



The Carter Center Record

Obtaining durable solutions through proactive mediation

Thomas B. Mawolo, Regional Coordinator of the Diocese of Cape Palmas, JPC

Liberians often use the example of cow poopoo to describe conflicts. Cow poopoo has an outward appearance of a dried product but inside is still wet.

This parable makes sense to me especially concerning mediation.

In the mediation work of the JPC, we try to find true solutions to the problems of our clients, not just small solutions that will become a problem another day.

This summer, the JPC participated in a training in peace education organized

by UNHCR in Gbarnga.

There we discussed two types of mediation: reactive and proactive.

A proactive approach to a mediation finds a durable solution so it cannot resurface.

Reactive mediation is a type of mediation we are very used to in Liberia. It is often undertaken by people who have status in their society.

The mediator may give advice to a party what to do or encourage the parties to come to a mediation table even when they are not ready.

This may possibly result in a durable solution, but at the end of the day it may

result in a situation of cow poopoo, where the problem is not really solved.

Proactive mediation requires a positive resolution to the conflict so that it never reoccurs. It is necessary for all the parties to a problem to come willingly to the mediation table. No one should send a proxy or family head in their place. The mediator does not force anybody to a mediation.

We often find that this kind of proactive approach results in a better solution to the problem – one that includes mediation, resolution and transformation.

This should be the goal of a community legal advisor.

Bringing rule of law awareness to Maryland County

Lucy W. McCarthy, SEWODA, Maryland County

Before The Carter Center awareness in Pleebo communities, people believed that sassywood was legal because it is what their forefathers used to find out facts and make people afraid to do bad things.

During the rule of law education and

awareness program that the Southeastern Women Development Association (SEWODA) carried out in these communities, people came to know about the bad behavior people engage in – like suffering and killing people, especially

young ones – under the excuse of culture.

(Continued on page 3)



SEWODA on the Cavalla rubber plantation in Maryland Co.

Mama Tumah combines legal empowerment for women with economic empowerment on farms

Since early in 2007, The Carter Center has worked with Mama Tumah, one of Liberia's most influential and important women leaders, to develop strategies for reaching rural women with messages about inheritance rights, gender-based violence, and the rule of law.

From the beginning, Mama Tumah encouraged the Center to combine its message of legal empowerment with a strategy of economic empowerment.

In recent months, The Center has engaged her group, Traditional Women United for Peace, to educate women about rule-of-law themes on a series of farms and agricultural cooperatives in Lofa County.

Her work is bringing a message of hope and empowerment to women across the country. In this Q&A, Mama Tumah reflects on the "new Liberia."

The photo and interview are by The Carter Center's Connie Nelson.

The Record: *What difference will the new laws in Liberia make for Liberian women?*

Mama Tumah: The new laws and the new government have opened their eyes, so now they know their rights as women of Liberia.

TR: *What does the average Liberian woman face today?*

MT: They have empowerment to be able to succeed for themselves and their children, because they lost everything in the war. They have empowerment to be able to keep themselves busy; and once they are busy, they will not be going to sit down and worry about the war, to keep thinking about the war, but they will moving forward. They will be busy doing things.

TR: *Where would you like to see the women of Liberia in five years?*

MT: Five years from now, the women will be in the forefront of development because of the

support they are getting from the government and from Madame President. In the past, women were not involved in meetings with government officials, but right now, they are involved.

TR: *How have you seen Liberia change from before the elections until now?*

MT: Number one, you are getting your salary. People are getting paid now on the 25th of every month, and they have increased the salary. So...you can go straight to the bank and cash the check, and you can laugh about it. You have money in your hands. The salary and payment structure—everything—is all right. Even the street vendors are getting their money on time, and so they are happy to work.

TR: *If President Carter were sitting here with you, what would you say to him?*

MT: I would tell President Carter 'thank you' and also thank The Carter Center for giving support to the TRC (Truth & Reconciliation Commission) and the work that the Center is doing in other communities along with other NGOs. The Carter Center helped to end the war and we thank the Center for that, and for encouraging us through work you are doing in the rule of law, so that people do not go back to war. The Carter Center did not make a mistake to come back to Liberia, to be engaged with the local communities....by engaging with the women and empowering them to do more.



Brenna Carmody, JPC Intern

Moving into the future, JPC Cape Palmas has recently launched a new web site to provide information to the public, donors, and partners about our work.

Descriptions of the program of community legal advisors and parish-based committees are supplemented with maps of where we work and data about our clients.

Articles written by our monitors and real-life case studies provide a glimpse of the impact of the

program in improving access to justice throughout the southeast.

These sections will be continuously updated as the program expands its influence.

The news section highlights recently announced partnerships such as with the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), and a survey to measure the impact of our work being conducted by the Oxford Center for the Study of African Economies.

Vivid photos capture our staff at work with clients and conducting trainings. If you have any questions about the program, contact information is listed for the Regional Coordinator and all of the county monitors.

We hope the web site allows you to understand who we are, what our work is, and our role within the community of southeastern Liberia.



A JPC monitor and parish-based committee member from Zwedru track their cases.

SEWODA brings rule-of-law awareness to Pleebo, Maryland County

(Continued from page 1)

When the SEWODA program begins in a community, people refuse to come in the gathering and decide to go their way.

One time in Besseken, under the rubber plantation, the people said, "Oh, you NGO people come to look for money and make lie to us."

But when the drama begins and stories begin to be told, peo-

ple are all happy to see the action. Because people can see and hear these things, they can also see themselves in the picture. They say, "Oh, this thing happened to so-so-and-so people." And at the end they say, "Yes, it is true."

We are still educating the community people to stop rape, violence, sassywood, and trial by ordeal.

We also encourage them to

marry in order to secure their rights to inheritance and over children. When they have disputes, we encourage them to talk the case peacefully with chiefs or community leaders, in the court, or with an NGO like the Justice and Peace Commission (JPC).

This is better than taking the law into your own hands.

THE
CARTER CENTER



Waging Peace. Fighting Disease. Building Hope.

**STRENGTHENING THE RULE OF LAW IN
POST-CONFLICT LIBERIA**

Edited by:

Jeff Austin

The Carter Center/Alex Tubman Street
Harper, Maryland County, Liberia

the.record@cartercenterliberia.org

The Carter Center, founded in 1982 in Atlanta, U.S.A., by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, is committed to advancing human rights and alleviating human suffering.

The Center's staff and its partner organizations wage peace, fight disease, and build hope by engaging with those at the highest levels of government and working side by side with people at the grassroots. A not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization, the Center's work is supported by donations from individuals, foundations, corporations, and countries.

The Carter Center works in Liberia in partnership with the Liberian Justice Ministry and is supported by UNHCR through the Peacebuilding Fund..

*Gerald S. Dolo, Bong Youth
Association*

Can any society exist without laws or norms? Is there a possibility for democracy and development to flourish when there is no law and order?

Of course one could expect the answer to the above questions to be no.

Surely human beings try in their own ways to satisfy their needs and desires. It is their direction that has brought disparity among mankind.

Because of this, there has existed a gap between democracy and development even though they both must work hand in hand with one complementing the other.

The question now becomes: What or how can this gap be bridged?

The benefits of the rule of law program in Liberia by the Carter Center is clearly seen as bridging

this gap. This is because the program brings to light the aspect of the law that has not been known for years immemorial.

Let's take an example—the issue of refunding bond fees.

It always sounds like someone dreaming and being told that bond fees are to be given back upon appearance to court on a specified date agreed by a defendant and judge.

Another example could be the inheritance law considering dowry as a gift and the wife's right to her inheritance.

It is evident that most advantaged people will seem to have problem with the above issues because the approach to those practices years back has been different from the ones unfolding now.

But it is now becoming clearer that democracy is taking its real form where both men and women are beginning to know that in order for democracy and



*Woman at BYA function in Bong County.
Photo by Connie Nelson.*

development to flourish in Liberia, they must know and abide by the rule of law with each respecting the other's rights.

Thanks to the rule of law program.