



## overview

### STATE OF PEACE, RECONCILIATION AND CONFLICT IN LIBERIA

#### BACKGROUND

Following 14 dark years of civil war, Liberia made significant advances toward democratic governance. Despite this progress, however, positive peace has yet to take root throughout the country. National security remains fragile and under-resourced. Reconciliation did not reach deeply and widely enough to rebuild the torn relationships within and between ethno-regional groups. Neighbors from different ethnicities who once lived peacefully are feuding over grievances, property titles and residency rights.

To advance justice and positive peace, CRS Liberia, in collaboration with the JPC and CABICOL, conducted in-depth research on the current conflict dynamics. The “State of Peace, Reconciliation and Conflict in Liberia” report provides data, analysis and recommendations for developing and implementing actions that foster constructive community relations, inclusive development and sustainable peace. This research complements existing conflict assessments by focusing on pathways to overcome key challenges, to foster meaningful reconciliation and citizen engagement, and to move toward positive peace.

#### GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

- Liberians appreciate their Pax Liberia but fear that, given the current threats and trends, the peace is fragile and volatile.
- Liberians believe that curbing corruption in public services, resolving divisive land disputes, furthering employment of young people, and conducting free and fair general elections in 2017 are the necessary next steps for advancing positive peace.
- Liberians acknowledge that strengthening intercommunal relations and fostering meaningful reconciliation are crucial for the country to overcome the deep divisions from the enduring distrust, hurt and hatred sown by the civil war.

#### FRAGILE PEACE

Liberians perceive the current peace as primarily “negative,” as it still lacks the attributes of positive peace, such as social harmony, interethnic coexistence and trust in institutions. Respondents were evenly split on whether Liberia is at risk of descending into large-scale violent conflict (50.6% for “high to very high risk” and 43.7% for “no to low risk”). Optimistic respondents and interviewees pinned their hopes conflict fatigue, but also

Figure 1: Influence of religious leaders on their followers to promote peace

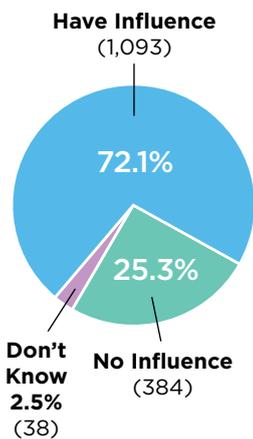
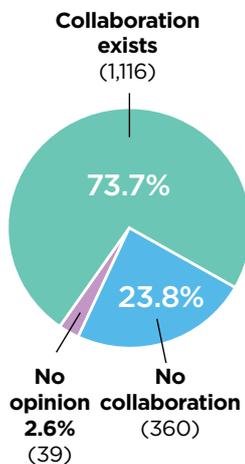


Figure 2: Possibilities for interfaith collaboration for peace



highlighted powerful risk factors for renewed violence: systemic public sector corruption, disputes over land ownership and high rates of youth unemployment.

### RECONCILIATION

The vast majority of Liberians believe that the main perpetrators of wartime violence escaped punishment and that the victims of violence were denied justice. More than 80% of respondents felt that people who suffered grave injury during the war did not receive justice through the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Half of respondents (49.7%) believed that postwar reconciliation failed to achieve its objectives. Key informants elaborated that the national peace and reconciliation processes had the weakest impacts at the grassroots level, where efforts were piecemeal and superficial.

### KEY ACTORS AND FLASHPOINTS

Political leaders (71.8%) and unemployed youth (58.2%) topped the list of potential actors that can instigate violence. Nimba, Grand Gedeh and Montserrado were cited as the main flashpoint counties, due to both historical and current factors. Inhabitants of Rivercess (79.3%), Nimba (74.9%), Grand Kru (74.4%), and Grand Cape Mount (74.2%) assessed the risk as highest, while respondents in River Gee were the most optimistic. Also, the politically driven attempt to officially declare Liberia a Christian state was seen as destabilizing.

### SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Encourage free and fair general elections in 2017** through a nation-wide election observation mission, parallel vote tabulation, civic and voter education campaigns, and other actions.
- **Foster meaningful and profound reconciliation across Liberia** through safe spaces for healing and reconciliation, suitable indigenous reconciliation mechanisms, women-focused support, and other actions.

### MEDIUM TO LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS: PEACE AND CONFLICT

- **Institutionalize a culture of peace through education programs in schools and the community** through peace and education activities focused on young people.

### MEDIUM TO LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS: DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

- **Promote transparency, stewardship and accountability in public resource management** through transparency initiatives, and community accountability forums.
- **Promote transparent land management and property dispute resolution** through comprehensive land title documentation processes, and enhanced community capacity for land use negotiations.
- **Create opportunities for Liberia's youth to heal and advance their livelihoods** through additional research on issues and challenges, and capacity building of young people and improved youth employability.
- **Promote community dispute resolution mechanisms** through Community-based Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (CADRMs), improved capacity of chiefs to dispense justice, and other actions.

### MEDIUM TO LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS: SOCIAL COHESION

- **Increase trust and cooperation between government and citizens** through greater policy transparency, community encounters with decision makers, and social cohesion workshops.
- **Promote intercultural communication and exchanges** through cultural connectors for peace, and cultural encounters and intercounty migration, especially among young people.
- **Support youth trauma healing and socialization** through opportunities for healing and social reintegration, and institutionalized peace education in schools.