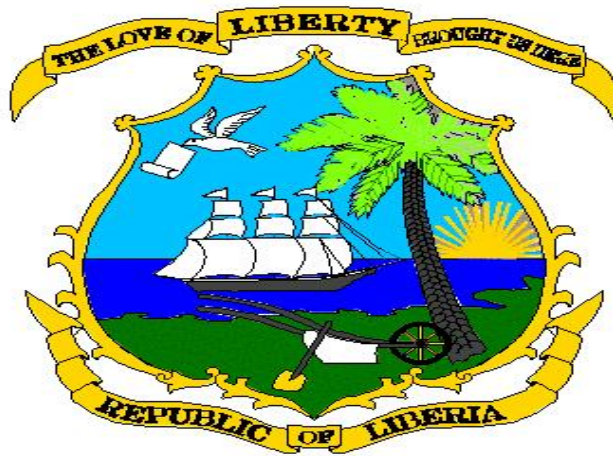


**LIBERIA RECONSTRUCTION AND
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
SECRETARIAT (LRDC)**

**PRS CABINET REVIEW
RETREAT REPORT**

PRS 90-DAY IMPLEMENTATION ACTION
PLANS AND UPDATED STATUS REPORT



**MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
EXECUTIVE MANSION GROUNDS
CAPITOL HILL
MONROVIA, LIBERIA**

CABINET RETREAT REPORT

“PRIORITIZING THE PRIORITIES”

INTRODUCTION

On June 3, 2009, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs released the preliminary progress report on the first year implementation of the “Lift Liberia” agenda or Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). Based on the findings of the first year report which showed that “progress was slow relative to potential”, the President, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, requested that a cabinet retreat session be held to review the implementation process and design a more robust strategy to accelerate implementation.

In furtherance of the request by the President, the LRDC Secretariat initiated a series of review activities leading into a two-day technical working session by the Cabinet which took place on Friday and Saturday, August 14 – 15, 2009 at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Paynesville City, Liberia. These working sessions brought together all Cabinet Ministers and Heads of Agencies, along with their deputies and assistants. Also forming part of the technical review sessions were directors with implementation responsibilities under the PRS.

Development partners and non-governmental organizations were included in pre-retreat activities but were excluded from the cabinet retreat, which was designed purposely as an internal review process for Line Ministries and Agencies. The Government felt it was necessary for Ministers, Heads of Agencies and their technical teams to critically review the entire PRS and match their capabilities and capacities against the interventions and systematically outline how they would go about implementing this important development agenda.

The retreat was a technical review working session that was broken into sub-pillar working groups. The groups brought together relevant ministries and agencies around particular interventions (deliverables). Ministries and Agencies then discussed technical matters relating to implementation and put in place the necessary coordinating mechanisms to ease, smooth and accelerate implementation.

At the close of the retreat, Ministers and Heads of Agencies presented their 90-Day Action Plans which were informed by the previous day’s working sessions, as well as the information from pre-retreat working sessions held from August 4 – 7, 2009 at the Ministry of Planning.

Included in this report are the 90-Day Action Plans for each ministry and agency, along with re-sequenced interventions that are due to be completed at the end of the 90th day (November 2009). The plans are arranged by sub-working groups.

Ministries or Agencies having deliverables under more than one group will be listed multiple times in the ACTION PLAN matrix.

PRS FIRST YEAR REVIEW PROCESS

In order to perform the kind of thorough review needed to put the “Lift Liberia” agenda back on course and demonstrate a more robust local ownership of the implementation process, series of activities were initiated by the Government of Liberia (GoL). It would have been impractical to review the entire PRS in a two day session and it would have been insufficient to partially review the PRS. To achieve a sufficiently comprehensive and in depth review of the PRS, two complementing review processes were put in place:

1. A pre-retreat review session. These sessions were intended to review all the overdue and at risk (with end date of December 2009) deliverables. It included partners as well as technical representatives from Line Ministries and Agencies.
2. A Cabinet Review Retreat. This was made up of several working sessions held exclusively with Cabinet Ministers and their technical teams to review all interventions from January 2010 – June 2011. The pre-retreat sessions along with the cabinet review retreat technical working sessions provided the information needed to develop the 90 day action plans.

These two processes provided the platform necessary to conduct a comprehensive and thorough review of all interventions under the PRS.

OUTCOME OF THE RETREAT

After several weeks of intensely reviewing the PRS and developing strategies to accelerate implementation, the final two days of retreat completed the process that produced the following outcome:

1. A comprehensive and practical 90 day action plan from each Ministry and Agency that took into account the capacity and resource constraints;
2. A revised, re-sequenced, and prioritized list of interventions with dates that are more realistic and achievable within the PRS timeframe;
3. A strategy of tackling deliverables in a period of 90 days, thus making them more doable and less burdensome;
4. More simplified and measurable interventions with clear path to implementation.
5. A more robust meeting schedule of technical teams that gives the PRS the urgency and attention it deserves.

6. A systematic incorporation of PRS activities into the work plans of Ministries and Agencies
7. Promotion of buy-in from all levels of management within Ministries and Agencies.

PARTICIPANTS

More than 400 participants at all levels across the government participated in the pre-retreat and the retreat sessions. With very few exceptions, all Cabinet Ministers and Heads of Agencies; their Deputies and Assistants, as well as Principal Directors with PRS implementation responsibilities were present. The President, the Vice President, the Chief Justice and a representative of the Speaker of the House of Representatives were present.

PILLAR STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

In addition to the broad outcomes outlined in the preceding section, a number of specific but major actions were taken:

1. IBS Pillar Chairmanship moved from the Minister of Agriculture and was assigned to the Minister of Public Works;
2. GRL Pillar Chairmanship moved from the Minister of Planning and was assigned to the Director General of the Civil Service Agency;
3. A third sub-pillar working group, Rule of Law – Judiciary, was established to be headed by the Chief Justice;
4. The Governance Commission (GC) is to head the Governance sub-working group, while the Ministry of Justice will head the Rule of Law – Justice sub-working group;
5. A total of 16 sub-pillar working groups have been reactivated to accelerate the PRS implementation process. These groups are to meet twice a month for the next 6 months;
6. Pillar meetings will be held monthly after all technical meetings have been held;
7. LRDC Steering Committee meetings will now be held quarterly
8. PRS activities to be a regular item on the cabinet meeting agenda.

NEW INTERVENTIONS MATRIX

Based on the technical review of the PRS, the new, revised and updated interventions are summarized below:

PILLARS	# OF INTERVENTIONS (OLD)	# OF INTERVENTIONS (NEW)	COMPLETED TO DATE (JULY 2009).	COMPLETION RATE TO DATE (JULY 2009)**	TO BE COMPLETED IN 90 DAYS (BY NOV 2009)	COMPLETION RATE AT THE END OF 90 DAY (BY NOV. 2009)***
Security (SEC)	22	95	29	31%	18	50%
Economic Revitalization (ERC)	139	129	11	9%	8	15%
Governance and Rule of Law (GRL)	55	53	5	9%	2	13%
Infrastructure and Basic Services (IBS)	144	209	23	11%	18	20%
Total	360	486	68	14%	46	23%

Source: PRS Deliverable Tracking Tool, 2009

** Total completed deliverables as of July 2009 divided by the total number of new interventions

*** Total completed deliverables plus deliverables expected to be completed by the end of November 2009 divided by the total number of PRS deliverables

KEY OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PRS REVIEW PROCESS

The entire PRS review process (pre-retreat and cabinet review retreat sessions) has highlighted important lessons for Liberia's development planners and implementing Ministries and Agencies. The following is a list of key observations gleaned from the review process; this list is comprehensive but not exhaustive.

1. Implementation timeframes were unrealistic. The timeframes did not take into consideration budget cycles, aide flow timing, climatic conditions, legislative cycle, procurement processes, and a host of other external factors that could affect delivery;
2. The PPCC procurement process, Ministry of Finance budget allocation process, and human capital challenges at the technical level represented the **binding constraint** to implementation under the PRS;
3. No thorough process mapping or project management techniques have been designed around most the interventions;
4. Donor aid coordination is weak and most implementing agencies do not have comprehensive knowledge of where to source funding; they do not even know if funding is available for their particular interventions;
5. Implementing Ministries and Agencies have not taken the time to plan for PRS interventions, and have therefore not included these interventions in their work plans, if any exist;
6. PRS interventions were clustered together thereby making implementation complicated and unending. Several distinct and separate activities or processes were grouped together;
7. In some cases, interventions were ambiguous; the language used to describe them did not provide sufficient clarity on the required output, and completion deadlines;

8. Some interventions were assigned to the wrong Ministry or Agency, thereby leaving them without the proper owners;
9. The scope of some interventions clearly demonstrated that they could not be completed within the PRS timeframe;
10. Ministries and Agencies saw the PRS as an extra work load and not as the nation's development agenda;
11. Coordination within and between ministries and agencies was weak and could not support the robust implementation framework that was necessary to move this agenda forward;
12. Some mandates in the PRS were completely unfunded and unsupported by donors; for example, the Monrovia Transit Authority has no money and no partner to execute any of the interventions assigned to it;
13. No clearly established process exists to determine when a policy is considered complete;
14. Cabinet's mechanism to review and approve policies, if one exists, is too slow and hinders implementation;
15. There is also no coordinated strategy or framework to move PRS related legislation through the National Legislature;
16. Technicians with PRS implementation responsibilities, in some cases, did not know that these tasks were assigned to them; or, if aware of the assignment, did not know whether they were PRS related;
17. Technicians in Ministries and Agencies did not get full support and encouragement from the heads of their organizations in implementing their deliverables. They were only allowed to attend these meetings, but when they return, nothing happened;
18. Overall communication of the progress on and significance of the PRS to the public is poor;
19. No mechanism exists to discourage poor performance when it comes to PRS interventions.

APPENDIX

Included in this report are the following tables and matrices:

1. A summary of deliverables due within the next 90 days (September - November 2009)
2. A compilation of 90 day action plans presented by each Ministry and Agency.
3. A summary of deliverables due in the second 90 day period (Dec. 2009 – Feb. 2010)
4. A schedule of meetings for the sub-working groups