu/coexistence/about/CLGWA.html.
² More information on the Club of Madrid and the Shared Societies Project may be found at: http://www.clubmadrid.org/.
Workshop Aims

1. To raise awareness of a coexistence framework, key concepts, and related skills among representatives of 10-12 Liberian civil society organizations and the Liberian government;
2. To develop advocacy goals for coexistence-sensitive public policies in Liberia;
3. To develop linkages between coexistence and transitional justice, especially in the Liberian context;
4. To strengthen coexistence, transitional justice, and peacebuilding networks and examine how different networks may complement the activities of each other; and
5. To examine the usefulness of coexistence networks for strengthening social inclusion in Liberia and West Africa.

Expected Outputs

1. Strengthened coexistence skills, deeper understanding of the concept of applying a coexistence lens within the context of participants’ work in Liberia, and a framework for mainstreaming coexistence skills into this work on the part of both Liberian civil society and government officials;
2. A documented advocacy plan for an initial 3 month period to promote sensitivity to social cohesion in policy development by the Liberian government;
3. A vision statement for an effective network in Liberia that focuses on social inclusion;
4. An understanding of the links between coexistence and transitional justice in Liberia;
5. A conceptual framework of the role of national, regional, and leadership coexistence networks and their relationship to one another.
ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS

Coexistence International (CI)
CI is an initiative housed at Brandeis University’s International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life in Waltham, Massachusetts, USA. CI envisions a world in which people of different religions, ethnicities, and cultures relate with respect and recognize their interdependence, where diversity is embraced for its positive potential, and where equality is valued and actively pursued.

CI’s mission is to strengthen the field of policymakers, practitioners, researchers, advocates, organizations, and networks promoting coexistence at local, national, and international levels. CI encourages and promotes a complementary, inter-disciplinary vision of the coexistence field.

Transitional Justice Working Group (TJWG)
TJWG is a coalition of NGOs that seeks to stimulate and influence a broad discussion on transitional justice in Liberian society. It has worked especially closely on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Liberia, having been involved from the first discussions. It organizes workshops, public consultation, and education programs, and other activities designed to promote understanding of transitional justice, and seeks to influence policymaking in this area.

International Center for Transitional Justice – Liberia Program (ICTJ)
The ICTJ assists countries pursuing accountability for past mass atrocities or human rights abuses. The Center works in societies emerging from repressive rule or armed conflict, as well as in established democracies where historical injustices or systemic abuse remain unresolved. The ICTJ has operated in Liberia since 2004, and opened an office in Monrovia in February 2006.
**WORKSHOP OVERVIEW**

**Day One**
The workshop began with opening remarks by each of the convening organizations, followed by active listening exercises facilitated by Bill Saa. The exercises were designed to acquaint participants with one another and to strengthen their listening skills. Active listening respects the person being listened to, builds trust, ensures that the listener has properly understood the speaker, and encourages the parties to be open and relate to one another. Active listening is a particularly useful skill for practitioners in post-conflict environments such as Liberia, because it can help strengthen relationships, promote openness, and prevent misunderstandings.

The following session featured CI Program Director Jessica Berns, and focused on the meaning of coexistence and social inclusion, providing an international context for the concept. The session concluded with a discussion among workshop participants and conveners of what these concepts mean within the specific context of Liberia and what constitutes coexistence work.

During this session participants described *coexistence* in the following ways:

1) Transitional justice.
2) Human rights.
3) A group of people coming together to build peace in the environment.
4) All about peace building and justice systems.
5) Learning to tolerate each other. It is living with other values separate from yours that you can find useful.
6) The meeting point of various organizations and individuals.
7) Finding ways to live together and share experiences and values.
8) To communicate for one goal. It is sharing common goals.
9) To network.
10) To work together.
11) To live together happily and make things work.

The third session of the day was inspired by John Paul Lederach’s essay *The Meeting Place*. In this essay, Lederach describes the inspiration he found while working as a peacebuilder in Nicaragua. As a result of his experiences there, he came to envision the complex relationship between truth, peace, justice, mercy, and reconciliation. In this essay Lederach symbolically represents these concepts as characters engaged in a dialogue about the concerns each of them have about each other and in the midst of conflict. For this session of the workshop, participants critically examined the concepts of truth, peace, forgiveness, and justice. These values are vital for Liberia and other post-conflict countries because, according to Lederach and others in the peacebuilding field, it is the interdependent relationship and the dynamic between the four values that will either allow a country to reconcile and move forward peacefully. Yet in Liberia and

---

4 We substituted Lederach's term 'mercy' with the term 'forgiveness' for the purposes of this exercise.
Coexistence  Transitional Justice Working Group of Liberia
International Center for Transitional Justice, Liberia

other post-conflict settings, people draw varying conclusions and have different inclinations regarding how best to move society forward following war.

For this exercise, participants analyzed the respective opportunities and challenges of each of these concepts within the Liberian context—what each adds to a transitional justice process, how each relates to one another, and how they work dynamically to build towards reconciliation. For example, one group observed that emphasizing truth in a transitional justice process

... builds confidence. It encourages trust. It sets the basis for reconciliation and heals the society. It creates a knowledge bank of what transpired. It generates accountability. It enhances a well rewritten history.

While the same group identified the challenges of obtaining truth to be:

A reluctance to say the truth and own-up to one’s actions; it complicates the effort to create harmony amongst the varied perspectives; [it induces fears of ] pre-judgment and . . . of opening old wounds.

Appendix A documents in more detail the findings of each group.

**Day Two**

In the first session of the second day, the group identified 16 obstacles to social inclusion and coexistence in Liberia. The specific obstacles ranged from community-level elders’ exclusion of women from decision-making processes to exclusionary elements of the Liberian constitution. The 16 concerns were then organized by staff from the convening organizations into five broad categories: class and ethnic divisions; religious divides; breakdown of cultural values and norms; land disputes; and concerns of governance and state identity. The complete list of obstacles to coexistence can be found in Appendix B.

CI and ICTJ prioritize the sharing of international experiences in their work. While it is important to appreciate the uniqueness of each environment, shared learning between places is nevertheless relevant and helpful. Thus, an important element of the training was providing resources and perspectives from contexts outside of Liberia. In a panel discussion and subsequent question and answer session, the CLGWA members contributed an international perspective and shared their expertise and experience in working to strengthen coexistence during periods of transition from social conflict to peace in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Lessons and experiences shared included:

- Finding ways to include the voices and ideas of the marginalized is critical. For example, in Ghana, governance work undertaken in collaboration with an organization that advocated for the disabled was very effective. The collaboration empowered both the organization representing those with disabilities and the one doing governance work by broadening the pressure on elected officials for good governance, and resulted in the passing of legislation that addressed the needs of the disabled in Ghana, a traditionally marginalized group. Burkina Faso provided another example of the positive impact of including traditionally marginalized groups in setting public policy. Since 1987, following the assassination of its president, Burkina Faso had found itself locked in a
cycle of violence (particularly political assassinations) and social unrest. In response, in 1999 the Burkinabe government organized a "Wisemen Council"—made of up traditional, social, and religious leaders—to discuss the causes of the social unrest and advise the government on how to address them. Historically, the government had sidelined these non-governmental leaders when devising government policy. But this time the government implemented many of the council’s recommendations. Seeking and following the advice of community leaders rather than excluding them from government decision-making is credited with contributing to Burkina Faso's widely-recognized sustained period of relative peace. Sierra Leone is an important contrast: inclusion of traditional leaders there has been problematic because these leaders themselves often exclude the voices of women and youth. This reinforces the need for social inclusion practices to be truly inclusive of all of society.

- Tribalism and ethno-religious tensions are a common concern through much of West Africa.

- Governments should be mindful of how policies, laws, and constitutions may positively or negatively impact coexistence within a country. For example, governments can help strengthen coexistence by being mindful of the impact on social cohesion of recognizing (or not recognizing) certain national holidays, and of taking care when choosing national symbols such as the motto or coat of arms.

- Even when governments announce policies and programs or enact laws that are intended to be socially inclusive, implementation of those laws and policies often remains elusive. Advocating for implementation of laws and funding of programs that promote social inclusion is an important role of civil society.

- Governments should not fund civil society organizations (CSOs), nor should CSOs accept government money. Regardless of promises of neutrality, such scenarios often lead to government attempts to influence the work of the organization. In such cases, a government may suddenly remove funding, particularly when programming is perceived to threaten its own interests. One of the participants reported that in Sierra Leone, "civil society follows the money," meaning organizations are naturally drawn to implement programs the government or other funders develop and fund rather than pursuing their own programs that may have greater impact.

- Perseverance, persistence, and commitment are critical to social change, and whatever one is working towards can be achieved, no matter how daunting the task may seem. This was evidenced in Sierra Leone, where civil society remained strong in the face of opposition from the government to implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Despite government resistance, local organizations remained committed to holding the government accountable and advocated for an effective TRC process and a government that would be responsive to its recommendations. The government eventually yielded to many of civil society's recommendations for how the transitional justice process should be structured. This responsiveness to civil society is credited with leading to a process that was more widely accepted by the population.

- While being committed and keeping up pressure despite challenges is effective, it is also important to remain strategic in one’s thinking. In Sierra Leone, the government has not implemented many of the recommendations of the TRC. However, rather than pressuring for implementation of all the recommendations, civil society chose to focus on ones that were more immediately achievable and did not press the government to implement recommendations that were, for example, beyond the financial means of the country.
Following the CLGWA panel discussion, participants worked in small groups, facilitated by CLGWA members, to generate strategies and activities that would help reduce marginalization and exclusion in Liberia. For this session, the small groups drew on the knowledge and experiences of the Liberian participants and the international experiences of the CLGWA members articulated in the earlier sessions.

Ideas generated by the groups during this session included: promoting national policies that engender social cohesion through constitutional amendments; enacting statutes and ordinances; involving religious, political, and traditional leaders in peace building processes or activities; and creating a space for dialogue between the younger and older generations while encouraging mentorship between the two groups. The complete list of strategies and activities that participants articulated are found in Appendix B.

Adding to the international perspectives shared at the workshop, the representative of the Shared Societies Project, Nacho Espinosa, presented on the social cohesion work of the CoM at the head-of-state level and the "Ten Commitments and Approaches for Building Shared Societies". The commitments are key policy areas which CoM members (all of whom are democratically-elected former heads-of-state) identified as being essential features of a shared society. World leaders are asked by the CoM to make a commitment to each of them. The commitments also can be used as a check list to review those areas in which a state has made progress and those areas in which more work needs to be done.

Participants were eager to learn more about the Ten Commitments. They were especially interested in learning how the CoM can engage directly with the senior members of Liberian government as a means to support the coexistence work of civil society. Participants also contributed ideas about how the Ten Commitments are relevant to Liberia.

The Ten Commitments may be found in Appendix C.

Day Three
The first session of the day focused on identifying the five pillars of transitional justice and the main opportunities and challenges to transitional justice in Liberia. The five main pillars are: truth-telling, institutional reform, criminal accountability, reparations, and memorialization. Participants were then divided into five groups to discuss these issues.

1. Truth-Telling
   The TRC process in Liberia is meant to be a truth-telling mechanism. The challenges to this process have included fear of possible revenge; fear of being held liable/accountable and facing prosecution; lack of remorse; glorification of harms committed; uncertainty of the benefits; and concern that acknowledged harms won’t be forgiven. The process, however, has the potential to lead to justice, peace, and reconciliation.

2. Institutional Reform
   National institutions in Liberia such as the army and police are now transforming into entities of integrity rather than institutions of repression and other harms. They must now perform in line with acceptable standards of professionalism.

3. Criminal Accountability
The provision of the TRC recommending prosecutions for past crimes is also an important transitional justice issue in Liberia. It has the potential to serve as a deterrent to future human rights abuses, and strengthens the legal and security systems of the country. However, such transitional issues face some challenges, such as the lack of political will among politicians and the fear among citizens that attempting to prosecute former war lords will cause the country revert to conflict. There are also limited resources and a capacity gap in the justice sector to ensure the successful implementation of this endeavor.

4. Reparations

Addressing the needs of victims of conflict in Liberia poses one of the most important challenges for transitional justice in the country. Reparations have been extensively recommended in the TRC report, but the state has inadequate resources to address many of these issues.

5. Memorialization

Memorialization is the symbolic representation of grievance through the creation of permanent reminders of what has occurred as a way to prevent reoccurrence. So far, very little attention has been paid to this important issue.

The second session of the third day was a plenary in which participants reflected on the previous discussions and then brainstormed opportunities for advocating for coexistence-sensitive public policies in Liberia. Ideas included advocating for the immediate enactment of the “Code of Conduct Bill” currently before the national legislature and working with land commissioners to conduct research on baseline studies of the existing land issues in Nimba, Margibi, Maryland, and Montserrado counties.

A complete list of opportunities for advocacy can be found in Appendix B.

The final plenary session focused on networks. The group considered how a network, new or existing, could best support civil society efforts to mainstream coexistence and promote a coexistence agenda. The group also discussed how different networks (including the CLGWA) may support one another. The strong consensus reached by participants was that it would be best to use existing networks to further coexistence by using a coexistence lens as a valuable add-on to the work they are already doing.

During the closing plenary the Liberian participants committed to meet again in February 2010. At that meeting they proposed to discuss the ways in which they have (or have not) applied a coexistence approach to their work, discuss challenges they are encountering, and strategize best practices for strengthening coexistence in Liberia moving forward.
CONCLUSION

Early in the workshop it became clear that much of the work each person was already doing could in fact be considered coexistence work. This observation was useful in clarifying for participants and conveners what it means to be doing coexistence work in Liberia and to take a "whole of society" approach to building towards social inclusion. Work being done by workshop participants includes advocating to include youth in politics and creating spaces in rural communities for women to come together and discuss their concerns.

Throughout the three days a picture emerged of the obstacles to coexistence in Liberia, what civil society and the Liberian government are doing to address them, and new ideas for what may be done in the future.

Many social divides still pervade Liberia, and mistrust and socially exclusive practices across groups remain a concern. These include such historic divisions as the ethnic and class divides between the Americo-Liberians and indigenous Liberians; the exclusion of Mandingoes by almost every other group in the country; exclusion of Muslims by the predominantly Christian population; and more contemporary social divisions including a clash between traditional Liberian culture and the Westernized culture adopted by many of the Liberians returning from the diaspora and a new antagonism between the youthful generations and adults.

For Liberia to achieve sustainable peace it is important that its society becomes more inclusive, and that its government structures and practices are designed to further coexistence. Transitional justice processes—which typically include reparations and memorialization, the restructuring of systems that may have led to conflict (for example the security sector or certain government practices), and an increased focus on gender justice—present an opportunity and a framework for the government and people of Liberia to address persistent issues of exclusion and to rebuild or reframe the causes of division. Transitional justice may be a particularly apt lens to apply to Liberia, since many participants made clear the importance most Liberians place on finding justice. Yet, justice alone will not reconcile the many gaps that divide society. The fields of transitional justice and coexistence both advocate for a holistic approach, which includes openness to truth, peace, and forgiveness. Though this was recognized by workshop participants, it will remain a challenge for many of them and for the people of Liberia to be open to including other possibilities beyond the search for justice in this critical period of national reconciliation.

At the conclusion of the workshop some participants reported gaining a stronger sense of what coexistence means within the Liberian context, a new understanding of how a coexistence lens can be a useful add-on to their work, and practical advocacy strategies. Participants also reported having a new appreciation for coexistence in Liberia and came to see it as an important component to strengthening the prospects for reconciliation and sustained peace.

Though the workshop succeeded in raising awareness of a coexistence framework and key concepts, developing advocacy goals for coexistence-sensitive public policies, and coming to a consensus on the usefulness of coexistence networks to strengthening social inclusion in Liberia,
challenges to successfully consolidating these gains remain. These include maintaining the momentum and interest held by participants at the close of the workshop in incorporating a coexistence lens into more of their work and pursuing some of the advocacy and programmatic strategies that were identified.

Along these lines, in February 2010, several participants did meet as planned and used the meeting as an opportunity to reconnect and learn from each other about how they have applied a coexistence lens to their work. In this meeting they identified what has worked, what has not worked, and what they may do as individuals, organizations, or in collaborations to continue working towards greater social inclusion in Liberia.

Further, as a nation that only recently emerged from 14 years of civil war, the resources to undertake this work remain limited. Some of the resources that are available remain out of the reach of much of the general population. For instance, much of the work of the international community and Liberian civil society occurs in the capital of Monrovia, leaving much of the population in the outer counties unattended to (though several of the participants made clear that developing their connections to the more remote counties was of great importance). These capacity challenges, combined with Liberia’s 80% illiteracy rate and the widespread use of indigenous Liberian languages, mean that many resources (including CI’s publications)—even if disseminated to the broader community—will remain unread.

Despite real obstacles to coexistence and to addressing social exclusion in Liberia, many organizations are already working hard for greater social inclusion there. By sharing ways to consider the potential for coexistence in Liberia, examining how it fits within Liberia’s transitional justice process, and thinking as a group about ways that coexistence work can be done, this workshop is considered by its conveners to have been successful in three important ways: developing the coexistence skills of the key staff of several relevant organizations, taking a positive step towards planting the seeds for continued advocacy around social inclusion issues, and building broad support for coexistence in Liberia.
Appendix A
Truth, Peace, Justice, and Forgiveness
Small group presentations

In preparation for the workshop, participants read "The Meeting Place" by John Paul Lederach, which discusses the relationship between truth, peace, justice, and mercy and their interplay in post-conflict societies working towards reconciliation. For the third session of the first day, participants reached into a hat and randomly selected a piece of paper with one of the terms peace, justice, truth, or forgiveness written on it. Each group was then asked to:

1. Define what your group’s term means for group members;
2. Consider the value of pursuing this term and what it may mean for Liberia;
3. Identify the challenges in pursuing your group’s term;
4. Consider what may be the long term impact if achieved;
5. How does your group’s term relate to the other terms?

Group I
Justice

1. Justice is a legal framework where an individual or society seeks/gets accountability and restitution for wrongs.
2. The promotion of peace and deterrence of violence in Liberian society.
3. The logistical, political, and capacity constraints in putting in place an efficient, effective, and impartial justice system.
4. A peaceful and prosperous society where there is development and the rule of law prevails.
5. The group drew a graphic illustration showing that truth leads to justice, which leads to peace [with forgiveness at dependent on the successful establishment of the latter three.

Group II
Peace

1. This group considers peace from two perspectives: individual peace and collective peace. Individual peace is when a particular person feels happy and satisfied, when that person’s personal desires that bring happiness are met. But collective peace is when an entire nation lives in harmony based on those basic things necessary for a peaceful society. Examples include good governance, justice, inclusion, economic wellbeing, and equal protection.

2. Peace will be very valuable for the wellbeing of Liberia because it will bring about sustainable development and employment opportunities. Peace can become self-sustaining, and in an atmosphere of peace, Liberia can transform itself.

3. Some of the challenges to achieving peace are a weak justice system, lack of patience to pursue peace, lack of respect for people of groups different from one’s own, clashing cultural and religious values, and bad governance, which includes corruption, a lack of
tolerance, nepotism, and the exclusion of certain groups from power and decision making.

4. For the long-term impacts of peace, the group referred back to the values peace brings noted in the answer to question #2 above.

5. There can be no justice, no forgiveness, no truth without peace. So peace is the key to what we hope to bring about or maintain through these three other concepts.

Group III A

Truth

1. Knowing the facts of the when, where, why, what, and how things occurred and knowing who is responsible for what happened. Truth also means an accurate account of or a common understanding of what happened.

2. Truth establishes the basis for common understanding and reason. It presents the opportunity to connect our history and helps to move us forward.

3. The challenges that arise when pursuing truth include an unwillingness to take action when truth is uncovered. Truth breeds and creates conditions for insecurity and fear; and society may not be willing and ready to accept and live with the truth. The lack of definite action after uncovering the truth leads to potential crisis or conflict. In the post-conflict environment the truth can impact an individual’s status in society.

4. Truth guarantees sustainable peace and security. It ensures peaceful coexistence and healing and sets a precedent for future generations.

5. Truth provides a basis for transparent justice. Truth, when well-managed, is a bedrock for peace. Truth serves as a real/solid foundation for forgiveness.

---

5 There were two groups that did a presentation on truth.
Group III B
Truth

1. Truth is an individual and collective acknowledgement/acceptance of events of the past that will have a liberating/healing effect on the individual and society. This will include: clarification of real facts and forensic details; objective truth; social truth.

2. Truth builds confidence. It encourages trust. It sets the basis for reconciliation. It heals the society. It creates a knowledge bank of what transpired. It generates accountability. It enhances a well rewritten history.

3. Some of the challenges to obtaining truth may include a reluctance on the perpetrators’ part to say the truth and own up to their actions; the fear that truth may undermine the effort to create harmony amongst the varied perspectives; the fear of pre-judgment and of opening old wounds.

4. Trust, coexistence, societal growth, culture of non-repetition, and reconciliation are the long-term impacts if achieved.

5. Truth equals justice, forgiveness/reconciliation, and peace.

Group IV
Forgiveness

1. Forgiveness means letting go of what one has against somebody else.

2. Forgiveness will promote, protect, and enhance reconciliation and even broaden the scope of coexistence. However, with forgiveness there is the risk of returning to war if people believe they can commit grave acts and simply be forgiven.

3. Some of the challenges include the fact that not everybody will forgive, a lack of truth telling, and that the arrogance of perpetrators makes it hard to forgive them.

4. Some of the long-term impacts of forgiveness are that it can enhance coexistence, reconciliation, and stability. On the other hand, it runs the risk of sparking conflict again, thus undermining the hard-earned peace and stability.

5. To achieve total reconciliation you will need all of the components including justice, peace, and truth-telling.
Appendix B

Coexistence and Transitional Justice in Liberia: Identified Obstacles and Opportunities for Action

Obstacles to Coexistence and Social Inclusion in Liberia

I) Divisions in society that lead to the lack of acceptance of some groups by others

These divisions can be:

i) Tribal
   For example, Mandingoes aren’t accepted in certain areas of broader Liberian society;

ii) Religious
   For example, Muslims and Christians do not often integrate and many distrust each other;

iii) Gender-based
   For example, women are often excluded from decision-making processes.

II) Questions of Liberian identity

Some question whether Congos and Americos are “real” Liberians, and though Mandingoes have been present in Liberia for centuries, many believe they are recent migrants to Liberia and thus also not “real” Liberians.

III) Breakdown of family values

Some parents feel disrespected by their children. In some cases, youth have become the bread winners of their family, causing them to disavow the values their parents try to teach them. This lack of basic family values and respect is carried by youth into broader society. Parents are perceived by some youth to have played a role in family breakdown by compelling children to take care of themselves and to learn or copy from the experience of people outside the family.

IV) Lack of trust between youth and older generations

Liberian youth hold their elders accountable for the activities of the civil war and the unmet challenges to repairing the damage it caused.

V) Land disputes

Examples include the violent land disputes between the people of Rock Town and Wetochen in Maryland; the Charles Bennie and Roland Kaine land saga in Margibi county, and several land disputes in Montserrado county.

There are many disputes over proper land ownership, yet the systems in place to resolve these disputes are inadequate. It is also perceived to be unfair that some organizations and individuals own large tracts of land while many people own none.

VI) The class system

People in power try to promote a class system based on social status or political position. This system marginalizes those of lower socio-economic status to the benefit of elites. For example, former President William Tubman’s open door policy, centered on “humanistic capitalism,” is perceived to have benefitted foreign nationals and the Liberian political and economic elite rather than broader Liberian society.
VII) *Divisive legal instruments*

Examples include exclusionary clauses of the constitution related to citizenship and the rights of the disabled to hold high office.

VIII) *Lack of human capacity and knowledge of the law among cross sections of the society.*

For example, many Liberians are not aware of their basic civil and political rights; government officials sometimes prey on this weakness of the citizenry.

IX) *Naming systems*

Native names versus Congo/Americo names contribute to marginalization. Names serve as identity markers that maintain social divides.

X) *Breakdown of traditional and cultural values*

There is a tension between modern and Western values and the traditional Liberian values, which both exist within contemporary Liberian society.

XI) *Exclusion of individuals from decision making at community and traditional levels*

This commonly occurs on the basis of age, gender, tribe, etc.

XII) *Justice system capacities are limited*

People do not trust the judicial and law enforcement systems, which are viewed as biased, corrupt, and lacking capacity to lead. In this atmosphere, justice is rarely achieved. In addition, law enforcement agencies do not respect nor enforce human rights.

XIII) *Distrust of state entities and their ability to model and support family values*

For example, some politicians/people of affluence pursue extra-marital affairs and other immoral activities.

XIV) *Pervasive corruption among government officials*

XV) *Limited use of vernacular Liberian English by institutions*

When government, international bodies, civil society, etc. do not communicate in the vernacular, this can leave a large segment of society overlooked. As a result, these institutions' messages fail to reach many people.

XVI) *Religious discrimination*

Despite being officially secular, Liberian society and government widely support Christian traditions and values both implicitly and explicitly, while the traditions and values of non-Christians (mainly Muslims) are ignored. For example, the government officially recognizes Christian holidays, but does not recognize any other religious holidays.

After participants identified these 16 obstacles to coexistence in Liberia, the workshop facilitators organized the obstacles into five broader categories: Class & Ethnic Divisions; Religious Divides; Breakdown of Cultural Values & Norms; Land Disputes; and Identity, Governance, and the State. Participants then worked in small groups according to the five categories and identified activities and/or advocacy goals that would address the obstacles to social inclusion and thereby strengthen coexistence in Liberia.
Outline of Transitional Justice in Liberia

I) Transitional justice was incorporated as part of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which called for:

   i) The establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to address issues of accountability, healing, and reconciliation
   ii) Security sector reform

II) The recommendations in the TRC Report

   i) Criminal prosecutions—both domestic and international
   ii) Public sanction and lustrations
   iii) Reparation and the addressing of victims’ needs
   iv) Memorialization and memorials
   v) Community reconciliation (Palava Hut process)
   vi) Land reform
   vii) Identity, changing minds and attitudes in Liberia
   viii) Administration of justice

Links Between Transitional Justice and Coexistence in Liberia

A number of factors and issues were identified as links between coexistence and transitional justice. These include but are not limited to:

I) Limitations and lack of trust in the justice system

   In the absence a capable justice system, criminal accountability for past human rights violations will be difficult to achieve. This will put an onus on the population to find alternative paths to peace and, when possible, reconciliation. Working towards a more socially inclusive society, while not discounting the injustices that have occurred, can be one such path.

II) Striving for reconciliation in a climate of mistrust

   A coexistence lens can help promote communication across interpersonal and intercommunal divides, and across divides between citizens and state institutions.

III) Identity issues, social exclusion, and land disputes

   Some of the recommendations of the TRC report center on resolving identity issues and reforming the land tenure system. A coexistence lens is responsive to individuals’ and groups’ need for identity and inclusion, and seeks to balance recognition of diversity with the need for social cohesion.
## Broad Coexistence Obstacles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class &amp; Ethnic Divisions</th>
<th>Activities and Opportunities for Advocacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I) Community outreach and sensitization to coexistence principles through town hall meetings, dialogues, and radio talk shows. This should include engaging youth, women, traditional leaders, and ex-combatants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II) Promote policies that engender social cohesion through constitutional review and enactment of laws.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III) Increase information sharing between the national legislature and citizens.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV) Establish a system for the judicial apportioning of lands.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V) Devise a national curriculum in schools that promotes a Liberian national identity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Religious Divides

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Divides</th>
<th>Activities and Opportunities for Advocacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I) Involve religious, political, and traditional leaders in peacebuilding activities and processes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II) Hold national and cross-community dialogues to increase understanding and discuss issues of concern.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III) Raise awareness of each religion’s values and way of life through various media, workshops, community forums, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV) Build networks to carry out these activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Breakdown of Cultural Values & Norms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breakdown of Cultural Values &amp; Norms</th>
<th>Activities and Opportunities for Advocacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I) Create forums where Liberian values are highlighted and promoted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II) Integrate these values into the school system (for example: education on citizenship).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III) Create employment opportunities for parents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* During the workshop, the facilitators organized the 16 identified obstacles to coexistence into five broader categories. Participants then worked in small groups according to the five categories and identified activities and/or advocacy goals that would address the obstacles to social inclusion and thereby strengthen coexistence in Liberia.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coexistence</th>
<th>Transitional Justice Working Group of Liberia</th>
<th>International Center for Transitional Justice, Liberia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Land Disputes

I) Advocate for a review of existing laws and policies on acquiring and owning land.

II) Raise awareness of land issues through radio, traditional leaders, NGOs, schools, churches, and mosques.

III) Advocate for, and work with, the Land Reform Commission to conduct research on baseline studies of the existing land issues in Nimba, Margibi, Maryland, and Montserrado counties.

IV) Promote coexistence values within community-level work related to land issues.

### Identity, Governance, and the State

I) Organize a national dialogue on national symbols, including the coat of arms, flag, and motto.

II) Advocate for constitutional reform in areas that perpetuate social division. For example, section 52(c), which requires Liberian residency for the 10 years prior to seeking the office of the presidency. This excludes many Liberians who fled the 14 years of civil war and have since returned.

III) Raise capacity of government employees and provide incentives for training by linking them with salary increases.

IV) Increase training and equipment for legal personnel.

V) Advocate for a passage of an asset-declaration law for appointed and elected government functionaries to improve transparency in government.

VI) Advocate for the creation of a serious fraud office to independently investigate alleged incidents of serious corruption by government officials.
Appendix C

Club of Madrid Shared Societies Project's
10 Commitments for Shared Societies\(^6\)

The following Ten Commitments are key policy areas that are essential features of a shared society. Leaders are encouraged to commit to them. They can serve as a check list to review policy areas in which a state has made progress or where more work remains to be done.

**Institutional Arrangements**

1. Locating responsibility of social cohesion within government structures
2. Create opportunities for minorities to be consulted

**Safeguards**

3. Monitor structures and policies to ensure they are supportive of social cohesion
4. Ensure the legal framework protects the rights of the individual
5. Deal with economic disadvantages faced by those discriminated against

**Service Provisions**

6. Ensure that physical environments create opportunities for social interaction
7. An education system that demonstrates a commitment to a shared society

**Inter-community development**

8. Initiate a process to encourage the creation of a shared vision of society
9. Promote respect, understanding and appreciation of diversity
10. Take steps to reduce tensions and hostility between communities

\(^6\) From the Shared Societies Project's website: http://www.thesharedsocietiesproject.clubmadrid.org