

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia



TRC Fast Track

November 17 - 30, 2006

TRC Reviews Initial Statements

As the TRC prepares to start holding hearings of human rights violations in the Country in January, hundreds of statements from the public have begun pouring into the Commission. Statement Takers deployed throughout the fifteen subdivisions of Liberia, last week started turning in written accounts on standardized Statement Takers Forms recording the experiences of victims, witnesses and perpetrators of rights abuses which occurred in the country especially during the civil conflict of the last 14 years. This initial process of gathering statements is now being evaluated by the Commission with the intent to modify or improve the forms and process. Already, there are indicators that issues such as sexually based violence that are germane to women, need to be addressed more holistically. Meanwhile, the TRC has invited experts on gender and gender related matters to assist in the revision of the forms and make appropriate recommendations or suggestions for improvement. Statements Takers are expected to be redeployed finally following the modification of the forms.

The TRC commenced its Statement Taking pro-



Registering for statement taking aptitude test in Lofa county

cess in July, administering a Statement Takers aptitude test to over 1,500 applicants throughout the Country. A one week Statement Taker's Training was conducted in Monrovia in August with over 200 individuals trained as Statement Takers. In October, Statement Takers were commissioned and a formal launching of the process held at the head office of the TRC in Monrovia. The Chairman of the TRC Cllr. Jerome J. Verdier in his launching statement,



Commissioner Syllah administers statement takers test in Lofa county said that the Commission had worked diligently to establish a team of competent and qualified individuals to carry out the process of statement taking in which victims, perpetrators and witnesses will be treated equally with respect and dignity.

The role of the Statement Takers he said was vital to the investigative and inquiry functions of the TRC. "The Statement Taker has no opinion and passes no judgment; he or she is to simply record the experiences of all witnesses just as they are told, as accurately as possible without bias. Through this process, the truth of what happened during the crisis, to whom, by whom, why, where and how, will be answered, supported by further research and investigated. A national account of our experiences will be established". He averred.

TRC Gets Director of Media and Outreach

The new Director of Media and Outreach, Mrs. Juliane Westphal, has taken up her work in the Commission. She brings in a wide range of experience, having worked in the print media, as a radio documentary producer and on outreach campaigns before.



She has followed up the TRC process in Sierra Leone as a radio journalist. Later she developed projects to disseminate the contents of the TRC Report, raised the necessary funding, and managed their implementation.

She has now started to re-strategize TRC outreach activities with the department and partners. She is hoping to develop a cordial relationship between the media and the TRC.

Liberia is First TRC to Systematically Engage Diaspora

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Liberia has ended a successful one month of outreach and Statement Taking activities with Liberians residing in various parts of the United States. This ground breaking effort to give a voice to the diaspora community, makes the Liberian TRC the first Truth



Town hall meeting in Staten Island, New York, October 14 2006

Commission to systematically engage communities living outside of home country. The Commission's work in the States included three Statement Taker's workshops and town hall meetings held in States known for their high Liberian population. The State of Minnesota in Midwest USA, hosts over 10,000

Liberians, while the Washington DC Metro area and Staten Island, New York, are home to more than 8,000 and 9,000 Liberians respectively.

According to TRC Commissioner Massa A. Washington, Head of the TRC's Diaspora Committee who coordinated the trainings, the workshops and town hall interactive sessions, provided the forum for the TRC to update Liberians in the Diaspora on the activities of the Commission and recruited volunteers to serve as Statement Takers for the TRC as prelude activity to the commencement of hearings in the Diaspora. Most importantly, the TRC used the opportunity to dialogue with Liberians in the US and hear their views and suggestions about the reconciliation and healing process in Liberia after 14 years of civil conflict.

The workshops and meetings commenced on Friday, September 29 and ended on October 14. Over 150 individuals were trained as Statement Takers in Minnesota where a Statement Taker's pilot project is anticipated. The three workshops were hosted by the various Liberian communities and



Commissioner Washington presents at Minnesota workshop

jointly conducted by the TRC in collaboration with the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) and the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT). Meanwhile, Liberians in the US have pledged their fullest support to the TRC and were very instrumental in the successful outcome of the US programs. Several Liberian community leaders participated in the activities including Liberian Ambassador to the USA, Hon. Charles Minor.

Quote of the Week

"Whether big or small, powerful or weak, the TRC in pursuit of its mandate will listen to all and demand appearance of all without fear or favour in order to bring healing to our people and closure to a long and bitter past."

TRC Chairman at the commencement of Statement Taking

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