

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia



TRC Fast Track

January 19 - February 1, 2007

TRC Starts Public Hearings

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) will start its Public Hearings into human rights violations during the period of Liberia's conflict from January 1979 to August 2003. The first of these hearings is scheduled to be held on January 30, 2007.

The hearings are intended to help further resolve the Liberian conflicts and to facilitate reconciliation; to recognize and acknowledge the losses and hardship of victims; and to give both victims and perpetrators the chance to tell their stories. The TRC is not a court and will not prosecute anyone. It may recommend amnesty and in some cases judicial prosecution.

When announcing the start of the hearings to the public, Chairman Cllr. Jerome Verdier said: "All Liberians must embrace these hearings and understand that they are about overcoming the conflict and not igniting new ones. The hearings provide a unique opportunity to hear the truth and listen to individual

whether they be victims or perpetrators. Coming forward to speak the truth is a heroic act of bravery and patriotism which we all must applaud and support."



TRC Chairman announcing the start of the hearings at the end of the month at a press conference, January 11, 2007



Press conference, January 11, 2007 at TRC headoffice

experiences of what happened during the crisis which may be similar or different from one's own experiences. It is an opportunity for national healing, empathy and vindication and not a forum to provide fodder for gossip, finger pointing, recriminations, stigmatization or reprisals. We must show respect for all witnesses

There will be two types of hearings: public hearings and private in-camera hearings. Public hearings will be open to the general public and broadcast around Liberia on radio and television. Public hearings will be organized around different themes and will give an opportunity to witnesses, including victims and perpetrators, to tell their stories of human rights violations.

The TRC thematic hearings will cover themes on women, children, youth, economic crimes and corruption, historical review, institutional accountability, and others.

Private in-camera hearings will be held for some witnesses, such as women, children and vulnerable groups, to guarantee their safety and dignity. Issues surrounding the security of the country will also be considered in-camera.

The hearings will shed light on what happened during Liberia's conflict and will provide the basis for

the TRC Report, which will compile findings and make recommendations. These findings and recommendations will have a great impact on lasting peace and development in Liberia.

The TRC hearings will start in Montserrado county and later will be held in other parts of the country.



Statement Taker explaining the TRC process in Harbel, Margibi County, January 15, 2007

Statement Takers Return to the Field

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has redeployed Statement Takers throughout the country for the massive statement taking. Before going back to the field, a three-day workshop was held to further prepare the Statement Takers for full-scale statement taking after the three weeks of statement taking in October. The workshop was held at the TRC Head Office on 9th Street from December 27-29, 2006.

Having gone through this vigorous refresher training, the Statement Takers are now capable of recording accurate statements from the state-



Statement taking in Smell No Taste, Margibi County, January 15, 2007

ment givers, some of which will be used to facilitate the hearing process. The training workshop was facilitated by the TRC and its partners. They were trained on topics of motivation and teamwork, mobilization and sensitization, filling in and processing statement forms, amongst others.

The evaluation of the initial statement forms has also been concluded and all necessary improvement and corrections made. The Statement Takers were happy about the revised form because it reflects recommendations they had made based on their field experience and difficulties they had faced when using the first form. The new forms make the work of the Statement Takers easier and helps give them the upper hand in collecting more accurate statements.

The Statement Takers collected nearly 2000 statements from victims, witnesses and perpetrators around the country during their first three



Statement taking in Harbel, Margibi County, January 15, 2007

weeks of deployment. In his Year-End Statement, the TRC Chairman thanked "the thousands of Liberians who have allowed us into their homes to take their statements". He invited "other Liberians to do likewise in order that an accurate and complete record of the civil crises and their impact on individuals, families, communities and the whole country can be established for posterity. Doing so will also assist us in knowing the truth, fostering genuine healing and reconciliation, and promoting peace, accountability and justice in Liberia".

Quote of the Week

"The coming year will be pivotal in our ability to give voices to the thousands of our people who were silenced by the guns of war and the untold sufferings they endured."

TRC Chairman in his Year End Statement and Goodwill Message