

# Carter Center Launches Dispute Management Program

By Marcus N. Maloney  
in Gbarnga, Bong County

Carter Center has ended a week-long alternative dispute resolution training with local traditional leaders from five of the 15 counties in Liberia in Gbarnga, Bong County.

The five counties are Bong, Nimba, Lofa, Maryland and Margibi.

According to the Associate Director for Conflict Resolution at the Carter Center, Mr. Tom Crick, the training workshop was aimed at building a working and responsive justice system that requires the active participation by citizens at all levels.

Mr. Crick said the training would strengthen the capacity of local institutions to deal with local problems before they go sky-high. He noted that the training would also give national leaders new skills with which to help government respond to problems as they occurred.

The training exercise brought together more than 50 participants from the National Traditional Council, traditional leaders

from the five target counties, officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs as well as women and youth leaders.

The training, according to Mr. Crick, helped to discover existing challenges facing local leaders and to discuss alternative dispute resolution options that would help analyze and address home disputes.

He maintained that the training provided specific leadership on the laws and other local disputes.

He informed the gathering that the program would provide logistics and training support to local monitors based in the target counties.

Mr. Crick indicated that studies demonstrated that the majority of Liberians access justice first and foremost through local leaders on a day-to-day basis.

He said the Carter Center had worked with the Ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs to strengthen formal systems of justice to educate

citizens on their rights and to reinforce indigenous dispute resolution in ways consistent with the law.

He maintained that following the end of a 15-county consultation on the rule of law with traditional leaders in 2009, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Traditional Council requested the Carter Center for assistance to fortify the capacity of local leaders to determine disputes consistent with the law, as an important means of maintaining and building peace throughout the country.

The training program witnessed the official launch of an 18-month USAID-funded project designed to strengthen the capacity of indigenous leaders to administer local disputes as well as give the officers of the National Traditional Council improved ability to act on major disputes.

The project, according to Mr. Crick, will be implemented by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the National Traditional Council.

Speaking earlier at the launch of the program, Deputy Internal Affairs

Minister Peter Kemei lauded the Carter Center for the assistance it continued to provide the Liberian people.

The Deputy Internal Affairs boss said he believed that with the involvement of land, tribal and religious

connections as the three major sources of conflict in the training exercise, there was the chance to return Liberia to its pre-war status for the people to peacefully co-exist.