

Post Conflict Needs Assessments (PCNAs): Case Study Liberia

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Preface

The following work has been developed in the context of a consultative study carried out by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) on behalf of UNDG/UNDP and The World Bank. In July 2003 these multilateral organizations contracted GTZ in order to develop a practical guide for future Needs Assessments in post-conflict settings, based on a review and analysis of past experiences as well as research on other assessment methodologies in the context of humanitarian aid and development cooperation. The German Ministry for Economic Cooperation, BMZ, additionally supported the in-depth analysis of the four case studies in Afghanistan, East Timor, Liberia and Sri Lanka by co-financing the work of GTZ, with a particular focus on the involvement of bilateral donors in PCNA.

While the preliminary results presented in the following Working Paper have been shared and discussed with UNDG/UNDP and the World Bank, responsibility for the content rests entirely with GTZ.

We would like to thank our interview partners from the whole PCNA mission staff.

1. Political Context and background to the Needs Assessment

Liberia enjoyed relative stability and modest progress until the 1980's when a combination of wrong policy choices, and later the outbreak of full scale civil war in 1989, ruined the economy and completely reversed the course of socio-economic development. The cessation of hostilities and subsequent elections in 1997 ushered in unprecedented enthusiasm and fresh hopes that the country was on its way to making sustained strides in the rehabilitation and recovery of its socio-economic infrastructure and the resumption of growth and development.

However the elections of 1997 did not bring the anticipated growth and prosperity. Barely two years following the elections, due to renewed insurgencies by the rebels, the incipient peace broke down. This conflict, which initially started in the northwest, later engulfed 12 of the 15 counties of Liberia and resulted in a complete halt of development activities and the reversal of political and economic prospects. At present, economic growth remains slow, averaging less then 50% of its pre-war GDP level; unemployment rate in the formal sector has risen up to 85% of the total labour force of about one million people. National debt recorded at approximately US\$ 3.0 billion remains above sustainable thresholds. Poverty levels continue to rise at 76.2% and 52% in absolute and extreme poverty terms, respectively.

Liberia remains amongst the most food insecure countries in the West African sub region, with 27% of the children under five years old undernourished. Life expectancy is recorded at 47.7 years, maternal mortality is estimated at 578/100,000; child mortality, 194/1000 live births; infant mortality, 117/1000; access to health services is about 40%; HIV/AIDS prevalence is 8.2% with an upward trend; adult literacy rate of 37% compared to 58% for sub-Saharan Africa. Liberia's human development index (HDI), was recorded as 0.276 (1999, HDR) and it did not appear in the rankings in the 2002 estimates.

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The country has also lost substantial institutional capacity in terms of manpower and the socio-economic infrastructure needed to support nation building. Public and private sector institutions have been unable to effectively utilize and retain available human capacity, while the systems required for efficiency, effectiveness and transparency are completely absent.

In essence, the unfavourable political climate, prevalent insecurity, and failure to create an enabling environment for growth and development, resulted in the renewed insurgencies which culminated into intense war between the government and the rebels in 2003. However, increased regional and international initiatives led by ECOWAS and supported by the UN, resulted in a brokered peace agreement and the impending ascension of a transitional national government in Liberia.

The PCNA took place in November through January 2003/2004 under severe security restrictions. Travel within the country was not possible and the disturbances around the start of the disarmament and demobilization process restricted movement within Monrovia itself for some days. This made it necessary to draw heavily on secondary data.

2. The Needs Assessment Process

Purpose and process

The objective of the Liberia PCNA was stated in the conceptual note as follows:

"The primary purpose of the needs assessments is to provide representatives at the Reconstruction Conference and other stakeholders with a multi-sectoral, technical overview of the main rehabilitation and reconstruction needs and priorities to be addressed for peacebuilding and recovery in Liberia. Its purpose is not to "projectise" the assessed needs, i.e. directly translate identified needs and priorities into concrete projects and programmes.

Within this context, the objectives of the needs assessment are to:

- a) Serve as the framework for a mutually agreed transition strategy for Liberia;
- b) Identify benchmarks, outcomes and desired results that must receive the most urgent attention as immediate efforts are made to repair Liberia's social, infrastructural, institutional and economic systems; and
- c) Inform and guide the decision-making process within the donor community with regard to commitments and pledges at the Liberia Reconstruction Conference".

Thus, the PCNA was primarily undertaken to prepare a background report for the donor conference due to be held in early February 2004. Fig. 1 gives an overview of the PCNA process in Liberia from the peace accord in August 2003 until the donor conference in New York on the 5th to 6th of February 2004.

The PCNA started with an initiative the of Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Liberia, Jacques Paul Klein, stating a list of needs for reconstruction from United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)'s perspective. This initiative was taken up by the UN Country Team (UNCT) and discussed at a first meeting of the Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) chaired by Deputy SRSG/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative Abou Moussa on the 24th of October 2003 in Monrovia, with the

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UNCT, the National Transitional Government and NGO representatives. Based on an initial definition of 13 priority sectors, the PCNA would be coordinated at the technical level by the different UN-organisations on the ground.

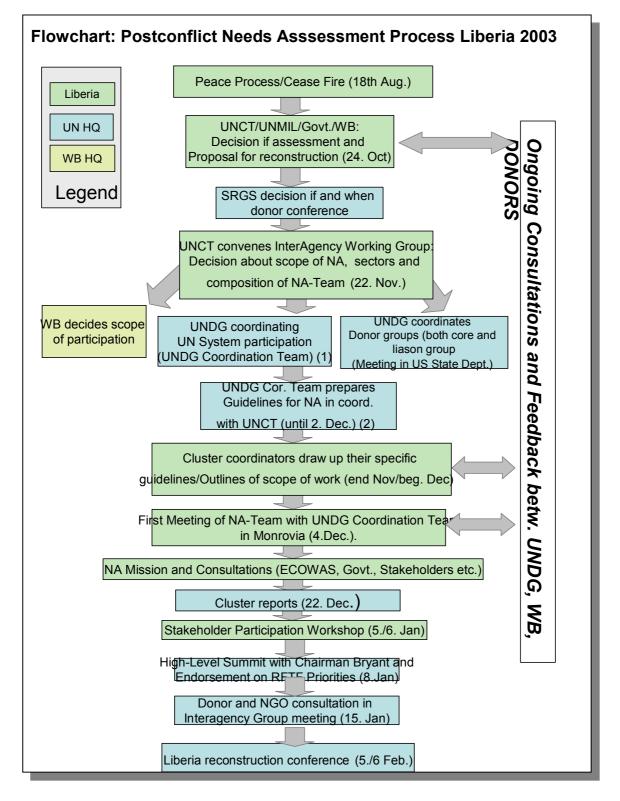
In a meeting of the UNDG Technical Working Group in New York the 28th of October, it was agreed that UNDP would provide coordination support to the UNCT. Following this decision, the UN HQ and the World Bank became more engaged in the process. An overall coordinator¹ was selected, sectors defined and the country team was asked to specify additional support needed. In addition, coordination between the UNCT, UNDG, World Bank and with the Core Group of donors was supported by the UN Development Group Office (DGO).

The initial structure of the PCNA was further refined at a workshop with UNMIL, the UNCT, World Bank, USAID, EU, DFID and some NGO Representatives on 20th to 21st of November, with the agreement that the PCNA would be organized and 9 clusters and elaborated into a "Results Focused Transitional Framework" with measures, benchmarks and costs for a 6, 12, 18 and 24 month period.

¹ The selection of David Nabarro reflected the fact that he served as task manager in the Iraq PCNA and could therefore bring this experience into the Liberia process.



Fig 1: PCNA Process Liberia



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Staff and consultants for some of the clusters started work by mid November (Agriculture, Education and Water & Sanitation, Governance) even before the conceptual guidance was elaborated by the UNDG Coordination Team (David Nabarro, Paul Hulshoff, Shani Harris) and the World Bank Team Coordinator (Richard Verspyck).

The external consultants for the cluster teams arrived at different dates mainly in the first week of December. The World Bank team also came in by the 7th of December and stayed one week in the country. Parallel to the PCNA there was an IMF Mission, analysing the public financial and budgetary situation of the country. Unfortunately the results of this mission were available only after the field phase of the PCNA finished.

Teleconferences, email communication and a web page were set up to facilitate communication between people in Liberia, UN HQ and the World Bank. However some substantial issues, e.g. important assumptions, contents of clusters and links to other clusters, reporting formats were clarified only after the arrival of the UNDG coordinators in Liberia (2nd and 7th of December).

The initial priority sector reports were completed by the 22nd of December. Until the 6th of January the sector analysis had to be put in the proposed Results Focused Framework by the coordination team and was discussed and endorsed by the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) and national stakeholders. The result of this consolidated Framework was then presented to a preparatory Liaison Group meeting for interested Donors and NGOs on the 15th of January in New York.

Scope and structure of the Needs Assessment

The major document clearly stating the scope and structure of the PCNA is the "Annotated Guidelines" (Draft 2.3 No. 25th). The World Bank produced some specific terms (*draft statement of mission objectives*) for their team and its tasks based on these guidelines.

According to both documents the PCNA was designed to fulfil the following objectives:

- a) Identification of priority needs and funding requirements for 2004 and 2005
- b) Development of a transitional strategy for 2004 and 2005 with key considerations for sustainable development
- c) Identification of concrete 2004-2005 outcomes and progress benchmarks

The PCNA had a sectoral structure and was initially divided in 13 priority sectors. After the meeting of the World Bank and IAWG in Liberia on the 21st of November, those 13 sectors where regrouped in 9 clusters that would be organized into a Results Focused Transitional Framework (RFTF) (see annex).

The 9 clusters were:

- 1) Security;
- 2) DDRR;
- 3) Refugees, Returnees and IDPs;
- 4) Governance, Democratic Development and Rule of Law
- 5) Elections;
- 6) Basic Services;
- 7) Restoration of Productive Capacity and Livelihoods;
- 8) Infrastructure;



9) Economic Policy and Development Strategy.

The crosscutting issues were: Gender; Environment; Human Rights/Child Protection; HIV/AIDS; Shelter; Forestry; and Media. Capacity building was included as an integral part of each cluster. The World Bank led the clusters on Economic Policy/Development Strategy and Infrastructure while UNMIL, different UN agencies staff (or consultants) led the remaining 7 clusters.

The RFTF is a new approach to orient the Needs Assessments into a logical framework with objectives and benchmarks which give clear guidance to government policies, priorities to donors and a baseline for monitoring of results.

Regarding the scope of the PCNA the question was raised by some experts if this still very comprehensive and development oriented analytical framework of 9 clusters is useful for a country in such a labile political and security environment. The suggestion was that there should be a focus on those sectors that are of particular importance for stabilisation and peace-building in Liberia, which would also mean a further reduction of clusters (see also lessons learnt.).

The selection of clusters (and sectors within each cluster) was oriented on the NTGL priorities and discussed in detail with the stakeholder in various workshops through the field phase and the consolidation workshops. However, what becomes obvious in the Liberia case is that conflict analysis was not an explicit part of the PCNA. The cluster selection was not based on a conflict analysis and it was not included in the analytical framework or assessment methodology, although the Annotated Guidelines were asking for the integration of this issue within each cluster

During the PCNA, managing the process of cross-sectoral integration and integration of the cross cutting issues became a major challenge. This is partly a product of integration of sector analysis teams in the wider clusters framework during the process of the PCNA and the late definition of cut-off points between clusters.

Another major structural challenge in Liberia was the question of how to link the PCNA to the CAP Process, which launched its appeal only weeks before the PCNA began. Apparently this posed important institutional questions as well as technical problems for the PCNA. The question was left open of how to include Humanitarian Needs, their costs and the funds already raised for them into the RFTF and the longer term transition strategy.

Methods and Instruments

Since there is no coherent overall PCNA methodology developed so far, guidance for the field phase was limited. Apart from the general "annotated guidelines", which were never finalized, there were no further instruments available to the PCNA team members as they began their work. In the absence of predefined procedures, instruments and formats and combined with the enormous time pressure for the PCNA, Guidelines, Terms of Reference and Checklists had to be produced by the coordinators and the team members specifically for this assessment causing considerable delays and to some extent insecurity regarding basic scenarios, numbers, data requirements and formats.

However some clusters did produce individual Terms of Reference during the PCNA. In most cases the methods used were semi-structured interviews, group discussion and workshops

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and the revision of secondary data. Criteria and topics of those interviews and secondary data analysis are based on the technical expertise of the cluster managers and team members.

Most focal points for crosscutting themes produced checklists for the clusters. They were extensive and sometimes exceeded the capacity of the cluster managers or were not totally relevant for their work. In addition, some focal points provided comments on the draft reports.

Costing formats came very late in the field phase and some cluster teams struggled to elaborate the relevant costing sheets. This was related to the lack of available data and some confusion of the types of costs to be included.

Management Arrangements

Initially the PCNA was steered within Liberia by the Interagency Working Group under the overall leadership of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General to Liberia, Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) and UNDP Resident Representative in close coordination with the NTGL. After the meeting of the UNDG Technical Working Group on Liberia the 28th of October, it was decided that UNDG would support the UNCT and set-up a HQ-based Coordination Team. This team consisted of three members. David Nabarro was appointed as overall UNDG Coordinator for the PCNA. He was assisted by two staff members, one from DGO and one from UNDP.

With the selection of a coordinator with experience as a task manager for the health sector in the Iraq PCNA, UNDG aimed to incorporate lessons learnt and expertise from the Iraq PCNA into the Liberia PCNA. The role of the coordinator could be interpreted to guarantee the overall technical steering of the PCNA.

For each of the 13 priority sectors, a Task Manager was appointed with the function to coordinate the technical assessment and the consultation process in Liberia. For the crosscutting issues Focal Points were appointed. Cluster Coordinators were advised to produce specific terms of reference or guidelines. However, it seems that those guidelines were not elaborated for all the clusters.

Although initially it was suggested that UNCT staff and Liberia-based consultants should undertake the needs assessment, later in November and beginning of December a substantial number of external consultants were brought in to support the processes the were overloaded with their normal duties and the PCNA tasks.

The coordination team (David Nabarro, Paul Hulshoff) travelled to Liberia the 2nd and 7th of December. Before their arrival, teleconferences, email exchange and a special web page were set-up to facilitate communication. The Technical Working Group and Task Managers met frequently during the whole PCNA in order to exchange information and discuss conceptual issues such as content and thematic overlap between priority sectors and important assumptions (e.g. basic figures and indicators, security assumptions etc.).

Before their arrival in Liberia, some questions were forwarded to the coordination team for guidance. Most of the raised issues were clarified later after their arrival.



Reporting structure

The process can be divided in two main products:

a) The PCNA report with costing sheet

b) The RFTF with outcomes and benchmarks for the 6, 12, 18 and 24 month period (incl. costing sheet)

The formats can be found in the annex. Due to the narrow timeframe, the detailed structure of both documents and the calculation sheet were elaborated and communicated during the later stage of the PCNA (8-9th of December).

Participation

Participation of the Government and the major stakeholders was achieved through the Interagency Working Group (IAWG) and Core Group. Although the NTGL did not lead the Priority Sectors or the PCNA process, various ministries participated extensively in the sector working groups and government officials were consulted frequently during the process. Compared to former PCNAs such as Iraq's, there is a significantly higher degree of participation and ownership in the Liberia case.

NGO representatives participated in the IAWG (namely Oxfam, Merlin and SCF UK), sector working groups and the Liaison Group. Both local and international NGOs were later invited to attend the Liaison Group meeting held on 15 January at the United Nations in New York. NGOs also participated in the technical discussions at the Reconstruction Conference.

However some NGOs stated that participation should be more substantial in the overall design of the PCNA process and not only limited to sector working groups. This should be based on clear representation arrangements within the NGO community, yet requires commitment from the NGO side as well. The practical arrangement for participation of NGOs also needs to tackle the issue of funding for participation. Donors (USAID, EU, DFID, GTZ) were also encouraged to participate in the IAWG and sector working groups.

Consultation with donors

The Core Group was formed at a preliminary meeting in Washington, DC on 17 November 2003. The US led the effort, calling together the following countries to make up the Core Group: EC/EU, Sweden, Ghana (ECOWAS), Japan, France, UK, with the UN, the WB and the IMF acting as observers. The membership was based on countries that had expressed interest and established with the goal of being kept small. The group operated primarily through weekly conference calls after two initial face-to-face meetings in DC (on 17-11-03 and 3-12-03), leading up to the Liaison Group meeting on the 15 January 2004 and the Reconstruction Conference on 5 and 6 February.

Additional consultations were held with donors (USAID, EU, DFID) who had capacity on the ground in Monrovia.

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3. PCNA Report

The report of the Liberia PCNA follows in some ways a new and innovative path. Besides the extremely narrow timeframe, the consolidation of the priority sector reports within a single summary and the elaboration of the RFTF presents a clear strategic orientation for the post-conflict recovery.

Furthermore the RFTF proved to be a very useful tool to foster discussion, exchange of opinions and clarification and hence generated the important consensus for the peace and the recovery process.

Participation and Ownership:

The RFTF and the synthesis report were discussed and revised after the termination of the field phase in various meetings and workshops with the NTGL, national stakeholders, donors and NGO partners. The process was as follows:

- i. Synthesising of a single RFTF by the UN and World Bank Coordination Teams (31st . Dec.- until 4th Jan.)
- ii. Workshops with some 200 national stakeholders to revise the RFTF (5th and 6th of Jan.)
- iii. Revisions and consolidation of the RFTF by NTGL, World Bank, UN Working Group
- iv. Presentation of the RFTF to a high level summit in Monrovia (with NTGL, ECOWAS, USA, EU, ICRC, World Bank and UN representatives) endorsing the RFTF (8th of Jan.)
- v. Presentation and discussion of the RFTF by the NTGL in a Liaison Group meeting in New York with UN Member States, Liberian and International NGOs, the World Bank, IMF and several UN agencies (15th of Jan)
- vi. Consolidation of the synthesis report and posting on web (26th of Jan.)

The participation of government representatives and the Chairman throughout the process resulted in high level of ownership of the PCNA.

Prioritisation

The RFTF clearly defines priorities within the different time frames of 6, 12, 18 and 24 months. These priorities were intensively discussed after the technical field phase but remained in accordance to the different sector/cluster reports. This is based on the transition period defined by the Accra peace accord. The establishment of a monitoring mechanism (Cluster/Sector 10 of the RFTF) will help to overview the implementation of the RFTF.



4. Lessons learnt and Good Practices

From the Liberia Case of the joint World Bank/UN Needs Assessment some preliminary findings or lessons learnt can be drawn, even though the process itself is still ongoing. These lessons can be structured according to the main issues of a PCNA: (i) the process and time frame of a PCNA, (ii) the scope and methodology, (iii) management procedures and instruments and (iv) the generation of participation and ownership of the PCNA. However there are four overall observations:

- a) There is no coherent methodology for PCNAs so far, but there is a high need to develop some standardised procedures and methodologies, perhaps less in the traditional sector analysis but in process design and management.
- b) As in other PCNAs and the humanitarian needs assessments, there is *need for the definition of needs* and clarification of the objectives of the PCNA itself. There seems to be a dichotomy of defining the "real existing" needs of the country and its people versus the definition of programmes to be funded according to the expected financial and thematic donor preferences. Using an expected level of MDGs achievement as a target could be useful.
- c) Given the usual time constraint of the PCNAs basic data and some definition of assumptions (e.g. socio-economic indicators or assumptions) should be elaborated ex ante through the UN System in all conflict relevant countries.
- d) There should be a decision within the UN-System to standardize and institutionalise the PCNA process and provide training for PCNA team members.

Process

The <u>time</u> available for the PCNA is a crucial issue. In order to develop a clear contextual understanding, define clear objectives, methodological and managerial procedures and promote ownership and participation, time has to be given to preparatory steps. Again as in other cases, timeframe in Liberia was very narrow. Within only 3 months the whole exercise had to be conducted. This necessarily led to some compromises on logistical preparation, participation of NGOs, methodological discussion and definitions of basic assumptions, elaboration and communication of instruments e.g. for reporting, cost calculation and for exchange and discussion of reports. Thus there is a strong recommendation to determine some minimum time standards for implementing PCNAs.

The <u>secretarial and coordination support</u> from UN and World Bank HQ is of crucial importance for the PCNA. The Liberia case showed that the timely installation of the coordination team in the country and the clear definition of its roles and functions in relation to other actors are also crucial. This was done quite late in the PCNA process. This lead to communication gaps and the fact that major decisions on formats, contents and assumptions could only be taken toward the end of the PCNA causing some avoidable uncertainty and double work to Task Managers and cross cutting Focal Points.

In this regard, it is also important to stress the need for a <u>coordinated preparation and</u> <u>parallel deployment</u> of PCNA team members, especiallyTask Managers.

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Scope and Methodology

Regarding the scope of the PCNA our recommendation for the Liberia case which should be considered for similar types of conflict situations should be to focus on key conflict relevant sectors/clusters, to promote stability and peace in the country. Instead of taking all development relevant sectors into consideration the focus should be in the immediate conflict relevant ones. Since there will also be a pressure to include more sectors (especially from the government side) we suggest to think about a two stage process for such PCNA. In the first stage those immediate conflict relevant sectors could be analysed while in the second stage of a more longer term development strategy could be developed. This approach could also reduce the managerial tasks involved in large teams.

However, the grouping of priority sectors into 9 clusters and the focus on clear outcomes and benchmarks using the RFTF is a very important step in this direction and should be recommended as a general approach. It served both functions, to have a clear "technical Log Frame" for policy decisions and monitoring as well as a platform for stakeholder participation and the creation of ownership.

Since there was some discussion about the scope of the area based sectors such as "community driven development " and "reintegration" one lesson from Liberia is also to think about alternative approaches to pure sectoral structuring. There could be some advantages of area based spatial structuring of the PCNA e.g. according to Sub-regions.

The role of the cross cutting issues should be reviewed. Instead of trying to fit cross cutting focal points into a sectoral analytical approach and have them *"chase behind"* task managers at least some of those cross cutting issues (gender, environment) should be incorporated as specific tasks in each relevant cluster analysis (similar to the handling of the institutional capacity issue).

The linkage to the CAP process is both of institutional and technical importance. Close time links with CAP can create competition between PCNA and Humanitarian Needs. On the other side CAP information is of utmost importance and relevance for the PCNA. There should be further work and definition of key needs and indicators for both processes. Those definitions can define which humanitarian needs should be incorporated (and costed) in the PCNA documents.

Management

The management of the process is crucial for reaching the objectives. The importance of the secretarial and coordination function in HQ but also in the country is already mentioned above.

The <u>roles and functions of the coordination team members should be institutionalised and</u> <u>standardized</u> in the UN context as it is the case with the CAP process. This improves clear working relations between the different actors in the PCNA, coordination in the country and the PCNA team members or their HQs and increases the efficiency of the PCNA.

A very important lesson from Liberia is the need to have the overall "Annotated Guidelines" "Cluster Outlines" and crosscutting sector checklists very early or better even before the PCNA team deployment, readied and circulated among the members. Those documents are essential to define open questions, cut-off points/overlap between clusters, can focus on the cross-cutting sector work and facilitate exchange of information. There is a strong

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recommendation for the formulation of some overall and cluster specific <u>standard guideline</u> <u>documents</u> which of course have to be adapted during the process through regular and transparent discussion. Also the preparation of a basic data sets and scenarios for the cluster teams is important and could be done using CAP data and UNCT know-how even before the deployment of the Teams

This <u>standardization</u> is also recommended for the RFTF framework, some additional and general information on outcome and benchmark formulation as well as on the costing calculation procedures.

The guidelines should clearly define <u>the mechanisms for integration of cross-cutting sectors</u> in the cluster analysis and reports. One lesson could be that there should be regular meetings of a cluster manager with the different and relevant cross cutting sector managers.

Those guidelines should also establish the scope and type of the necessary and available communication structure in the country and give some priority for logistical arrangements especially the timing and structure of regular cluster meetings, and phone communication.

Participation and Ownership

There was a high degree of participation during the field phase and the consolidation phase of the PCNA. However, for the generation of participation and ownership <u>time and</u> <u>transparency are key factors</u>. Stakeholder should be systematically involved in conceptual development of the specific methodology and also in the implementation of the PCNA from the beginning. Perhaps due to the time pressure and late secondment of the PCNA coordinators to Liberia – the process was not always clear to some actors, which possibly hindered further commitment and generation of ownership at the beginning. However the consultation process during the PCNA and the RFTF preparation phase did clearly produce this commitment by the NTGL



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Beside the listed documents further documents such as emails from David Nabarro, Paul Hulshoff and others were used as background information for the Working Paper No. 9.



List of Abbreviations

BMZ	German Ministry for Economic Cooperation
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
HDI	Human Development Index
IAWG	Inter-Agency Working Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
PCNA	Post-Conflict Needs Assessment
RC/HC	Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator
RFTF	Results Focused Transitional Framework
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
(UN)DGO	(United Nations) Development Group Office
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
WB	World Bank