

Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL-RfP)

Leaders of the National Muslim Council of Liberia and the Liberian Council of Churches, in response to the December 1989 civil conflict actualized a concept of inter-faith collaboration that was initially called Inter-Faith Mediation Committee (IFMC) so as to engage both the warlords and the Government of Liberia to ceasefire and come to the table to settle their differences. The body later became known in June 1995 as the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL).

For its role in the Liberian Peace initiative from 1990, the Council won the Desmond Tutu Peace Award. In those efforts of mediation in the Liberian crisis, the Council initiated the framework, which formed the basis for the **ECOWAS PEACE PLAN** for Liberia (cease-fire, round table conference, peace-keeping force and security among others) leading to general elections in 1997. The Council also consequently engaged the UN platform for Liberia called **International Contact Group** on Liberia that facilitated the final phase of the Liberian peace process in 2003.

Vision:

IRCL envisages in the pursuit of its objectives and accomplishing its mission, a tolerant Liberian society peacefully coexisting where our differences are being used for the best interest of humanity. Usage that will serve our common interests, promote peace, security and human right; eradicate or dissuade the use of religion for the wrong reasons

Mission:

1. To strengthen the Religious collaboration and cooperation
2. To advocate for the well being of all.
3. To plan together on addressing issues of both national and religious concerns
4. To coordinate our resources for efficient joint action when necessary and possible

Objectives:

The purpose and/or objectives of the Council include but not be limited to:

1. Dialogue among various faith communities for peaceful co-existence, understanding and religious tolerance;
2. Advocate for human rights, justice for all irrespective of creed, religious affiliation, ethnicity;
3. Promote the prevention, management and/or resolution of conflict through peaceful means;

4. Mobilize collective assets and resources to address issues of common concern that affect our common humanity, at local, national, regional and international levels;
5. Respect religious differences and actively promote unity among all religions in Liberia and beyond;
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7. Educate one another and the general population about the commonalities and differences of our religions, thereby promoting tolerance, acceptance and appreciation both within and amongst different religions;
8. Coordinate resources and cooperate for efficient and effective joint action at local, national, sub-regional, regional and international levels;
9. Serve as mediators in local, national, sub-regional, regional and international conflict/crisis by helping to make peace, reconcile, heal the wounds of conflicts and unit all affected communities;
10. Speak with a united voice against violations of human/people's rights and all forms of injustices within the country and anywhere these ills against humanity may exist;
11. Cooperate with National and International NGOs, Governments, Councils, Agencies, and Fellowships on projects/programme of mutual interest to humanity;
12. Speak with a united voice against all forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and discriminations; collaborate with other stakeholders to address this issue through statements and concrete action.
13. To affirm our unity as a people while respecting our differences and to actively promote the desire of unity among the peoples of Liberia

Program areas:

Peace and Reconciliation

- Conflict prevention, management and Resolution
- Mitigation, mediation and Peace building
- Good Governance
- Human Rights
- Civic/voter education
- Democracy
- Rule of Law
- Youth and Young Adult programs
- Women & Children Dept. (Women of Faith)
- HIV/AIDS Awareness, prevention & Psychosocial
- Building Inter-religious Cooperation Relations
- Anti Gender-based Violence/Harmful Traditional Practices

- Humanitarian Assistance, etc

Structure

Categories of membership

The Council has two (2) categories of Membership. They are:

1. **Full Membership:** It is limited to duly registered, incorporated National Religious Councils/Organizations which possess the following qualifications and characteristics:
 - Defined religious goals and objectives that are internationally accepted;
 - Maintains good social standing within the religious community it represents;
 - Pledges to uphold, protect and defend the general principles of The Council, and willing to carry out the responsibilities and duties of its Membership;
 - Has its National office in Liberia; and
 - Its non-partisan and non-political
2. **Affiliate Membership:** Open to all National Religious Organizations which have professed a defined interest in the promotion of peace, social justice, unity, religious tolerance and harmony; and in good social standing within its community; non-partisan, non-political, and maintaining a national office in Liberia.

General Assembly

The General Assembly consists of members and officials of the Executive Committee and delegates from the member organization. The Executive Committee comprises of twenty members ten apiece. And the Secretariat currently has 13 staffers including the Secretary and Deputy Secretary General; Financial officer, Treasurer, Coordinators and Deputy Coordinators for each Women and Youth Desks etc...

As a religious institution with broad-based constituencies and national credibility, Inter-Religious Council of Liberia enjoys the unflinching support of the Liberian people. The Council seeks among many things to discuss religious and national issues and to make constructive recommendations to the Government, offer prayers for the survival of the Nation, and mobilize resources to support the needy. It continues to be active in resolution of crisis, consolidating peace and development agenda. In the pursuit of these endeavors, it has collaborated with various Governments in West Africa as well as the International Community in nearly all peace negotiations and subsequent settlements of the Liberian civil conflicts.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee meets quarterly to:

1. Implement the general policy of the council as laid down by the General Assembly;
2. Administer, manage and control the affairs and property of The Council;
3. Receive and ratify decisions of the Standing Committees;
4. Determine terms of reference for all Committees of The Council, review and approve administrative and financial policies for the Secretariat as well as terms and conditions of service for employees;
5. Make Policy or Position Statements on behalf of the Council.
6. Fill any vacancies occurring amongst the officials and officers of The Council between Annual General Assemblies.

Standing Committees are:

1. Inter-Religious Dialogue and Mediation Committee;
2. Information and Education Committee;
3. Human Rights Committee;
4. Refugee, Emergency and Relief Committee;
5. Budget, Finance and Transparency Committee;**
6. Membership Committee
7. Ways and Means Committee

SECRETARIAT:

headed by a Secretary General and Asstant Secretary General

WOMEN'S DEPARTMENT

There shall be established within The Council a Department for Women's and Children Affairs. This Department shall in consultation with the Secretary General, plan and carry out projects, programs and activities that will assist and guide The Council in the discharge of its responsibilities and duties to women and children.

The day to day affairs of the Department shall be carried out by an Administrative staff headed by a Coordinator and assisted by an Assistant Coordinator respectively. Other women nominated by the Member Organizations will assist in performing the operation of the desk as required by the coordinators. The Staff shall be responsible and accountable to the General Secretary through its Coordinator and/or her proxy in office. The position of Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator are rotational in the manner and form in which the Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary

General are. The Executive Committee must be informed of all activities and programs of the Department through the Secretary General of the Council.

SECTION II: YOUTH DEPARTMENT

There shall be established within the Council a Youth Department. This Department shall in consultation with the Secretary General, plan and carry out projects, programs and activities that will engender in the youth better understanding and deeper appreciation of the concepts and principals of inter-religious collaboration and will assist and guide The Council in the discharge of its responsibilities and duties to youth.

The day to day affairs of the Department shall be carried out by an Administrative staff headed by a Youth Coordinator and Assisted by an Assistant Youth Coordinator respectively. Other youth nominated by the Member Organizations will assist in performing the operation of the desk as required by the Coordinators. These Staff shall be responsible for all youth activities, supervise, and coordinate the work of any Committee that may be appointed on all youth affairs and shall be accountable to the Secretary General through its Coordinator and/or her proxy in office. The position of Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator are rotational in the manner and form in which the secretary general and the assistant Secretary General are. The Executive Committee must be informed of all activities and programs of the Department through the Secretary General of the Council.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND INTERVENTIONS

- The Council sponsored and effectively staged a mass stay-home action on March 9, 1995 and February 15, 1996 demanding disarmament before elections.
- Successfully launched a Civic Disarmament Campaign to assist in disarmament, repatriation and resettlement programs immediately after the February 15, 1996 civil action.
- Issued several position statements regarding the peace process and the violation of human rights.
- Co-sponsored a workshop on “The Protection and Reintegration of Liberia’s War Affected Children” in October 1996.
- Intervened in the Mandingo/Lorma Crisis, Lofa County.
- Intervened in the Mandingoes/Gio and Mano crisis in Nimba County.
- Held several workshops on Religious Tolerance and Peaceful Co-existence throughout the country.
- Sponsored a symposium for civic organizations, political parties, religious institutions, youth and women groups to galvanize views and opinions of

prevailing situations in the County and the Sub-region; and presented a comprehensive document to the Government of Liberia for a way forward.

- Held consultative meetings with the Religious Communities of Guinea and Sierra Leone and signed communiqué with both Leaderships of the Religious Communities of Guinea and Sierra Leone to foster cooperation and collaboration on peace, security and reconciliation in the sub-region, which has culminated into the Mano River Union Inter-religious Council's Coordinating Committee (MRU IRCC) comprising of two representatives from each –Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast.
- Held consultative meetings to chart the way forward with the office of the European Union (EU) in Liberia, the United Nations Office in Liberia (UNOL), United States Embassy, the British Embassy in Freetown, the French Embassy in Conakry, as well as credible Civic Organizations in Liberia aimed at finding a peaceful resolution to the ongoing fighting between the Government of Liberia (GOL) and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).
- Constructively engage both the Government of Liberia (GOL) and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) to resolve the ongoing hostility on the dialogue table.
- Working closely with ECOWAS Secretariat and Parliament in strategizing a way forward for a peaceful resolution of the Liberian crisis. In this regard, the Council delivered a position statement (on the Liberian crisis) to the ECOWAS Parliament Second Ordinary Session in Abuja, Nigeria.
- Held Consultative meetings with both Governments of Sierra Leone and Guinea in finding a way forward for the peaceful resolution of the crisis within the Mano River Basin.
- Facilitated a consultative meeting between ECOWAS Parliament and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Major Post-war Activities 2004-Present

- Organized and facilitated Peace Conferences in five of the 15 political sub-divisions of Liberia (Montserrado, Bomi, Cape Mount, Bong and Grand Bassa counties)
- Through the assistance of **Mercy Corps/USAID** held Special Peace and Reconciliation Conference as a result of the October 28-29, 2004 mob violence that occurred in Monrovia and its environs taking religious and cultural dimensions that brought about the destruction of churches, mosques and religious institutions.

- Organized and facilitated Integrated Peace building workshops for community and religious leaders in Margibi, Bong and Montserrado and Lofa Counties.
- Established four Local IRCL structures in Bong, Margibi, Grand Bassa and Lofa County.
- In collaboration with CHF International, conducted an assessment in Lofa County; concluded arrangement for the training of Community Peace Councils; for ensuing peace & reconciliation workshops and peace forums.
- In July, along with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), facilitated a three- day peace conference in Gbarnga, Bong County, led to the signing of a “Peace Resolution” among all the tribes & religious groupings.
- Monitored the Ghanaians’ election upon the invitation of National Democratic Institute (NDI)
- Certificated by the National Elections Commission of Liberia to conduct civic and voter education and elections monitoring.
- By the assistance of the **World Conference of Religion for Peace** hosted a week long sub-regional solidarity peace conference at the Corina Hotel;
- Printed 2000 copies of the Accra Peace Accord document and distributed free copies;
- Established the Women & Youth Desks of the IRCL to implement programs of Women and Youth in Grand Bassa, Margibi, Bong, and Montserrado Counties.
- Organized a series of staff capacity building training workshop.
- Signed an In-Kind Support Agreement with the Liberian Transitional Initiative to conduct five-days peace conference in Nimba County with the aim of developing a Code of religious and cultural tolerance.
- 2005, with support from the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) the IRCL worked on a project titled “eliminating the practice of Female Genital Mutilation and creating awareness on HIV & AIDS, in Bomi and Cape Mount Counties.
- From 2006-9, ICCO & Kerkinactie supported IRCL to conduct a research on the root causes of the Liberian civil conflict in Bong, Grand Bassa and Lofa Counties and formulated Districts and County Codes of Conduct for local inhabitants as a way conflicts in communities where legal apparatuses were not fully accessible.
- In 2009, IRCL conducted a Gender-based Violence workshop in Grand Cape Mount County which was sponsored by Religions for Peace (RfP)
- 2009-10 UNOPS & InterPeace collaborated in partnership with IRCL to conduct an all Nimba County Conference and resolutions were implemented throughout the districts of Nimba which included awareness and sensitization on tolerance and peaceful coexistence; conducted focus group discussions with youth groups, religious and traditional Leaders on the root causes of the war and way-forward actions for reconciliation; and created platforms for the formation of Peace Committees.

- In 2010, after an intervention by a team of Executives of the IRCL in the Lofa incidence of fighting between Lormas and Mandingos over the reported death of a student girl in Koniya, Voinjama District, the IRCL tracked funding from Trust Africa and Humanity United (TAHU) and implemented a project titled, Institutional Capacity building and strengthening communities in Lofa for dialogue and development. District structures were formed that constantly monitor early warning indicators and report them to Peace Committees.
- In 2010-11, ICCOKERKINACTIE support to IRCL that came through clustered framework with other civil society groups working on the same agenda fostered the creation of Peace Mediation Committees to work along with the local existing structures that were trained in areas of intervention and conducting community dialogues. 3000 copies of the County Code of Conduct which was the outcome of the all Lofa County Conference held were distributed.
- In 2010, The Carter Center in Liberia maintained its already strong partnership with IRCL on the civic education and advocacy on Rule of Law in target county Grand Gedeh.
- From 2011-2013, the UNICEF-RfP-IRCL project on Child Rights and Protection/Health (Awareness on HIV & AIDS) was launched and its currently active with target counties namely, Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, Rural Montserrado, Margibi, and Grand Bassa.
- 2013, the IRCL led the mediation between the Government of Liberia and Civic Society pressure groups threatening demonstrations and protests across the Country against the UP led Government on several Counts allegation including the position of Robert Sirleaf at NOCAL.
- 2014: Conducted a Religious Leaders Mapping with support from UNICEF C4D assessing 10,000+ Religious Leaders in the 15 Counties and actively worked with the Incidence Management Committee (IMS) for the Ebola; breaking the cycle of transmission through engagement in community dialogues with 82 health districts on safe and dignified burial practices. The IRCL in collaboration with the Traditional Council of Chiefs removed the cremated ashes of over 8000 deaths from Ebola and committed it in safekeeping in 18 barrels at the National Cemetery in Margibi County.
- 2015 started campaign in partnership with the Episcopal Church of Liberia Relief Development (ECLRD), preparing a Tool Kit for Gender based Violence, launched the Tool Kit and 100 Senior Religious Leaders signed up to speak Out against GBV
- From 2010-2016, the UNICEF-IRCL-RfP project on Child Rights and Protection remained active with focus in Lofa, Margibi, Rural Montserrado, Bomi, Cape Mount, Bong, Nimba, Grand Gedeh, and Sinoe Counties. IRCL established data Centers in Cape Mount, Bong ad Grand Gedeh Counties with active staffing.

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