

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: LBR34713
Country: Liberia
Date: 6 April 2009

Keywords: Liberia – Kpelle – Traditional practices – Christian converts – Poro – NPFL – Child soldiers – Peace Agreement – Demobilisation – Passports – China

This response was prepared by the Research & Information Services Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. This research response may not, under any circumstance, be cited in a decision or any other document. Anyone wishing to use this information may only cite the primary source material contained herein.

Questions

1. [Please provide information on the Kpelle, including their traditional practices, and their location within Liberia.](#)
2. [Is conversion to Christianity and refusal to adhere to traditional practices a problem for Kpelle living in Liberia?](#)
3. [Please provide information on the NPFL and their use of child soldiers, including information on the peace agreement and their demobilisation.](#)
4. [Please provide information on passport procedures in December 2007 and whether it is possible to get a passport through connections or bribes.](#)
5. [Please advise if there is a special deal between Liberia and China re entry into and employment of persons.](#)
6. [Please provide brief information on the current political environment in Liberia.](#)

RESPONSE

A map of Liberia is included as Attachment 1 (United Nations 2004, 'Liberia – Map No. 3775 Rev. 6', January <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/liberia.pdf> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 1).

1. **Please provide information on the Kpelle, including their traditional practices, and their location within Liberia.**

The information provided in response to this question has been organised into the following three sections:

- [Kpelle](#);
- [Poro and Sande Secret Societies](#);
- [Traditional Practices](#).

- [Marriage](#)
- [Sande & Circumcision](#)
- [Poros & Tattoos](#)
- [Poisoning](#)
- [The Forest](#)

Kpelle

According to Gerald M. Erchak, Professor of Anthropology at Skidmore College, there are over 300,000 Kpelle in Liberia constituting about 20% of the population. Minority Rights Group International reports that there are 487,400 Kpelle in Liberia or 15.2% of the population. The US Department of State reports that the Kpelle are Liberia's largest ethnic group comprising 20% of the population (Erchak, Gerald M. 1998, 'Kpelle', *The Encyclopedia of World Cultures CD-ROM*, Macmillan, College of Letters and Science, UCLA website <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/fiske/135b/kpelle.htm> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 2; Minority Rights Group International 2008, 'Liberia Overview', *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples* <http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=5235&tmpl> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 3; and US Department of State 2009, *Background Note: Liberia*, February <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 4).

According to the US Department of State, the Kpelle live in central and western Liberia. *The Peoples of Africa: An Ethnohistorical Dictionary* reports that the Kpelle “are concentrated in Bong County but can also be found in Gibi County, Bomi County, and Lofa County.” According to Erchak, “there are now distinct Kpelle communities in Monrovia” (Olson, James Stuart 1996, 'Kpelle', *The Peoples of Africa: An Ethnohistorical Dictionary*, Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, p.305, Google Books website http://books.google.com/books?id=MdaAdBC-_S4C&dq=Peoples+of+Africa:+An+Ethnohistorical+Dictionary&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=dM7SpEzd9R&sig=Leo6yFb0MnMnYjIuTIRvGkwBbJk&hl=en&ei=LJvSSeyvBKjq6gOKhbydBA&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=7&ct=result#PPA305,M1 – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 5; Erchak, Gerald M. 1998, 'Kpelle', *The Encyclopedia of World Cultures CD-ROM*, Macmillan, College of Letters and Science, UCLA website <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/fiske/135b/kpelle.htm> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 2; and US Department of State 2009, *Background Note: Liberia*, February <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 4).

Erchak provides extensive information on the Kpelle in his 1998 article from *The Encyclopedia of World Cultures CD-ROM* which is included as Attachment 2. The information is presented under a number of headings: Orientation, History and Culture, Settlements, Economy, Kinship, Marriage and Family, Sociopolitical Organisation and Religion and Expressive Culture (Erchak, Gerald M. 1998, 'Kpelle', *The Encyclopedia of World Cultures CD-ROM*, Macmillan, College of Letters and Science, UCLA website <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/fiske/135b/kpelle.htm> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 2).

James L. Gibbs Jr. also provides extensive information on the Kpelle of Liberia from *Peoples of Africa* published in July 1966. The information is included as Attachment 6 and presented under a number of headings: Introduction, Economy, The Community and Territorial Organization, Lifecycle, Stratification, Political Organisation, Tribal Societies, Law,

Religion, Ethos and Change (Gibbs Jr., James L. 1966, 'The Kpelle of Liberia', *Peoples of Africa*, July, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, pp.199-240 – Attachment 6).

Poro and Sande Secret Societies

The 1997 book *Anthropology: What Does It Mean to Be Human?* provides information on the secret societies of Poro and Sande which are found amongst a number of tribes including the Kpelle in Liberia:

Poro is a secret society for men; Sande, a secret society for women. Poro is responsible for initiating young men into social manhood; Sande, for initiating young women into social womanhood. These sodalities are secret in the sense that members of each have certain knowledge that can be revealed only to initiated members. Both sodalities are hierarchically organized. The higher a person's status within the sodality, the greater the secret knowledge revealed.

Poro and Sande are responsible for supervising and regulating the sexual, social, and political conduct of all members of the wider society. To carry out this responsibility, high-status sodality members impersonate important supernatural figures by donning masks and performing in public. One secret kept from the uninitiated is that these masked figures are not the spirits themselves.

Membership is automatic on initiation, and all men and women are ordinarily initiated. ...Each community has its own local Poro and Sande congregations, and a person initiated in one community is eligible to participate in the congregations of other communities. Initiates must pay a fee for initiation, and if they wish to receive advanced training and progress to higher levels within the sodality, they must pay additional fees. In any community where Poro and Sande are strong, authority in society is divided between a sodality of mature women and one of mature men. Together, they work to keep society on the correct path (Lavenda, Robert H. & Schultz, Emily A. 2007, 'Secret Societies in Western Africa', *Anthropology: What Does It Mean to Be Human?*, 16 February, Oxford University Press website http://www.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780195189766/student_resources/Supp_chap_mats/Chapt07/Secret_Soc_West_Africa/?view=usa – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 7).

A journal article dated October 1972 by Richard M. Fulton of King's College provides information on the political structure and functions of Poro in Kpelle society. According to Fulton, "To be a true participant in the Kpelle community, one must be a member of the Poro secret society." Fulton continues:

It is still extremely difficult for an outsider to gain specific information on the workings of the Poro, and virtually impossible to join it.

...Even "modernized" and Christianized people will say little or nothing about the Poro; indeed, the casual visitor sees little indication of the presence of the Poro even in the remote villages of the interior. All sacrifices and ceremonies are held within the "sacred grove" of the Poro society; only the "bush school" of the Poro is visible. This institution is the ritualistic, cultural socialization mechanism used to initiate adolescents into the adult community. The "schools" are conducted to teach men and women (in separate sessions lasting now for some weeks, but traditionally for some years) farming, cooking, herb techniques, sex education, hunting, and rules of the culture not already assimilated (with special and added emphasis on authority structures) in short, anything that a person needs to know in order to survive in this culture. It is not hard to comprehend the power of the Poro when we realize the variety of functions that it performs, educationally, religiously, medically, and politically (Fulton,

Richard 1972, 'The Political Structures and Functions of Poro in Kpelle Society', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 74, No. 5, October, p.1222 – Attachment 8).

Fulton reports that the “Poro performs both sacred and secular functions.” Fulton provides the following information on the sacred functions of Poro amongst the Kpelle:

In its strictly *sacred* manifestations, the Poro is the means of organizing relationships with the spirits that are the foundation of the Kpelle belief system. These spirits can be divided into five categories: (1) ancestral spirits, (2) genii, (3) miscellaneous bush and water spirits, (4) spirits of the associations, and (5) specific Poro spirits.

All play a role in the pantheon of Kpelle beliefs. The first three categories of spirits govern the unseen world of the otherwise unexplainable. Ancestral spirits explain the life after death question present in most cultures and provide a spiritual mirror to the kinship based relationship patterns of daily life. The ancestors maintain a personal interest, and influence, on family and chiefdom life. They are protectors, and the Loi-Kalon [chief elder] and the Poro share responsibilities for keeping them satisfied (ritually “fed”) and interested in the well-being of the chiefdom and its peoples.

The genii and the bush and water spirits are a group of specific nature spirits with the ability to transfer specialized knowledge or punishments. They therefore often need earthly specialists in dealing with them hence, the existence of specialized medicine men, fortune tellers, and communicators with the spirits. The spirits of the associations are more pervasive influences, since they manifest themselves through the hierarchy of specialized societies. There are various specific associations that arise from time to time with particular interests and functions (e.g., snake society, leopard society) which manifest their power through specific spirits personified by varied masked figures. Most probably these specific associations are “arms” of or auxiliaries of the Poro and are ultimately controlled by the Poro hierarchy.

The spirits of the Poro society are the worldly representation of supernatural forces personifying the will of “god” or the mysteries of life. These spirits are different from the others because they represent not only the supernatural world, but the earthly manifestation of this power: the Poro. Chief amongst these spirits is the “bush devil” (daa-devil). He represents the ultimate communication of the power and will of the spirits (god). The very highest level of the Poro controls the worldly appearance of this figure in the form of a masked “mummer.” The Poro controls several masked figures that represent spirits and perform a variety of functions, but it is the “bush devil” who is the cumulative power of the spirits and the Poro and is as close to an earthly manifestation of “god” as exists in Kpelle religion. Harley (1950) indicates the masks of this and the other figures contain the real power of the religion, not the men of the Poro themselves. Regardless, it is the control of these spirits (through ceremony, medicine, and exclusive contact) for good or ill that constitutes the hard-core hold on the society that is the sacred power of the Poro (Fulton, Richard 1972, 'The Political Structures and Functions of Poro in Kpelle Society', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 74, No. 5, October, pp.1226-1227 – Attachment 8).

Fulton provides the following information on the political functions of Poro amongst the Kpelle:

Although it is the sacred aspect of life that gives the Poro its main reason for existence, it is the secular extension of the sacred functions, and the organization of society to realize these, that touches most directly the political life of the Kpelle. The close relationship between the sacred and the secular presents the key to Poro influence on political decisions.

...In relation to the Poro activities dealing with the supervision of political affairs within the Kpelle chiefdom, I place the activities of the Poro in specifically political affairs in the following categories: (1) reinforcing the legitimacy of the polity, (2) performing some functions of internal police, (3) performing certain judiciary functions, (4) playing a role in diplomacy and communications, and (5) advising the secular authorities.

(1) Legitimacy. As a general legitimizing force, it is clear that the Poro, having control of spiritual matters, can give credence to the political system.

...(2) Police functions. The Poro, or auxiliary associations connected with the Poro hierarchy in some specific instances, act as enforcers of cultural norms. Poro agents, not agents of the Loi-Kalon or the elders, execute those who deviate seriously from social (civil as well as sacred) norms. Matters of a serious nature adjudicated by the Loi-Kalon, village elders, or the Poro elders are enforced by the Poro. Poison is the usual method of execution (for witchcraft, revealing Poro secrets, doing bodily injury), and a trial is not always granted, especially if there is general agreement of wrongdoing. One of the main reasons that the Poro has been called an ultra-conservative force in relation to change has been its role as enforcer, in fear generating ways, of the traditional norms and its punishment of the dissenters from traditional or accepted leadership.

...Kpelle society is largely self-policing, but whenever the need arises for a policing function, it is felt that only the Poro can act without triggering a series of traditional reprisal incidents.

(3) Judiciary. In addition to enforcing many of the culture's norms, the Poro often is the judge of these norms. Since there is no law-making body in the Kpelle polity, all "laws" consist of cultural boundaries of norms-givens. If disagreements over land or women arise, the secular authorities adjudicate the case by a variety of conflict-solving means including informal moots as well as more formalized court procedures. Cases are judged on perceptions of each side's actions as they are supported by custom and tradition (see Gibbs 1963, 1969). In the secular area, however, there are a few crimes grave enough to demand the attention of the Poro leadership, for they deal more with spiritual than secular effect. The human body is sacred to the Kpelle, so violation of the body is a serious offense. The Poro combines with the secular system to control violence within the society. Making murder and serious fighting that result in bodily harm a Poro offense gives added weight to efforts to minimize violence.

Matters concerning "witchcraft" or other supernatural phenomena are adjudicated within Poro by the council of Poro elders. Unlike some societies in the area, Kpelle Poro seems not to have primary jurisdiction in cases dealing with land distribution and use, bride price business, distribution of spoils of war, or debt payment. All these go before secular courts composed of village chiefs and elders with appellate rights to the Loi-Kalon and his chiefdom elders. If, however, dissatisfaction is great with any decision in the secular system, and the society is disrupted, a problem may find a final appeal in the Poro elders. This is quite rare...

...(5) Advisory function. In most, but not all, secular affairs, Poro elders act as advisors to the secular leaders, this is a natural function, considering the significant power the Poro control. A secular leader is living dangerously if he does not have the support of the Poro hierarchy in his chiefdom or village. With their support there is much he can do; without their support he is likely to find himself poisoned. Most situations fall between these two extremes in practice, for the secular leaders are not without power and usually participate in high Poro councils as well (Fulton, Richard 1972, 'The Political Structures and Functions of Poro in Kpelle Society', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 74, No. 5, October, pp.1227-1228 & 1230 – Attachment 8).

International Crisis Group (ICG) reports that the “Liberian justice system is an amalgam of internal and imported statutory law; U.S. common law; state-sponsored African customary law, in which chiefs and local administrators exercise judicial powers; and African customary law that operates beyond state oversight, within Poro and Sande power association, council of elders, and other forms of dispute resolution.” ICG continues:

The two forms of customary justice have continued and even thrived despite the upheaval of war. Governments and donors pay scant attention to the interface between statutory and customary law but in Liberia customary law is the primary arena in which citizens look for justice. Reforming only the statutory system would mostly benefit urban elites, who are most likely to avail themselves of that system. A working relationship should be nurtured between the statutory and state-sponsored customary law systems, including by training customary officials and strengthening the appeals process of the customary system by facilitating appeals to the statutory courts.

...Liberia also has customary law systems that operate outside executive review. The Poro and Sande power associations, commonly referred to as secret societies, initiate males and females into adulthood, resolve community disputes and condemn members who have defied established social norms. Leaders believed to wield magical and spiritual powers secretly hand down harsh justice in the Poro forest; the more visible to the outside world the inner workings of the associations are, the less power they are believed to possess.

...The state-sponsored and outside-the-state customary law systems often share personnel. Setting clearer standards in the realm of state-sponsored customary law would make clearer to those operating in the “invisible” system the limits of allowable practice (International Crisis Group 2006, *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*, 6 April, ‘Executive Summary and Recommendations’ & p.8 – Attachment 9).

For more information on the Kpelle Poro secret society please see pages 219 to 223 of Attachment 6 (Gibbs Jr., James L. 1966, ‘The Kpelle of Liberia’, *Peoples of Africa*, July, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York – Attachment 6).

For more information on Sande please see Attachment 10 (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, *LBR38472.E – Liberia: Information about the initiation rites of the Sande secret society, and prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) among the Bassa of Liberia, including age at which initiation into the Sande secret society and FGM are performed; any state condemnation of the practice and whether state protection is available to women or female children who refuse to be subjected to this practice*, 18 March, UNHCR website <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=country&docid=3df4be5e0&skip=0&coi=LBR&querysi=Kpelle&searchin=fulltext&display=50&sort=date> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 10).

Traditional Practices

Marriage

According to Erchak, “A man’s authority, property, and younger wives are inherited either by his oldest surviving brother or his oldest son. Obligations, debts, personality, and food taboos, among other things, are inherited patrilineally”(Erchak, Gerald M. 1998, ‘Kpelle’, *The Encyclopedia of World Cultures CD-ROM*, Macmillan, College of Letters and Science,

UCLA website <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/fiske/135b/kpelle.htm> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 2).

The 1980 book entitled *Women and Marriage in Kpelle Society* reports that amongst the Kpelle “a woman and her children remain the property of the lineage that paid bride-wealth, even if the husband dies.” The book continues:

Especially in patrilineal societies such as the Kpelle, rules ensure that a woman and her children remain the property of the lineage that paid bride-wealth, even if the husband dies. Though seldom practiced, the Kpelle levirate legally transfers a widow to one of her husband’s brothers or other male lineage mates as his wife. A widow may even be transferred to one of her husband’s sons by another marriage, usually if she is of the same age or younger, though many of my informants regarded this dubiously, calling it a marriage between a man and his ‘mother.’ (All of one’s father’s wives are called ‘mother’) (Bledsoe, Caroline H. 1980, *Women and Marriage in Kpelle Society*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, Google Books website http://books.google.com/books?id=NjqsAAAIAAJ&dq=%22Women+and+Marriage+in+Kpelle+Society%22+bledsoe&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=P2-gun44fq&sig=PV9Lj_toqqc3rIH-su-1SmxHgI&hl=en&ei=NMXSSe6eD6jm6gOs6bCfBA&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=10&ct=result#PPA82,MI – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 11).

Sande & Circumcision

Erchak reports that “between the ages of 7 and 20, girls are initiated into the women’s Sande society, a process that traditionally lasted up to three years. Clitoridectomy and labiadectomy are central features of female initiation.” Canada’s International Investigation Agency, Introspec reports that during Sande school initiates undergo a clitoridectomy. The US Department of State reports that the “secret Sande Society” in Liberia “often performed FGM as an initiation rite, making it difficult to ascertain the number of cases” (Erchak, Gerald M. 1998, ‘Kpelle’, *The Encyclopedia of World Cultures CD-ROM*, Macmillan, College of Letters and Science, UCLA website <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/fiske/135b/kpelle.htm> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 2; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, *LBR38472.E – Liberia: Information about the initiation rites of the Sande secret society, and prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) among the Bassa of Liberia, including age at which initiation into the Sande secret society and FGM are performed; any state condemnation of the practice and whether state protection is available to women or female children who refuse to be subjected to this practice*, 18 March, UNHCR website <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=country&docid=3df4be5e0&skip=0&coi=LBR&querysi=Kpelle&searchin=fulltext&display=50&sort=date> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 10; and US Department of State 2009, *2008 Human Rights Report: Liberia*, 25 February, Section 5 ‘Children’ – Attachment 12).

Poro & Tattoos

Erchak reports that initiation into Poro “features scarification on the back and often on the chest and stomach as well.” The 1997 book *Anthropology: What Does It Mean to Be Human?* reports that anthropologist Beryl Bellman was initiated into a Poro chapter of the Kpelle in Liberia. Bellman reports that during the initiation “marks were incised on the necks, chests, and backs of initiates” which represent the “devil’s teeth marks” (Erchak, Gerald M. 1998,

'Kpelle', *The Encyclopedia of World Cultures CD-ROM*, Macmillan, College of Letters and Science, UCLA website <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/fiske/135b/kpelle.htm> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 2; and Lavenda, Robert H. & Schultz, Emily A. 2007, 'Secret Societies in Western Africa', *Anthropology: What Does It Mean to Be Human?*, 16 February, Oxford University Press website http://www.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780195189766/student_resources/Supp_chap_mats/Chapt07/Secret_Soc_West_Africa/?view=usa – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 7).

Poisoning

A journal article dated October 1972 in *The American Anthropologist* reports that poison is the “usual method of execution” for witchcraft amongst the Kpelle:

Poison is the usual method of execution (for witch-craft, revealing Poro secrets, doing bodily injury), and a trial is not always granted, especially if there is general agreement of wrongdoing. One of the main reasons that the Poro has been called an ultra-conservative force in relation to change has been its role as enforcer, in fear generating ways, of the traditional norms and its punishment of the dissenters from traditional or accepted leadership (Fulton, Richard 1972, 'The Political Structures and Functions of Poro in Kpelle Society', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 74, No. 5, October, pp.1227 – Attachment 8).

2. Is conversion to Christianity and refusal to adhere to traditional practices a problem for Kpelle living in Liberia?

No information was found amongst the sources consulted on the consequences for Kpelle Christian converts who refuse to adhere to traditional practices in Liberia.

Erchak reports that “some 10 to 25 percent of the Kpelle are nominal Christians (usually Lutheran) in those areas where missionaries are very active, and whereas a handful embrace Islam, the vast majority hold traditional animistic beliefs.” Erchak continues:

Kpelle religion is rather inchoate, focused vaguely on God, the ancestors, and forest spirits and more sharply on the secret medicine societies and the masked spirits who operate within those societies. The Kpelle recognize a High God who created the world and then retired. They believe in a variety of lesser spirits or genii, including ancestors, personal totems, water spirits, and spirits in magically powerful masks. Witchcraft and sorcery figure prominently in the belief system.

Religious Practitioners. The Kpelle recognize three principal types of shaman (medicine person of either sex): those associated with the Poro and Sande societies, those associated with other specific medicine societies, and those who are independent. The first two types mainly conduct rituals; the third type, and occasionally the second, primarily heal. The Kpelle also utilize diviners who analyze problems for a fee.

Ceremonies. Sacrifices are made to ancestors and other spirits, often at crossroads. Rituals and ritual knowledge are secret and, in general, associated with the secret medicine societies. Accordingly, most important Kpelle rituals are not accessible to observers. One exception is the coming-out ceremonies following initiatory seclusion.

...**Medicine.** The Kpelle deal with disease and with spirits through magic and medicine, both of which are implied by the word *sale*. Depending on whether a malady is determined to be

caused by spiritual (e.g., witchcraft) or other agency, the appropriate type of specialist is consulted for treatment.

Death and Afterlife. Death is a passing into a spiritual realm that coexists with the material realm. The deceased become ancestors, who seem to become increasingly vague and to move further away from villages and into the bush as their memory becomes less distinct in the minds of their living relatives (Erchak, Gerald M. 1998, 'Kpelle', *The Encyclopedia of World Cultures CD-ROM*, Macmillan, College of Letters and Science, UCLA website <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/fiske/135b/kpelle.htm> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 2).

Ayodeji Olukoju, in the 2006 book *Culture and Customs of Liberia*, notes that “regardless of the religious affiliation of Liberians, they all share a common outlook on the supernatural and the keeping of secrets.” Olukoju continues:

Liberian religious culture broadly defined is characterized by a predisposition toward secrecy (encapsulated in the concept of *ifa mo* – “do not speak it”) and an ingrained belief in the intervention of mysterious forces in human affairs. Regardless – or because – of their religious preferences, Liberians acknowledge the power of evil in human affairs.

...Beliefs in spirits has always been fundamental to Liberian life, worldview, and religious beliefs. Traditional religionists, especially those in the Poro areas of northern and northwestern Liberia, believe in the existence of a variety of spirits: ancestral spirits, various water and bush spirits, genies, spirits of the associations and specific Poro spirits. Ancestral spirits are believed to protect and play mediatory roles in the affairs of their offspring and in their offspring's dealings with the spirit world, and generally maintain an interest in their well-being. Bush and water spirits and genies are believed to possess humans and to be capable of transferring specialized knowledge or power to them. This consequently has led to the emergence of specialized priests, diviners, physicians, and fortune-tellers who themselves claim to communicate with the spirits. These spirits are also believed to govern the mysterious world that exists outside of human control. Spirits (or totems) of the associations government the affairs of the snake and leopard societies, which often act as the agents of the Poro. The Poro spirits include the bush devil, which communicates the will of the god and acts as its earthly or visible manifestations. These spirits are represented by several masked dancers under the control of the Poro.

...In essence, it is commonly held that the unseen gods and spirits represent the ultimate sources of power, and humans have to arrange how to communicate with or appease such spiritual forces. Yet it is important to concede not only that these beliefs vary in their details but also that they are more grounded in some parts of the country than others. Thus, given the antiquity of the Poro and Sande (male and female societies, respectively) in the central regions, they are more intricately woven into the fabric of society and politics in those places than in southeastern Liberia (Olukoju, Ayodeji 2006, 'Traditional or Indigenous Religion and Worldview', *Culture and Customs of Liberia*, Greenwood Press, Westport, pp.23-25 – Attachment 13).

For more information on the religion of the Kpelle please see pages 226 to 229 of Attachment 6 (Gibbs Jr., James L. 1966, 'The Kpelle of Liberia', *Peoples of Africa*, July, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York – Attachment 6).

According to Erchak, “Beyond enculturation, conformity is achieved largely through social pressure, especially the fear of being accused of witchcraft. The Poro and Sande also keep their members in line”. Fulton reports that “Poro is the society's main coercive agent:

psychologically and physically” (Fulton, Richard 1972, ‘The Political Structures and Functions of Poro in Kpelle Society’, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 74, No. 5, October, pp.1218-1233 – Attachment 8; and Erchak, Gerald M. 1998, ‘Kpelle’, *The Encyclopedia of World Cultures CD-ROM*, Macmillan, College of Letters and Science, UCLA website <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/fiske/135b/kpelle.htm> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 2).

According to Gibbs Jr., membership of Poro or Sane “is an important part of being a Kpelle”. Gibbs Jr continues:

In spite of the vitality of the Poro and Sande as institutions, non-membership seems to carry no great disadvantage. An uninitiated man can hold land and property and marry, which it is said, would not have been possible in the past. ...Although membership may not have tangible advantages, it is an important part of being a Kpelle and accounts for much of the pride that Kpelle have in their culture. It has been correctly pointed out that the attachment most Kpelle feel to the tribal societies and their secrets is similar to European and American conceptions of patriotism.

Membership in different lodges or units of the Poro or Sande is an important integrating factor, for the unifying bonds of society memberships crosscut the divisive links of kinship and territorial affiliations. They can even link members of different tribes (Gibbs Jr., James L. 1966, ‘The Kpelle of Liberia’, *Peoples of Africa*, July, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York – Attachment 6).

3. Please provide information on the NPFL and their use of child soldiers, including information on the peace agreement and their demobilisation.

The information provided in response to this question has been organised into the following three sections:

- [National Patriotic Front of Liberia \(NPFL\)](#);
- [Civil War 1989-1997](#); and
- [Child Soldiers](#)

National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)

The UK Home Office provides the following information on the NPFL:

Formed in Abidjan, Cote D’Ivoire, it began the civil war under the leadership of Charles Taylor in December 1989, with an invasion into Nimba county that led to its control of large parts of Liberia. It acquired largely Gio and Mano membership, and is said to have been responsible for a number of atrocities committed against members of the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups. Between 1990 and 1994, it controlled the bulk of Liberian territory, which it ruled through the National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government (NPRAG), based in Gbarnga, Bong county (UK Home Office 1999, *Liberia Assessment*, September – Attachment 14).

The Conflict Transformation Service provides the following information on the NPFL:

- Established in 1989;
- Represents “Gio and Mano in Nimba county, some Americo-Liberian leaders”;
- Capital in Gbarnga;
- Estimated maximum number of combatants: 25,000;

- Supported by Libya, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso;
- In conflict with the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the United Liberation Movement of Liberia (ULIMO) (Lehtinen, Terhi 2002, 'Liberia', *Agents, Motives and Instruments: An Atlas of African Conflicts*, Conflict Transformation Service website, p.147 <http://www.conflicttransform.net/Liberia.pdf> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 15).

A UN Development Programme (UNDP) funded study in partnership with the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) dated April 2007 reports that “Taylor’s forces were shown to be drawn from the historically antagonistic tribes of the LURD and MODEL – Gio and Mano as well as a strong contingent of Bassa and Kpelle” (Pugel, James 2007, *What the Fighters Say: A Survey of Ex-combatants in Liberia February-March 2006*, UN Development Programme & African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect, April, p.27 http://www.lr.undp.org/UNDPwhatFightersSayLiberia_Finalv3.pdf – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 16).

A paper dated February 2008 by Andrew T. Young, University of Mississippi reports that in July 1991 Taylor established the National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government (NPRAG) with himself as President:

He proclaimed his territories “Greater Liberia”; its capital was seated in Gbarnga in Bong County. The NPRAG established a banking system (the Bong Bank) with its own currency, maintained an official newspaper called *The Patriot*, and operated television and radio networks. It also operated airfields and a deepwater port at the coastal town of Buchanan (Pham, 2004, p. 104).

Controlling most of Liberia’s resource-rich territory, Taylor was able to fund his NPRAG and NPFL forces to great extent by taxation and/or protection payments. European and US businesses operated in Greater Liberia extracting iron ore, rubber, timber, diamonds, and gold. Lowenkopf (1995, p. 94) claims that this resulted in \$8 to \$9 million in monthly revenues to NPRAG. Reno (1998, pp. 98-99) goes further, claiming that during the first two years of war “the total yields of Taylor’s warlord economy approached \$200-\$250 million a year” (Young, Andrew T. 2008, ‘Costly Discrimination and Ethnic Conflict: The Case of the Liberian Civil Wars, Ludwig von Mises Institute, February, p.12 <http://mises.org/journals/scholar/young2.pdf> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 17).

Civil War 1989-1997

A UNDP funded study in partnership with the ANPPCAN dated April 2007 reports on the three phases of the Liberian civil war. Please note that this question is concerned with the first phase:

The “war” as most contemporary Liberians understand it began in 1989 when Charles Taylor crossed into Liberia from neighboring Ivory Coast. The war can be characterized by three distinct phases. First was the Taylor insurgency, which included the surrounding of Monrovia, international intervention, the killing of Samuel Doe, and an eventual electoral process that installed Charles Taylor as president in 1997. Second was a brief interlude where Taylor continued the legacy of authoritarian rule in Liberia. President Taylor’s “poor governance, administrative malfeasance, corruption, intimidation, threats, torture, terrorist acts against his population and summary executions of civilians” set the stage for the final phase of the “war.”

In 1999 Liberia spawned a new rebel organization, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), backed by neighboring Guinean president Lansana Conte. Fighting in Liberia's northern Lofa County intensified by 2001 and reached Monrovia in June 2003. By this time, a second rebel faction intent upon the removal of Taylor from power emerged from the eastern part of the country – the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) – and was said to be backed by the government of the Ivory Coast. With the capital city, Monrovia, surrounded, Charles Taylor accepted an invitation for asylum from the Nigerian government and departed the country on 11 August 2003. The UN mission in Liberia (UNMIL) then was established by September 2003, and the process of negotiating the peace and placing Liberia on a track of renewal began (Pugel, James 2007, *What the Fighters Say: A Survey of Ex-combatants in Liberia February-March 2006*, UN Development Programme & African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect, April, p.13 http://www.lr.undp.org/UNDPwhatFightersSayLiberia_Finalv3.pdf – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 16).

Human Rights Watch (HRW) provides the following background on the conflict which began in 1989:

The conflict in Liberia, which began in late 1989, when then rebel leader Charles Taylor launched an incursion from neighboring Côte d'Ivoire, has been characterized by brutal ethnic killings and massive abuses against the civilian population. Although the conflict is rooted in historical grievances, the brutal tactics employed from 1989 to 1997, including targeting of particular ethnic groups by Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and later the United Liberian Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) were previously unknown in Liberian history.

In the almost eight years of fighting before a binding ceasefire was negotiated in 1997, numerous efforts to bring about peace were unsuccessful. In the interim, civilians suffered at the hands of the fighting groups; thousands of Liberians were killed in the fighting and subject to torture, beatings, rape, and sexual assault, resulting in massive displacement inside and outside the country. Following the ceasefire of 1997, Charles Taylor, former head of the NPFL, was elected as president of the country (Human Rights Watch 2004, *How to Fight, How to Kill: Child Soldiers in Liberia*, February, Vol. 16, No. 2(A), p.7 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/liberia0204/liberia0204.pdf> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 18).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan provides background to the conflict:

The roots of the Liberia's civil war, and its consequences for children, go as far back as its founding in 1847 by freed American slaves. New settlers, known as Americo-Liberians for 133 years, subsequently controlled the fledgling republic. They ran their new country like a colony, establishing a feudal structure with all social, economic and political power in their hands. In the name of this Christianizing and civilizing mission, the indigenous population who outnumbered their colonists by twenty to one, were subjected to wave of abuse, including forced labor, disenfranchisement, and exclusion from the coastal, enclave economy, all of which led to their impoverishment and cultural alienation while the ruling class prospered.

By 1970s, however, this once unassailable power structure was beginning to show sign of crumbling as a new constituency of disaffected, often foreign educated, Liberians, as well as schooled indigenous technocrats, joined forces in various opposition groups and began voicing their demands for reform. Their dissatisfaction culminated in 1979 with the "rice riots," a two-thousand-strong protest, sparked off by a 50 percent increase in the local staple,

which turned to mayhem when police began firing into the crowd, killing more than one hundred protesters. It was this growing discontent that paved the way in 1980 for the military coup that brought Samuel Doe, a Krahn from Tuzon, to power. Although he himself later became a symbol for greed and corruption, the new president's bloody debut was initially welcomed by the majority of Liberians as an end to more than a century of colonization.

The years that followed were marked by mounting unrest due to an increasingly Krahn-dominated authoritarian regime that promoted the joint militarization and ethnically based politics and reigned over a sagging economy characterized by burgeoning inflation and growing unemployment. Against this background, other ethnic cliques began plotting their own rise to power, culminating in 1985 with a brutally suppressed coup attempt by Thomas Quiwonkpa, an ethnic Gio from Nimba County of Liberia. After murdering Quiwonkpa, Doe's soldiers, the Krahn dominated Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) began a bloody campaign of reprisal killings, mainly targeted at Gios and Manos, a closely related group that resides in the same region of Liberia.

In December 1989, a small group of armed rebels led by ex-civil servant (Charles Taylor), himself an Americo-Liberian, invaded Nimba County from the Ivory Coast. They called themselves the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). The AFL responded with ruthless counterinsurgency campaign, indiscriminately killing civilians, burning villages, raping women and looting. In response, NPFL ranks swelled with the long-victimized Gios and Manos, many of whom were boys orphaned during the waves of reprisal killings or simply enraged by the attacks against their people. Meanwhile, the NPFL was conducting its own reign of terror on civilians and suspected supporters of the Doe regime, primarily members of the Krahn and Mandingo group. By 1990, the rebel group had over-taken every military position, counties except Monrovia the capital city of Liberia.

What ensued was a slow burning seven year of war fuelled by the formation of one ethnic-based rival group after another. By 1992, the NPFL splinter group, the Independent National Patriotic Front (INFL), which captured and killed Doe, had already reached its zenith and faded. But the United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO), formed by Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone who had been loyal to Doe, were making gains from across the border into southwestern Liberia. In 1993, the Liberia Peace Council (LPC), a largely Krahn offshoot of the AFL, challenged the NPFL and gained significant control over the southeast (Deng Deng, William 2001, '2.3 Liberia', *A Survey of Programs on the Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers*, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 30 March <http://www.mofa.go.jp/POLICY/human/child/survey/profile3.html> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 19).

BBC News provides the following brief summary of Liberia's civil war between 1989 and 1997:

On Christmas Eve, 1989, Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) began a rebel assault from the north-eastern province of Nimba – reaching Monrovia by September 1990.

...Three armed groups competed for Monrovia – the NPFL, a breakaway group led by Prince Yormie Johnson and the Armed Forces of Liberia – AFL – remnants of Doe's army.

It was Prince Johnson's forces which captured Doe, and savagely hacked him to death.

From 1990 onwards there was an escalation of war in Liberia, with new rebel groups establishing powerbases throughout the country.

An African peace-keeping force – ECOMOG – of mainly Nigerian soldiers secured Monrovia and made it a relatively safe haven for civilians but rebel groups continued to control wide swathes of land outside the capital.

Charles Taylor established a rival administration in the central town of Gbarnga, complete with its own currency.

...Continued efforts at establishing peace and re-uniting the country failed and a new rebel movement, the United Liberation Movement of Liberia – ULIMO emerged to challenge the NPFL.

ULIMO, which invaded from Sierra Leone, succeeded in wresting large areas of Lofa and Cape Mount counties in western Liberia from Taylor's forces.

The movement later split into two – ULIMO J – led by Roosevelt Johnson, which was mainly Krahn and ULIMO K, led by Alhaji Kromah, which was principally Mandingo.

By 1993 another armed faction had emerged – the Liberia Peace Council (LPC) which battled the NPFL in south-eastern Liberia.

Against a background of painfully slow negotiations and numerous attempts to reach some kind of power-sharing agreement atrocities continued on all sides. Each step towards peace seemed to reach an impasse resulting in renewed conflict.

In April 1996, fighting erupted in central Monrovia and 40 Lebanese and 25 Nigerians were seized as US warships headed for the region

...The breakthrough came with a peace agreement signed at Abuja in Nigeria in August 1995 and the subsequent deployment of ECOMOG troops throughout Liberia.

Although hostilities continued the ceasefire generally held and rebel fighters slowly began to disarm, returning to Monrovia after years in the bush.

After many last minute hitches on 19 July 1997 Liberia finally went to the polls – with Charles Taylor securing an outright victory (Stead, David, 1999, 'Troubled past of Africa's first republic', *BBC News*, 12 August <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/418596.stm> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 20).

The UK Home Office provides a timeline of the Liberian civil war and peace agreements between 1989 and 1997 please see Section 3.6 to 3.29 of the report which is included as Attachment 14 (UK Home Office 1999, *Liberia Assessment*, September – Attachment 14).

Child Soldiers

An article dated 14 July 2003 in *The Independent* reports that "Mr Taylor is a pioneer in the dark trade of child soldiering." The article continues:

He has practically institutionalised it in Liberia. When he started his rebellion in 1990, he used armed boys and girls to oust the government. When he came to power, he used them to defend it.

They make for powerful, unquestioning fighters. Bolstered by drugs and alcohol, they use women's wigs, clothes and enemy bones to give them "supernatural" powers. Those who perish are easily replaced (Walsh, Declan 2003, 'Liberia's boy soldiers plan a final orgy of

looting, *The Independent*, 14 July <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/liberias-boy-soldiers-plan-a-final-orgy--of-looting-586745.html> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 21).

HRW reports that the “use of children as soldiers dates to the start of the conflict in 1989.” HRW continues:

Taylor’s NPFL became infamous for the abduction and use of boys in war; a tactic later adopted by other Liberian fighting factions as well as other fighting groups in West Africa. Between 6,000 and 15,000 children are estimated to have taken up arms from 1989 to 1997. A demobilization program conducted in 1997 was only partially successful in rehabilitating children, in part due to limited funding and insecurity in the countryside. Many of the same children who had fought previously became easily re-recruited when fighting resumed in 2000.

Charles Taylor’s NPFL used child soldiers extensively in groups known as Small Boys Units (SBUs) in the 1990s. Following a demobilization program in 1997, many children left the forces, entering into official rehabilitation programs or simply abandoning the groups on their own (Human Rights Watch 2004, *How to Fight, How to Kill: Child Soldiers in Liberia*, February, Vol. 16, No. 2(A), pp.8 & 14 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/liberia0204/liberia0204.pdf> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 18).

A HRW report dated March 2005 reports that child soldiers who originally fought with the NPFL “had been forcibly recruited or had joined voluntarily”. HRW continues:

The vast majority of regional warriors interviewed by Human Rights Watch had first fought with one of four armed groups; the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) from 1989-1996, the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) from 1992-1996, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone from 1991- 2001, or the Civil Defense Force (CDF) militias of Sierra Leone from 1994-2001.

Most had originally joined or been abducted and pressed into service as children. Those who had originally fought with the Liberian NPFL and ULIMO factions had been forcibly recruited or had joined voluntarily to more easily obtain food for themselves and their families. Some believed that by joining, they would be able protect themselves and their families from being harassed or targeted by armed factions, including the group they joined. A few others said that they joined to avenge the ethnic or tribally motivated violence that had claimed the life of a loved one (Human Rights Group 2005, *Youth, Poverty and Blood: The Lethal Legacy of West Africa’s Regional Warriors*, March, Vol. 17, No. 5(A), p.11 – Attachment 22).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan reports that 18% of the NPFL were child soldiers who spent four to five years in the faction:

Of the 1.4 million children, it is estimated that as many as 15,000 have served as child soldiers in Liberia’s civil war. The data collected from 4,306 of child soldiers comprises 20% percent of the total number of fighters demobilized. This follows the same pattern as the data collected of adults. Majority of fighters demobilized were between 15 and 28 when they turned in their guns. Of those 17 and under, majority 69% were in the age range of 15 to 17 followed by 27 percent between the ages of 12 to 14. About 4% were 10 or 11 with the remaining children, less than 1%, aged 9 years or below and young as 6. The fact that 69% of the child fighters were between the ages of 15 and 17 when they disarmed, it can be concluded that they were as young as 10 or 12 when they joined. In addition, a significant

portion of those demobilizing as adults and who are now in the range of 18 to 22 years old would have been children when they joined. However, it is important to note that when reviewing the data that it describes only those fighters who demobilized and as such, not truly reflecting the composition and characteristics of the fighting force as whole.

Although all of the relevant peace accords called for the encampment of ex-combatants during the disarmament and demobilization phase, there existed in Liberia neither the political will nor the resources from donors to implement such a scheme. ...As a result, the entire demobilization process for ex-combatants in Liberia was not more than 12 hours (Deng Deng, William 2001, '2.3 Liberia', *A Survey of Programs on the Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers*, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 30 March <http://www.mofa.go.jp/POLICY/human/child/survey/profile3.html> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 19).

Mamadou Diouma Bah, Masters Student in Peace and Conflict Transformation at the University of Tromsø provides the following information on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) in Liberia following the 1996 Abuja Peace Accord:

The Abuja Peace Accord in 1996 provided the bases for carrying out DDR and reform of the security forces in Liberia. Abuja II stipulated that all army factions were to be disbanded and the army to be reformed and trained by Ecomog. Consequently, Ecomog increased its forces to approximately 11,000 in anticipation of its role in implementing the Abuja peace accords. Ecomog eventually deployed its troops in every region of the country.

...At the time of Ecomog intervention in Liberia, combatants were estimated around 25,500; National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL): 12,500; Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL): 6,000; Armed Force of Liberia (AFL): 7,000. By the election time in 1997 estimates of combatants increased to 60,000. On 22 November 1996 the disarmament process officially started with slow beginning, but it picked up momentum towards the end of January 1997. Thus, the deadline for handing in weapons was extended ten days until 9 February. During this disarmament period which extended less than three months, Ecomog collected large quantities of weapons, and "for the first time in years guns were not visible on the streets of Monrovia except in the hands of the peacekeepers." Thus, according to UN figures, by 9 February 1997, 24,500 of fighters had been disarmed and demobilized. These included 4,306 child fighters and 250 adult female fighters. Over 9,570 weapons and 1.2 million pieces of ammunition were also surrendered and Ecomog search operations around the country seized another 122,162 pieces of ammunition and 917 weapons. However, such DDR efforts fell short to the standard which was needed in order to maintain peace in Liberia after the democratic elections of 1997.

To begin with, it is now an open secret that many of the weapons collected by Ecomog and the UN in the early stages of the disarmament phase were unserviceable. For instance, it is argued that about 20% of the estimated 10,000 weapons collected were unserviceable and the rest were in poor condition. Likewise, it is widely believed that many hardened fighters avoided demobilization and that the 'fighters' that queued in the demobilization centres were not the factions' more reliable troops. In addition, there were reports of arms caches being buried in the Liberian countryside by the warring factions.

...The other aspect was that while many arms were collected, demobilization in terms of breaking command and control over fighters by their former bosses was less eminent. One possible explanation of this still-bound between combatants and their former bosses could be that of scarce and poor planning of the process. Available reports for instance, indicate that demobilization was reduced to a twelve-hour process whereby ex-combatants simply turned in a weapon, were registered and then were left on their own without social integration

packages and long term employment programmes. One of the main consequences of failing to engage ex-combatants was the enormous sense of insecurity felt by the combatants themselves.

...Following demobilization, few reintegration programmes came on line. Lack of resources could be the main factor in this regards. There was a lack of adequate economic inducements for the fighters to give up their weapons. The terms of Abuja II, for instance, did not provide for assistance packages for former combatants, who afterward complained about the meagre food rations. The militarization since 1989 of the youth in Liberia means that for many the guns have become their source of survival-their "credit card" as one commentator put it.²⁵ Therefore, there is hardly any doubt that after six years of experiencing and to some extent "enjoying"²⁶ a certain uninhibited freedom, the majority of armed rebels, who were mostly young men and women, were only prepared for a violent lifestyle (Bah, Mamadou Diouma 2005, *Peace Building Through Informal Channels: A Comparative Analysis of Liberia and Mozambique*, Central New York Regional Peace Studies Consortium, pp.5-8 <http://www.peaceconsortium.org/Mamadou%20Diouma.pdf> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 23).

4. Please provide information on passport procedures in December 2007 and whether it is possible to get a passport through connections or bribes.

No information on the passport procedures in December 2007 were found amongst the sources consulted.

The Bureau of Passport and Visa of the Liberian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issues passports to Liberian nationals:

The Bureau of Passport and Visa primarily function to issue Passport to Liberian nationals and Visas to aliens requesting legal entry. In effecting these duties, the Bureau ensures that proper screening of applicants are conducted to establish the truthfulness of their claim of Liberian citizenship and the subsequent issuance of passports on the establishment of said fact. As you are aware, there are three categories of passport, namely Ordinary, Official and Diplomatic. The ordinary passport process is directly handled by the Bureau, with applicants going through the regular screening procedures ('The Successes of President Johnson-Sirleaf's Diplomacy and Foreign Minister H. E. Olubanke King-Akerele' 2009, The Liberian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, 9 February http://www.mofa.gov.lr/press.php?news_id=145 – Accessed 2 April 2009 – Attachment 24).

An article dated 5 April 2007 in *The Analyst* reports that Assistant Foreign Minister for Public Affairs, William K. Ledlum said that passport applicants "must submit two passport size photos and appear in person for an interview for the purpose of establishing the veracity of the information provided on the application form." The article continues:

"Passport costs only US\$20.00 and it's important that every Liberian obtains a passport and do so, you'll have to apply to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs".

Mr. Ledlum noted that applicant must submit two passport size photos and appear in person for an interview for the purpose of establishing the veracity of the information provided on the application form.

"Once an applicant's form is approved after review, a payment slip is issued to proceed to the Ministry of Finance to make payment into government coffers'.

“After payment, an applicant is listed along with hundreds and the listing is submitted to the Finance Ministry where a voucher is raised and a check is issued to LBDI for the release of the equivalent number of passport booklets.

“The passports are then moved to the Foreign Ministry for the entry of personal information and are signed by the appropriate person and issued to applicants”.

According to him, the entire process lasts about three weeks to have a passport completed for issuance (‘Liberia: No Middleperson in Obtaining Passport’ 2007, *The Analyst*, 5 April, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 2 April 2009 – Attachment 28).

An article dated 1 February 2008 in *The Perspective* reports that Bureau of Passports at the Liberian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has become one of the success stories of President Sirleaf’s administration:

President Sirleaf highlighted the bureau of passport at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, once a corrupt and inefficient office that epitomized everything that was wrong with Liberia bureaucracy, has now become one of the great success stories of this administration, through the work of Ms. Mary Broh. Ms Broh, one of the people who followed Mrs. Sirleaf in her quest for reform, gave up her life in New York and moved back to Liberia two years ago. Mary Broh did well, the President said. People remember how she transformed Broad Street. Now she has applied the same creative leadership to the passport office: she cleaned it, made it efficient and streamlined the process. She received two ovations from the jam-packed room in less than two minutes when the President praised her (Dukulé, Abdoulaye W. 2008, ‘President Sirleaf on the State of the Nation’, *The Perspective*, 1 February <http://www.liberiaitech.com/theperspective/2008/0131200801.html> – Accessed 2 April 2009 – Attachment 25).

An article dated 19 December 2008 in *The Liberia Paper* reports on changes to the Passport Section of the Liberian Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

When Mary Broh took over the Passport Section at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was just as decadent and inefficient as any other sector of our public institutions. She and her staff worked and developed new structures and processes that today function as efficiently as their counterparts in many places around the world. As a matter of fact, the effectiveness of the Passport Section exerted pressure on the Vital Statistics Unit at the Health and Social Welfare Ministry, where birth certificates are processed to start becoming effective. Malpractices were unearthed at the Vital Statistics Unit because Mary Broh executed her review of birth certificates with precision. This small example have how change can beget change has to be studied and applied across a broad spectrum of our public service delivery system.

Protocols can work if they are created to be easy and make sense. Often the person receiving the service can offer helpful suggestions, if they understand the tasks and goals of the public servant. Just before completing this paper, I checked with sources in Monrovia about the quality of service delivery at the Passport Section after Mary Broh’s departure, my source noted that there is still a semblance of the organizational effectiveness that Mary Broh put in place (Dolo, Emmanuel 2008, ‘Building a Corruption-Sensitive Society (Commentary)’, *Liberia Paper*, 19 December, Liberia Corruption Watch website http://www.liberiacorruptionwatch.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=146:building-a-corruption-sensitive-society-commentary&catid=1:latest&Itemid=1 – Accessed 2 April 2009 – Attachment 26).

5. Please advise if there is a special deal between Liberia and China re: entry into and employment of persons.

No information was found amongst the sources consulted on a special deal between Liberia and China re: entry into and employment of persons.

6. Please provide brief information on the current political environment in Liberia.

The US Department of State reports that political party structures “remain weak” in Liberia and “politics continues to be personality-driven.” The US Department of State continues:

On August 11, 2003, under intense U.S. and international pressure, President Taylor resigned office and departed into exile in Nigeria. This move paved the way for the deployment by ECOWAS of what became a 3,600-strong peacekeeping mission in Liberia (ECOMIL). On August 18, leaders from the Liberian Government, the rebels, political parties, and civil society signed a comprehensive peace agreement that laid the framework for constructing a 2-year National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), headed by businessman Gyude Bryant. The UN took over security in Liberia in October 2003, subsuming ECOMIL into the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), a force that grew to over 12,000 troops and 1,148 police officers.

The October 11, 2005 presidential and legislative elections and the subsequent November 8, 2005 presidential run-off were the most free, fair, and peaceful elections in Liberia’s history. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf defeated international soccer star George Weah 59.4% to 40.6% to become Africa’s first democratically elected female president. She was inaugurated in January 2006 and formed a government of technocrats drawn from among Liberia’s ethnic groups and including members of the Liberian diaspora who had returned to the country to rebuild government institutions. The president’s party, the Unity Party, does not control the legislature, in which 12 of the 30 registered political parties are represented.

The political situation has remained stable since the 2005 elections. The Government of Liberia has made positive strides aimed at political stability and economic recovery. President Sirleaf has taken a public stance against corruption and has dismissed several government officials. The President is supported by highly experienced and technically competent senior officials, and the public has more confidence in her administration than in any of its recent predecessors. President Sirleaf enjoys good relations with international organizations and donor governments, with whom she is working closely on Liberia’s development. The national legislature has enacted several key reforms.

In order to maintain stability through the post-conflict period, Liberia’s security sector reform efforts have led to the disarmament of more than 100,000 ex-combatants, the wholesale U.S.-led reconstruction of the Armed Forces of Liberia, and a UN-led effort to overhaul the Liberian National Police. The mandate of UNMIL was extended to September 2009, and a gradual drawdown was to commence in 2008, to last several years. During this period the Government of Liberia and its development partners will focus on creating jobs, attracting investment, and providing education and other essential services to Liberia’s communities. The Government of Liberia won substantial donor support for its new Poverty Reduction Strategy at the June 2008 Liberia Poverty Reduction Forum in Berlin, Germany.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Liberia has a bicameral legislature consisting of 64 representatives and 30 senators. The 2005 election placed a spectrum of political personalities in the legislature, most for six-year terms. Senior senators were elected for nine-year terms. Party structures remain weak, and politics

continues to be personality-driven. Historically, the executive branch heavily influenced the legislature and judicial system (US Department of State 2009, *Background Note: Liberia*, February <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm> – Accessed 1 April 2009 – Attachment 4).

BBC News provides the following information on Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf:

US-educated economist and former finance minister Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf won the second round of presidential elections in November 2005 and in January 2006 she was inaugurated as Africa's first elected woman head of state. The poll was intended to draw a line under Liberia's war.

Her rival, the footballer and political novice George Weah, alleged fraud. International observers said the vote had been broadly free and fair.

Known in Liberia as the "Iron Lady", Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf drew much of her support from women voters, and from Liberia's small educated elite. She faces the twin challenges of trying to rebuild the country and of fostering reconciliation. One of her priorities is to reintegrate into society former child soldiers. She has declared a "zero tolerance" of corruption.

The president served as finance minister under President William Tolbert in the late 1970s and fled the country after the Tolbert government was overthrown. She has worked for the UN and the World Bank.

Some of the opposition to Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf stems from her one-time association with former Liberian leader Charles Taylor. She briefly supported the then warlord in his quest to overthrow military leader Samuel Doe.

Born in 1938, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is a widowed mother-of-four ('Country Profile' 2008, *BBC News*, 26 November http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1043500.stm - Accessed 6 April 2009 – Attachment 27).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Government Information & Reports

Danish Immigration Service <http://www.nyidanmark.dk/>

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

United Nations (UN)

UN Refugee Agency – Refworld <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd>

Non-Government Organisations

Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Freedom House <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>

Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

International Crisis Group <http://www.crisisgroup.org/>

Minorities at Risk Project <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/>

Minority Rights Group <http://www.minorityrights.org/>

International News & Politics

allAfrica.com <http://allafrica.com/>

BBC News <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

IRIN News <http://www.irinnews.org/>

Search Engines

Google <http://www.google.com.au/>

Google Books <http://books.google.com/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. United Nations 2004, 'Liberia – Map No. 3775 Rev. 6', January
<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/liberia.pdf> – Accessed 1 April 2009.
2. Erchak, Gerald M. 1998, 'Kpelle', *The Encyclopedia of World Cultures CD-ROM*, Macmillan, College of Letters and Science, UCLA website
<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/fiske/135b/kpelle.htm> – Accessed 1 April 2009.
3. Minority Rights Group International 2008, 'Liberia Overview', *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples* <http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=5235&tmpl> – Accessed 1 April 2009.
4. US Department of State 2009, *Background Note: Liberia*, February
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm> – Accessed 1 April 2009.
5. Olson, James Stuart 1996, 'Kpelle', *The Peoples of Africa: An Ethnohistorical Dictionary*, Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, p.305, Google Books website
http://books.google.com/books?id=MdaAdBC-S4C&dq=Peoples+of+Africa:+An+Ethnohistorical+Dictionary&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=dM7SpEzd9R&sig=Leo6yFb0MnMnYjIuTIRvGkwBbJk&hl=en&ei=LJvS SeyvBKjq6gOKhbydBA&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=7&ct=result#PPA305.M1 – Accessed 1 April 2009.
6. Gibbs Jr., James L. 1966, 'The Kpelle of Liberia', *Peoples of Africa*, July, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, pp.199-240. (MRT-RRT Library)
7. Lavenda, Robert H. & Schultz, Emily A. 2007, 'Secret Societies in Western Africa', *Anthropology: What Does It Mean to Be Human?*, 16 February, Oxford University Press website
http://www.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780195189766/student_resources/Supp_chap_mats/Chapt07/Secret_Soc_West_Africa/?view=usa – Accessed 1 April 2009.
8. Fulton, Richard 1972, 'The Political Structures and Functions of Poro in Kpelle Society', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 74, No. 5, October, pp.1218-1233. (MRT-RRT Library)

9. International Crisis Group 2006, *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*, 6 April.
10. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, *LBR38472.E – Liberia: Information about the initiation rites of the Sande secret society, and prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) among the Bassa of Liberia, including age at which initiation into the Sande secret society and FGM are performed; any state condemnation of the practice and whether state protection is available to women or female children who refuse to be subjected to this practice*, 18 March, UNHCR website <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=country&docid=3df4be5e0&skip=0&coi=LBR&querysi=Kpelle&searchin=fulltext&display=50&sort=date> – Accessed 1 April 2009.
11. Bledsoe, Caroline H. 1980, *Women and Marriage in Kpelle Society*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, Google Books website http://books.google.com/books?id=NjqsAAAIAAJ&dq=%22Women+and+Marriage+in+Kpelle+Society%22+bledsoe&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=P2-gun44fq&sig=PV9Lj_toqpgc3rIH-su-1SmxHgI&hl=en&ei=NMXSSe6eD6jm6gOs6bCfBA&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=10&ct=result#PPA82,M1 – Accessed 1 April 2009.
12. US Department of State 2009, *2008 Human Rights Report: Liberia*, 25 February.
13. Olukoju, Ayodeji 2006, 'Traditional or Indigenous Religion and Worldview', *Culture and Customs of Liberia*, Greenwood Press, Westport, pp.22-27. (MRT-RRT Library)
14. UK Home Office 1999, *Liberia Assessment*, September.
15. Lehtinen, Terhi 2002, 'Liberia', *Agents, Motives and Instruments: An Atlas of African Conflicts*, Conflict Transformation Service website <http://www.conflicttransform.net/Liberia.pdf> – Accessed 1 April 2009.
16. Pugel, James 2007, *What the Fighters Say: A Survey of Ex-combatants in Liberia February-March 2006*, UN Development Programme & African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect, April http://www.lr.undp.org/UNDPwhatFightersSayLiberia_Finalv3.pdf – Accessed 1 April 2009.
17. Young, Andrew T. 2008, 'Costly Discrimination and Ethnic Conflict: The Case of the Liberian Civil Wars', Ludwig von Mises Institute, February <http://mises.org/journals/scholar/young2.pdf> – Accessed 1 April 2009.
18. Human Rights Watch 2004, *How to Fight, How to Kill: Child Soldiers in Liberia*, February, Vol. 16, No. 2(A) <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/liberia0204/liberia0204.pdf> – Accessed 1 April 2009.
19. Deng Deng, William 2001, '2.3 Liberia', *A Survey of Programs on the Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers*, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 30 March <http://www.mofa.go.jp/POLICY/human/child/survey/profile3.html> – Accessed 1 April 2009.

20. Stead, David, 1999, 'Troubled past of Africa's first republic', *BBC News*, 12 August <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/418596.stm> – Accessed 1 April 2009.
21. Walsh, Declan 2003, 'Liberia's boy soldiers plan a final orgy of looting', *The Independent*, 14 July <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/liberias-boy-soldiers-plan-a-final-orgy--of-looting-586745.html> – Accessed 1 April 2009.
22. Human Rights Group 2005, *Youth, Poverty and Blood: The Lethal Legacy of West Africa's Regional Warriors*, March, Vol. 17, No. 5(A).
23. Bah, Mamadou Diouma 2005, *Peace Building Through Informal Channels: A Comparative Analysis of Liberia and Mozambique*, Central New York Regional Peace Studies Consortium <http://www.peaceconsortium.org/Mamadou%20Diouma.pdf> – Accessed 1 April 2009.
24. 'The Successes of President Johnson-Sirleaf's Diplomacy and Foreign Minister H. E. Olubanke King-Akerele' 2009, The Liberian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, 9 February http://www.mofa.gov.lr/press.php?news_id=145 – Accessed 2 April 2009.
25. Dukulé, Abdoulaye W. 2008, 'President Sirleaf on the State of the Nation', *The Perspective*, 1 February <http://www.liberiaitech.com/theperspective/2008/0131200801.html> – Accessed 2 April 2009.
26. Dolo, Emmanuel 2008, 'Building a Corruption-Sensitive Society (Commentary)', *Liberia Paper*, 19 December, Liberia Corruption Watch website http://www.liberiacorruptionwatch.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=146:building-a-corruption-sensitive-society-commentary&catid=1:latest&Itemid=1 – Accessed 2 April 2009.
27. 'Country Profile' 2008, *BBC News*, 26 November http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1043500.stm – Accessed 6 April 2009.
28. 'Liberia: No Middleperson in Obtaining Passport' 2007, *The Analyst*, 5 April, allAfrica.com website <http://allafrica.com/> – Accessed 2 April 2009.