

Search for Common Ground Talking Drum Studio-Liberia

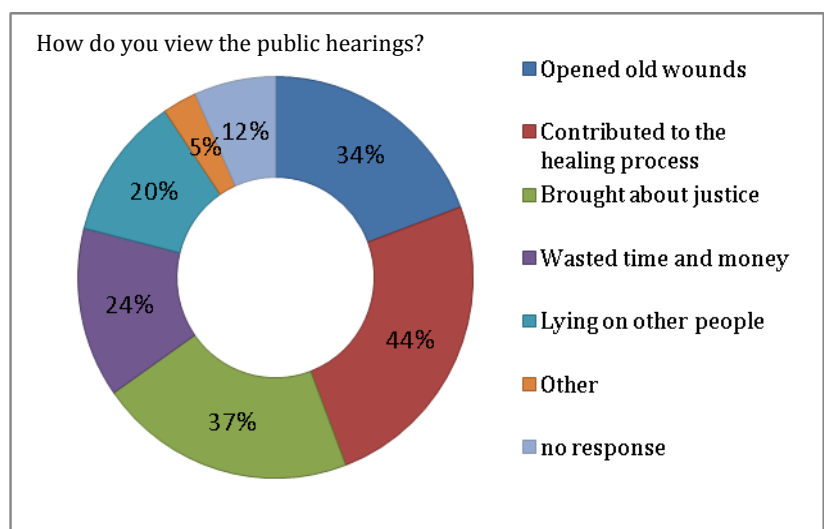
Quick Poll Results on Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Process and Final Report

SFCG is an international NGO with a mission to transform the way the world deals with conflict, away from adversarial approaches towards cooperative solutions. In Liberia, SFCG operates Talking Drum Studio, a multimedia production studio, and a complementary outreach project to strengthen participation and inclusion in consolidating peace in the country.

Recently, SFCG conducted a poll of Liberian citizens to gather information on public knowledge and perceptions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings and the recently published TRC Final Report and Recommendations. Surveying took place in 7 neighborhoods of Monrovia with a total of 160 participants over the age of 18. Participants were split almost evenly between those aged 18-35 and those over the age of 35. The survey serves as a follow up to a larger polling exercise SFCG conducted in 2008 while TRC hearings were underway.

Respondent feedback about the TRC was much more positive compared to previous polls. While only around 60% of respondents followed the TRC hearings, respondent feedback was much more positive than previous surveying with the highest number of respondents viewing the TRC process as contributing to Liberia's healing process (44%) and bringing about justice (37%). Most respondents were aware of the TRC Final Report to the Legislature, with the majority being aware of the establishment of a Criminal Tribunal and that President Johnson-Sirleaf is included on the list of people barred from running for re-election. The poll found that the majority of Liberians surveyed agree with this recommendation, a sentiment most members of the international community have been reluctant to publicly discuss.

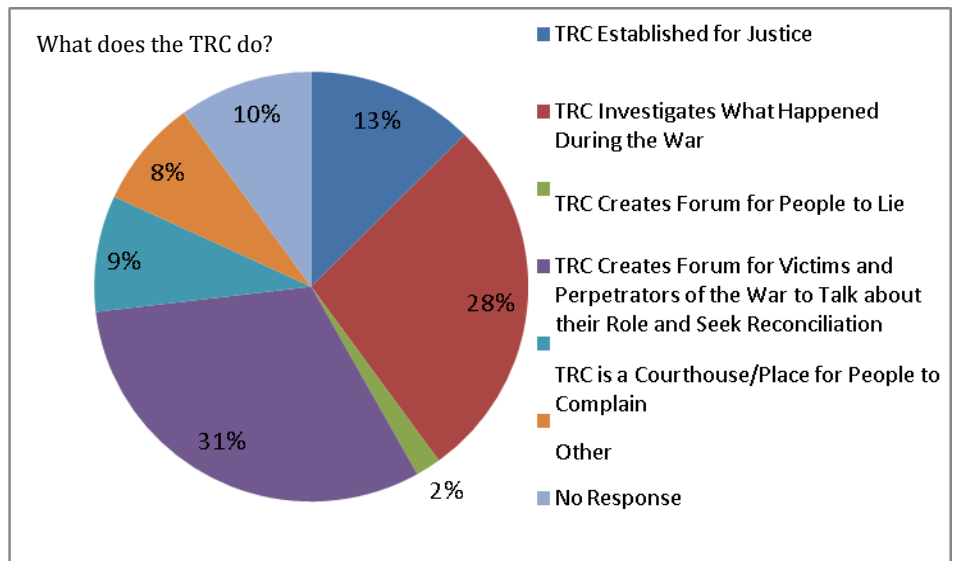
Respondents replied that the most effective way to promote Liberian unity would be to provide reparations for all individuals and communities victimized by the years of instability and war. However, 27% of respondents were unaware of this recommendation. This is indicative of the need for better media coverage and public dialogue around this



recommendation, as it was most important to those that knew about it. Generally, although the responses to the TRC's recommendations were more positive, most respondents still feel that the TRC process has not yet completely achieved its goals of bringing about justice, peace, unity and reconciliation in Liberia. There is also healthy skepticism that the government will adopt the TRC's recommendations, since many of them would negatively impact current government officials.

Specifically, the key findings from the survey revealed the following:

- Overall perceptions of the TRC are positive. When each responder was questioned as to his or her general views of the TRC public hearings, 44% felt that the TRC public hearings are contributing to the healing process and 37% view them as bringing about justice. In 2008, a full 70% of responses were negative in their assessment of the TRC, while in 2009, 81% were positive.
- 59% of those surveyed said they followed the TRC hearings.
- 46% believe that the TRC has not so far achieved its goals of bringing about justice, peace, unity and reconciliation in Liberia.



- Respondents were least aware of the recommendation for providing reparations to victimized individuals and communities (31%) and that all persons recommended for prosecution be barred from holding public office for 30 years (37%)
- Respondents were almost evenly split when responding to whether they believed the Liberian government would adopt any of the Final Report's recommendations. 29% believed it would, 31% believed it would not, and 32% did not know.
- Of those who did not believe that the government would adopt the recommendations, 60% cited the reason as being that government officials are affected by the recommendations.
- Participants were equally split in believing that the purpose of the TRC was either to investigate what happened during the war (28%) or to create a forum for the victims and the perpetrators of the war to talk about their role and seek reconciliation (31%)
- The majority of people (66%) were aware of the TRC final report, and of those, 59% were aware of the establishment of a Criminal Tribunal and 50% were aware of the recommendation that President Johnson-Sirleaf be included in the list of people barred from running for re-election.
- 44% agreed with the inclusion of President Johnson-Sirleaf on the list, while only 20% disagreed.