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| Country:            | Liberia   |
| Project title:      | Reintegration and Recovery Programme IV (RRP IV)  |
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| KfW Reference No.:  | 2012 65 099   |
| Project holder:     | Welthungerhilfe   |
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| Committed funds:    | KfW: 8.000.000,- Euro; Ibis: 30.000,- Euro; medica Liberia (mL)<br>36.000,- Euro; Welthungerhilfe: 234.000,- Euro |
| Co-financer (line): | Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)  |
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# Mid-term Evaluation RRP IV, Liberia

## Final Report

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## **I. Summary**

### **1. Brief description of the project and framework conditions**

Since 2005, following 14 years of highly destructive civil war (1989-2003), Welthungerhilfe has been implementing the Reintegration and Recovery Programme (RRP) in Southeast Liberia. In the first phases, RRP had many characteristics of an emergency project, but changed in later phases to development orientation. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) finances the programme through KfW, the Liberian Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) is the recipient of the funds, and Welthungerhilfe the responsible executing agency. KfW transfers the financial contribution directly to Welthungerhilfe. Welthungerhilfe ensures programme implementation in cooperation with the two subcontracted NGOs, the Danish INGO IBIS and the German INGO medica mondiale (mm). mm's Liberian branch, medica Liberia, was registered in mid-2014 as Liberian civil society organisation.

After an in-depth planning phase from January to June 2014, the programme is now in its fourth phase. This phase was planned to start in July 2014 and end in June 2017. However, the Ebola outbreak 2014/15 severely affected project implementation. Only mL could start its RRP IV activities as planned in July 2014, the start of Welthungerhilfe and IBIS RRP IV activities was delayed until March 2015. By end of June 2016, after two third of the planned RRP IV implementation period, only 53% of the total budget was spent. KfW has agreed to a six months no-cost extension of RRP until Dec. 2017. For this extension, Welthungerhilfe has to provide a budget revision, considering the results of the present mid-term evaluation.

RRP IV comprises four components – agriculture, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education as well as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), with infrastructure activities in all components. Welthungerhilfe implements the agriculture, WASH and infrastructure activities, IBIS education and mm/mL SGBV.

Project areas are in the remote South East of Liberia, in the counties of Grand Gedeh (GG) and River Gee (RG). This area is characterized by a low population density (ca. 15 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>), high rate of chronic malnutrition among under fives (stunting; GG 49%, RG 46%), low levels of education (in GG, 82% of the female household population age six and over had no school education at all or just some primary school education, RG 87%; male: GG 62%, RG 65%), high rate of SGBV, poor road infrastructure, and high rate of forest cover. The local farming systems of traditional subsistence agriculture comprise shifting cultivation with slash-and-burn forest clearing. Local government capacity is low.

RRP IV has covered 106 villages. The work in 44 so-called after-care or sustainability villages where the work of RRP III and its addendum SIRHC (Support to Ivorian Refugees and Host Communities) was not completed in time and in 23 other villages has ended by early 2016. At present, RRP IV works in 39 villages (GG 21, RG 18); many of these villages have already been supported under earlier RRP phases. Village level education activities cover 14 schools in ten villages, SGBV activities 25 villages (in GG only).

Many Welthungerhilfe staff also implement activities for the Ebola Support Programme (ESP, LBR 1043, KfW Reference No. 2014 688 18, 7/2015-6/2017) which is an addendum to RRP IV. It focuses on health infrastructure, WASH at schools and markets as well as nutrition. ESP project counties are GG, RG and Sinoe, covering many of the RRP IV villages. KfW is currently planning a second phase of ESP.

### **2. Relevance**

The programme is highly relevant, regarding its contents as well as the region covered. It has contributed to the socio-economic recovery in the South East of Liberia, to the improvement of living conditions and to the consolidation of the peace process. Over one decade of peace has passed since the end of the civil war and the situation has stayed stable. The current results of the programme serve as foundation for further development in the region. RRP IV has contributed towards consolidation of the achievements of former programme phases.

The programme has supported the achievement of Liberia's Agenda for Transformation (AfT) objectives in the regional context.

### **3. Effectiveness**

At the time of the mid-term evaluation, the extent to which RRP IV attained its objectives was still low. The **overall objective** of RRP IV is to contribute to the socio-economic recovery in the South East and to the consolidation of the peace process in Liberia. Communities in Grand Gedeh and River Gee are expected to experience increased support from local public institutions (improved public service delivery) and to achieve functional and strengthened community group structures to support community level services. The **project objective** is an improvement of living conditions of the population in the South East. The direct effects (outcome) of the programme are defined by seven indicators. Their achievement at the time of the mid-term evaluation is assessed by the consultants as follows:

1. Increased household income through agriculture: Limited (the agricultural activities of RRP IV did not yet lead to significant amounts of marketable products);
2. Women consume at least 1 food group more: Limited (nutrition is no major focus of RRP IV, ESP gives advice on nutrition and promotes backyard gardening in the villages);
3. Increased traffic volume on rehabilitated roads: Limited (except for project vehicles, the traffic volume on the 20 km road section which has been improved with culverts by Oct. 2016 is not expected to have increased significantly);
4. Decreased incidence of water-borne diseases: Expected (could not be assessed during the mid-term evaluation, but can be expected as a result of the WASH activities);
5. Oral reading fluency of grade 1 learners: Improved (2015 first graders from 14 schools);
6. Vocational training graduates receive income: Achieved (an analysis of preliminary data of 101 of the 110 EYE graduates showed that monthly incomes is on average 28.60 EUR);
7. Community members know the contact points / support channels on (S)GBV: Achieved.

Even though many outcome indicators have not yet been fully achieved, the living conditions of the people supported by RRP IV have improved.

### **4. Efficiency**

The implementation of the programme was conducted in a cost-effective manner, even though implementation costs were high due to the remote location and the bad road conditions. However, the project approach of working along one road axis improving access continuously reduced implementation costs. Implementing through local partner organisations (agriculture, WASH) served as capacity building even though direct implementation might have been faster and less costly. Infrastructure interventions were contracted to local contractors using locally available construction material as much as possible.

### **5. Outcomes and impacts**

Economic outcomes and impacts are at present mainly due to road works (salaries paid by contractors), agriculture (group farms) and the EYE centre trainings (EYE: Education for youth empowerment). The amount is still limited. Of the 20 group farms, only the eight vegetable group farms have achieved income so far, root and tuber crops (cassava, eddoe/taro) are not yet ready for harvesting. The project estimates the amount of income gained on the group farms by end of June 2016 at 566 USD in GG and 112 USD in RG. Preliminary data indicate that EYE centre graduates achieve on average around 30 EUR per month through the skills learned at the EYE centre. Both, income through agriculture as well as through work in the learned profession at the EYE centres is expected to raise in future. More indirect economic returns will emerge from capacity building of government officers and

implementing partners, road structures created, WASH, early grade reading and maths (EGRM) and SGBV.

Socio-cultural outcomes and impacts especially occurred due to the work of mL. Awareness for gender roles in the 25 mL-supported villages has increased, labour division in the families starts changing, and husbands give their wives more freedom of movement to discuss social issues within the village. Women are more able to participate in decision-making at community level, they became more active and are better able to articulate their needs. Violence against women and girls in the villages has reduced; the still remaining cases are handled more appropriately at community level. The SGBV support group members changed their attitude and feel empowered to defend women's rights and advocate for violence-free communities.

For the IBIS EYE centre graduates a lot has changed in their lives – they reported that they now feel as being part of society, respected, they can send their kids to school, they can continue their own education, they can better care for themselves (e.g. house construction). Before attending the EYE course, they felt as being nobody, without proper education, without hope for a better life.

Effects on nutrition in the villages were due to ESP backyard gardening activities which are highly appreciated by communities and government, RRP IV stressed less on nutrition.

Organisational and institutional/political outcomes and impacts: Local organisations and construction companies are strengthened thus leaving implementation capacities behind. The national and county government are more aware of their role in planning, implementing, steering and monitoring the development activities of the counties. There are, however, limiting factors such as budget, staffing, equipment and/or skills constraints for the county officials to take on this role efficiently.

## **6. Sustainability**

Sustainability was a special objective of the fourth phase of RRP. Knowledge and skills gained through RRP IV activities will continue to exist at individual level and might further spread in the communities. However, communities have not yet fully taken over responsibility for programme results; they are still requesting additional support from the programme. The reason for insufficient ownership at community level is mainly due to the limited involvement of the local population in project planning, insufficiently applying methods especially developed for community empowerment. In addition, there is a general risk for sustainability because of low monitoring capacities and lack of ownership of the government. At present, documentation of success stories, lessons learnt and best practices which are needed for scaling up is still insufficient. Also, the political situation in the country (elections in Oct. 2017) puts some risk for sustainability of programme work.

RRP IV aimed at creating functional and strengthened community group structures to support community level services for assuring sustainability. So far, most of such groups are not yet sufficiently functional. Communities want to continue being “spoon-fed”. But also for the government partners, Welthungerhilfe still takes a leading role, e.g. reminds Ministry of Health staff to test water quality of the community wells. Government partners are still not acting on their own. So far, RRP IV communities insufficiently experience increased support from local public institutions (improved public service delivery) – and the chance that this will happen in future is limited. RRP IV has tried to overcome this limitation by strengthening local organisations, for agriculture, WASH and SGBV.

## **7. Most important recommendations**

Based on the evaluation's findings, the evaluation team has developed 27 recommendations for the implementing partners, Welthungerhilfe, IBIS and mL. The 15 most important ones are as follows:



## **General recommendations**

1. Consider the no-cost extension to end in March 2018 instead of Dec. 2017 to cope with the rainy season and the elections on Oct. 10, 2017
2. Sensitize the communities and support sustainable exit strategies
3. Analyse and document lessons learnt/best practices and use them for scaling-up at county and national level

## **Programme management**

4. Elaboration of a procedural manual and Critical Path Analysis to elaborate robust project implementation plans that allow for example to identify tasks which must be completed on time for the whole project to be completed on time
5. Different component managers should take/get more responsibility in budget use (transparency)
6. Analyse budget available per component, identify minimum and maximum needs for the different infrastructure measures like wells, bridges and culverts (incl. priority), unit costs and time realistically needed (incl. number of contractors available), develop criteria on use of budget, jointly decide on budget plan for RRP IV no-cost extension
7. Infrastructure: Strengthen the monitoring system to avoid any further delays in infrastructure, employ additional qualified engineers to cope with the forthcoming work load
8. Focus the education activities on training of unskilled youth in close cooperation with education stakeholders

## **Project approach**

9. Promote more active involvement of the communities in project planning, implementation and monitoring (participatory approach), aiming at the creation of functional village structures

## **Project Activities**

10. **Agriculture:** Improve transfer of knowledge by farmer-to-farmer exchange (e.g. village field days at group farms, study tours to places of success)
11. **WASH:** Advocacy for regular testing of water quality and surveys on the functionality of all water points
12. **Education:** Vulnerable female youth should be a priority target group of the agricultural training at the Zwedru EYE Centre.

## **Cooperation with the government**

13. Advocacy towards the national and county government for improved ownership and taking over responsibility
14. Improve linkages and networking with the Ministry of Education (MoE) in curriculum development and use of Zwedru EYE Centre
15. Link SGBV support groups to existing county level women structures and County GBV task force

In addition to the recommendations developed during the time of the evaluation in Liberia, it became more apparent when writing the report that a phased exit of the different components could be more suitable than ending all activities in March 2018. Those activities already finalized do not need to be extended until March 2018. mL which started earlier might not need so urgently an extension as the infrastructure works which were hampered by Ebola Treatment Units construction, insufficient number of staff, high need for capacity

building of local contractors, and transport difficulties of construction material during the rainy season.

Recommendations to MFDP include MFDP facilitation that line agencies assume a more active role in project implementation and follow-up of measures as well as that positive RRP IV experiences are used for scaling-up project results within the country.

## **8. General conclusions and “lessons learnt”**

RRP IV is highly relevant for Liberia as a whole and the project counties in particular. The Ebola crisis 2014/2015 as well as bad road conditions and weak government structures hampered project progress and reduced project effectiveness. Welthungerhilfe and mL were setting up and/or strengthening local partner organisations and construction companies. Even though such an approach is more expensive and needs longer, it is well justified as it serves the objective of sustainability. The project has achieved manifold positive impacts in the economic, socio-cultural and institutional/organisational dimensions. With the weak government institutions in place, sustainability is mainly anchored at beneficiary level – in the fields of agriculture, infrastructure, WASH, education and gender. Beyond small spill-over effects to neighbouring communities, the evaluation team does not expect major broad mass impacts. The surge for more synergy between different project components could improve the visibility of the project achievements at community and county level.

Important lessons learnt include

- Participatory approaches are the key to sustainability. Short cuts in implementation due to time, financial or other constraints are generally not paying off and should be avoided (e.g. participatory appraisal reduced to a rapid appraisal).
- Supporting local organizations to develop into qualified independent organizations that will continue the work after withdrawal of project partners requires personnel and time, but pays off without fail.
- Project success needs to be well analysed and documented, otherwise it cannot be used for convincing government and non-government actors for replication of activities or adjustment of their current procedures and practices.