

# News from The Carter Center

THE  
CARTER CENTER



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Welcome to the fourth newsletter from The Carter Center in Liberia. This forum is to help partners stay informed of our work and that of our civil society partners as we continue to support the government's implementation of the PRS. In addition to providing on-going technical capacity support to the Ministry of Justice and Judiciary, The Carter Center works in partnership with civil society organizations (see side panel) and the Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs to educate Liberians in the counties on the rule of law. The Center also offers a Community Legal Advisor service in the North and Southeast through the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission. We welcome all questions and suggestions.

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The Carter Center is located on UN Drive in Monrovia, four compounds east of the Mamba Point Hotel. Our Project Manager, John Hummel, can be reached at 06 452 022. We also have field offices in Harper (06 452 682) and Gbarnga (06 558 429).

## National Traditional Council Re-Opens Headquarters

On July 17, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf joined more than 500 traditional leaders and chiefs from all 15 counties and the wider sub-region to re-open the National Traditional Council's (NTC) headquarters in Monrovia. The NTC sees itself as the voice of tradition and indigenous Liberians and is an important institution in the political landscape. Historically, the NTC has had a 'Chief's Compound' in Monrovia but the compound closed during the civil conflict. The re-opening of the NTC's headquarters, supported by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, The Carter Center, and UNHCR, further signals the government's commitment to include all Liberians in the national reconstruction processes.

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## Carter Center Civil Society Partners Meet with Minister of Justice

As a result of 14 years of conflict, many ministries, including the Ministry of Justice, are under-capacitated to fully perform their mandated functions outside of Monrovia. Recognizing this, in 2006 The Carter Center was asked by the Ministry of Justice to help the ministry with the crucial work of educating rural Liberians on the legal system and their legal rights and obligations. The Carter Center currently partners with ten civil society organizations (CSOs) to educate rural Liberians in eight counties (Lofa, Bong, Nimba, Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Maryland, Sinoe, and Grand Kru) through village dialogues, radio programming, and dramas on behalf of the Ministry of Justice.

In a vibrant democracy, there is a free-flowing exchange of ideas between civil society and policy makers. Working in the counties directly with the people, CSOs are well positioned to provide government with feedback from their work; in addition,

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## Carter Center Welcomes Law Fellows

The Carter Center and Transitional Law Institute of Washington and Lee University School of Law are pleased to announce the Liberia Law Fellowship Program. The fellowship program places recent law school graduates to work as fellows for a variety of government and non-governmental institutions in Liberia. These unfunded positions provide valuable legal assistance and offer fellows the opportunity to contribute to Liberia's reconstruction working to support the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Public Works, the James A. A. Pierre Judicial Institute and The Carter Center.

## Current Civil Society Partners

- Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC)
- Bong Youth Association (BYA)
- Modia Drama Club
- Southeastern Women Development Association (SEWODA)
- Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL)
- Traditional Women United for Peace (TWUP)
- Crusaders for Peace
- Special Emergency Activity to Restore Children's Hope (SEARCH)
- Lofa Youth for Progressive Action (LOYPA)
- Flomo Theatre Company



Carter Center Project Coordinator Pewee Flomoku addresses a community in Nimba County.

TCC's Access to Justice work is or has been supported through grants and other support from Humanity United, UNHCR (through the UN Peace Building Fund), OSI, OSIWA, DfID, Irish Aid, DRL, and UNMIL LJSSD.

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(National Traditional Council...continued from page 1)

At the opening ceremony, President Sirleaf called traditional leaders “the unifying strength of Liberia.” NTC Chairman Zanzan Karwar thanked the government and partners for their support, noting that the headquarters was building for all Liberians.



NTC Chairman, Zanza Kwarar enters the headquarters as traditional leaders observe.

A day prior to the opening ceremony, the Legal Working Group, comprised of Liberian legal experts and supported by The Carter Center, UNMIL Legal and Judicial System Support Division and the United States Institute for Peace, convened a roundtable discussion with Liberian traditional leaders and experts on customary law from Ghana and Sierra Leone to explore ways in which Liberia might harmonize the statutory and customary legal systems. The Legal Working Group is compiling a comprehensive report on the dual justice system in Liberia for the Judiciary’s sub-committee looking at the role of non-lawyers, and other partners.

(Carter Center Civil Society Partners...continued from page 1)

the government is able to share new initiatives with CSOs and better inform their work.

On May 7, representatives from all ten Carter Center CSOs (see side panel, page 1) met at length with then Minister of Justice Phillip Banks to update him on their work in the counties. CSOs both lauded the improvements that the Ministry of Justice has made in various counties and talked directly about outstanding needs and concerns. Several CSOs noted instances of low-level officials in the counties, police and others, soliciting bribes to perform their regular duties. Other CSOs highlighted knowledge gaps, such as rural community members unaware of court costs. Generally, all CSOs noted that rural Liberians are improving their understanding of the Liberian legal system.

**Statement on the TRC Final Report**

On June 30th, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia released its final (unedited) report. Since its release, Liberians have begun a vigorous discussion of its findings and recommendations. On July 14 The Carter Center issued a statement on the report, designed to communicate the report in simple terms, explain key recommendation, and make explicit the next steps as mandated in 2005 TRC Act. The statement was widely covered in the news media and will hopefully contribute to sober debate. As noted by Carter Center Associate Director for Conflict Resolution Tom Crick, “The TRC has now made its recommendations and it is now for legislature and the courts to begin their work in the spirit of Liberia’s continued and enduring commitment to peace.”

(The statement can be found at <http://cartercenter.org/news/pr/liberia-trc-rpt-071409.html>)

**Briefly Noted...**

- We extend our sincere regards to former Minister of Justice Phillip Banks for all of his tireless work. We welcome Dr. Christiana Tah to her new position and look forward to working closely with her.
- Carter Center Senior Legal Associate Lemuel Reeves has assisted the Judicial Training Institute complete a magistrate’s bench book to guide their work. Magistrates will be trained on the bench book and have it as a resource to use in the courtroom.
- Carter Center Liberia is pleased to announce our new website: <http://www.cartercenter.org/liberia>. Please visit to learn more about our programming, listen to radio shows, and explore resources.
- Laurie Reyman takes up her post as head of the Carter Center’s Harper Office.
- We bid a warm “farewell” to Itonde “Fiah” Kakoma, who leaves The Carter Center to complete his seminary studies, and to Cllr. Johannes Zlahn who for the past two years has provided invaluable service to the Ministry of Justice.

**Activity Tracker**

- CSOs meet with Minister Banks - May 7.
- Community Legal Advisor Training - Harper, May 18-20
- Community Legal Advisor Training, - Gbarnga, June 4-7; August 10-12
- Legal Working Group meets traditional leaders - Gbarnga, July 9
- Legal Working Group meets Liberian and regional traditional leaders - Monrovia, July 16
- National Traditional Council Re-Opens Headquarters - Monrovia, July 17
- County Attorney Training - Kakata, July 28-30
- Financial Training for CSO partners - Zwedru, August 17-18

**Carter Center Staff in Liberia**

John Hummel, Attorney  
Project Manager

Monrovia  
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Bindu Kromah  
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**On the Air**

The Carter Center sponsors weekly radio shows on Star Radio:

Wednesday, 11:00am;  
Repeating Saturday, 3:30pm –  
*Rule of Law Hour*

Friday, 3:30pm –  
*County Attorney Half Hour*